Foundations in Sociology II

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Society Structure Process

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Contents

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Overview

Foundations in Sociology: Society Structure Process, 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

Introduction to Sociology – 2nd Canadian Edition was adapted by William Little from the OpenStax College textbook, *Introduction to Sociology*. For information about what was changed in this adaptation, refer to the Copyright statement at the bottom of the home page. This adaptation is a part of the B.C. Open Textbook project.

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PART I

SOCIOLOGY 111

1. Module 1: Society, Culture and the Sociological Imagination

Figure 1.1*. Sociologists study how society affects people and how people affect society. How does being in a crowd affect people's behaviour? (Canada Day National Capital by PDerek Hatfield, CC BY 2.0)*

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between the concepts of society and culture and discuss the relationship between them
- Describe the different levels of analysis in sociology: micro-level sociology, meso-level sociology, macro-level sociology, and global-level sociology
- Elaborate the meaning of the sociological imagination
- Explain why the relationship between the individual and society is a challenging problem within sociology
- Compare ways of understanding the evolution of types of societies
- Describe the difference between pre-industrial, industrial, post-industrial and post-natural societies
- Discuss how a societies relationship to the environment is related to societal development
- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.

1.0 Introduction to Society, Culture and Sociology

A **society** is a group of people whose members interact, reside in

a definable area, and share a 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.

A **culture** includes the group's shared practices, values, beliefs, norms, and artifacts. 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.

This raises the distinction between the terms "culture" and "society" and how we conceptualize the relationship between them. In everyday conversation, people rarely distinguish between these terms, but they have slightly different meanings, and the distinction is important to how we examine them. As indicated above, a culture represents the beliefs, practices, and material artifacts of a group, while a society represents the social structures, processes, and organization of the people who share those beliefs, practices, and material artifacts. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other, but we can separate them analytically.

Sociology is 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. A selection of these different theories and methods and their application to various social phenomena will be examined in subsequent modules.

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society and the relationship of society and culture. 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. In general, sociologists break the study of society down into four separate levels of analysis: micro, meso, macro, and global.

The study of cultural rules of politeness in conversation is an example of micro-level sociology. At the *micro*-level of analysis, the focus is on the social dynamics of intimate, face-to-face interactions. Research is conducted with a specific set of individuals such as conversational partners, family members, work associates, or friendship groups. In the conversation study example, sociologists might try to determine how people from different cultures interpret each others' behaviour to see how different rules of politeness lead to misunderstandings. If the same misunderstandings occur consistently in a number of different interactions, the sociologists may be able to propose some generalizations about rules of politeness that would be helpful in reducing tensions in mixed-group dynamics (e.g., during staff meetings or international negotiations). Other examples of micro-level research include seeing how informal networks become a key source of support and advancement in formal bureaucracies, or how loyalty to criminal gangs is established. The micro and meso levels of sociological analysis are explored in greater detail within Sociology 112.

Macro-level sociology focuses on the properties of large-scale, society-wide social interactions that extend beyond the immediate milieu of individual interactions: the dynamics of institutions, class structures, gender relations, or whole populations. The example above of the influence of migration on changing patterns of language usage is a macro-level phenomenon because it refers to

structures or processes of social interaction that occur outside or beyond the intimate circle of individual social acquaintances. These include the economic, political, and other circumstances that lead to migration; the educational, media, and other communication structures that help or hinder the spread of speech patterns; the class, racial, or ethnic divisions that create different slangs or cultures of language use; the relative isolation or integration of different communities within a population; and so on. Other examples of macro-level research include examining why women are far less likely than men to reach positions of power in society, or why fundamentalist Christian religious movements play a more prominent role in American politics than they do in Canadian politics. In each case, the site of the analysis shifts away from the nuances and detail of micro-level interpersonal life to the broader, macro-level systematic patterns that structure social change and social cohesion in society.

In *global*-level sociology, the focus is on structures and processes that extend beyond the boundaries of states or specific societies. As Ulrich Beck (2000) has pointed out, in many respects we no longer "live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states and their respective national societies." Issues of climate change, the transmission of pathogens, 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, etc. — 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 examined at a global scale of analysis. The macro and global levels of sociological analysis are a primary focus of Sociology 111 and will be examined in greater depth in subsequent modules in this course.

The relationship, between the micro, meso, 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.

1.1 The Sociological Imagination

Although the scale of sociological studies and the methods of carrying them out are different, the sociologists involved in them all have something in common. Each of them looks at society using what pioneer sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) called the **sociological imagination**, sometimes also referred to as the "sociological lens" or "sociological perspective." In a sense, this was Mills' way of addressing the dilemmas of the macro/micro divide in sociology. Mills defined sociological imagination as how individuals understand their own and others' lives in relation to history and social structure (1959/2000). It is the capacity to see an individual's private troubles in the context of the broader social processes that structure them. This enables the sociologist to examine what Mills called "personal troubles of milieu" as "public issues of social structure," and vice versa.

Mills reasoned that private troubles like being overweight, being unemployed, having marital difficulties, or feeling purposeless or depressed can be purely personal in nature. It is possible for them to be addressed and understood in terms of personal, psychological, or moral attributes — either one's own or those of the people in one's immediate milieu. In an individualistic society like our own, this is in fact the most likely way that people will regard the issues they confront: "I have an addictive personality;" "I can't get a break in the job market;" "My husband is unsupportive," etc. However, if private troubles are widely shared with others, they indicate that there is a common social problem that has its source in the way social life is structured. At this level, the issues are not adequately understood as simply private troubles. They are best addressed as public issues that require a collective response to resolve.

Obesity, for example, has been increasingly recognized as a growing problem for both children and adults in North America. Michael Pollan cites statistics that three out of five Americans are overweight and one out of five is obese (2006). In Canada in 2012,

just under one in five adults (18.4%) were obese, up from 16% of men and 14.5% of women in 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Obesity is therefore not simply a private concern related to the medical issues, dietary practices, or exercise habits of specific individuals. It is a widely shared social issue that puts people at risk for chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. It also creates significant social costs for the medical system.

Pollan argues that obesity is in part a product of the increasingly sedentary and stressful lifestyle of modern, capitalist society. More importantly, however, it is a product of the industrialization of the food chain, which since the 1970s has produced increasingly cheap and abundant food with significantly more calories due to processing. Additives like corn syrup, which are much cheaper and therefore more profitable to produce than natural sugars, led to the trend of super-sized fast foods and soft drinks in the 1980s. As Pollan argues, trying to find a processed food in the supermarket without a cheap, calorie-rich, corn-based additive is a challenge. The sociological imagination in this example is the capacity to see the private troubles and attitudes associated with being overweight as an issue of how the industrialization of the food chain has altered the human/environment relationship — in particular, with respect to the types of food we eat and the way we eat them.

By looking at individuals and societies and how they interact through this lens, sociologists are able to examine what influences behaviour, attitudes, society and culture. By applying systematic and scientific methods to this process, they try to do so without letting their own biases and preconceived ideas influence their conclusions.

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1.1.1 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.**

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 modules 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).

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1.2 Understanding The Evolution of Types of Societies

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 to the earliest archaeological records. The very first occupation was that of hunter-gatherer.

Hunter-Gatherer Societies

***Figure 1.2**. The Blackfoot or Siksika were traditionally nomadic hunter-gatherers who moved camp frequently during the summer months to follow the buffalo herds. (“Blackfoot Indians” from Library and Archives Canada is 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 (Collins, 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.

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

***Figure 1.3**. 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. ("Maize-teosinte" by John Doebley is licensed under CC BY 3.0 Unported licence)*

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 1.4**. Roman collared slaves depicted in a marble relief from Smyrna (modern Turkey) in 200 CE. ("Roman Collared Slaves" from the Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England CC BY-SA 2.0)*

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 1.5*. Tapestry from the 1070s in which King Harold swears an oath to become the vassal of Duke William of Normandy.*(*Bayeux Tapestry – Scene 23 by Myrabella 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 1.6. *Wrapping bars of soap at the Colgate-Palmolive Canada plant, Toronto, 1919. ("Women wrapping and packing bars of soap in the Colgate-Palmolive Canada plant on the northwest corner of Carlaw and Colgate Avenues in Toronto, Ontario, Canada" by Pringle & Booth, Toronto 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. 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. The relationships between the rise of modern industrial society and the development of sociology is explored in greater detail in Module Two.

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 1.7*. 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.* (*George Stephen, 1965 by William Notman is in the public domain*)

1.2.3 Postindustrial Societies

***Figure 1.8**. The ubiquitous e-work place of the 21st century. ("The Desk" by Charlie Styr used under 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.

1.2.4 Postnatural Society: The Anthropocene

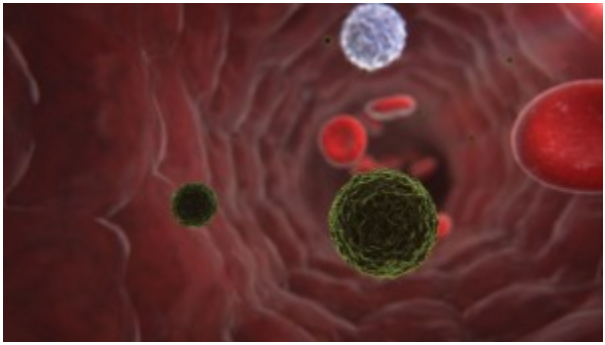

***Figure 1.9**. Advances in micro-biochemistry make it possible to manipulate the body at the molecular level. ("Dengue virus infection" by Sanofi Pasteur used under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 license)*

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 of 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.

The video "The Anthroposcene: A New Age of Humans" at https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=129507 is accessible in the LMS, and will highlight some of these key ideas.

1.3 Why Study Sociology?

***Figure 1.10**. 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 by Lieut. G. Barry Gilroy is in 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 a 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 Indigenous 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.

1.3.1 Sociology in the Workplace

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

- An understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- The ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working;
- The ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- The ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- Skill in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- The capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama).

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

Key Terms and Concepts

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

Culture: forms of cooperation and the common habits, behaviours, and ways of life of a group.

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

Sociology: the systematic study of society and social interaction.

Sociological Imagination: how individuals understand their own and others' lives in relation to history and social structure.

Social Structures: 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: the way in which abstract concepts, complex processes, or mutable social relationships come to be thought of as "things."

Figuration: the process of simultaneously analyzing the behaviour of individuals and the society that shapes that behaviour.

The Law of Three Stages: a sociological theory which holds 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.

Historical Materialist: an approach to understanding society that explains both social change and the development of human ideas in terms of underlying changes in the mode of production.

Usufruct: the distribution of resources according to need.

Social class: a group that has a distinct relationship to the means of production.

Anthroposcene: a proposed geological epoch dating from the commencement of significant human impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems.

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Ulrich Beck (2000)

2. Module 2: Classical Sociological Perspectives: Origins, Applications and Relevance

Learning Objectives

- Identify the three dimensions of knowledge and outline how they account for the evolution of human knowledge
- Distinguish between the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment
- Explain how social thought differs from sociological thought
- Explain why sociology emerged when it did.
- Describe the central ideas of the founders of sociology (Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Simmel and Martineau)
- Discuss why contemporary sociological thinkers continue to revisit the insights of the classical thinkers

2.0 Locating Sociological Perspectives within a broader Account of the Evolution of Human Knowledge

While sociologists share a common adherence to the framework and central insights of the sociological imagination (as described in Module One), the complexity, historical contingency and multi-layered reality of society–the subject of sociology–has fostered the development of a disciplinary community that is multi-perspectival in its structure, organization and development. To appreciate why this is an important and valuable feature of the discipline of sociology it is instructive to explore recent thinking in the history of science. This is particularly the case in current efforts to systematically account for the historical evolution of human knowledge. As described by Jurgen Renn, it is through conscious reflection on the cognitive, material and social dimensions of knowledge within particular historical contexts that we can gain insight into the complexity of those evolutionary processes.

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https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=933#h5p-1

Building on the general insights of Renn concerning the evolution of human knowledge, a primary objective in this module is to explore the origins of different sociological perspectives from their roots in pre-sociological thought to their emergence within the context of the intellectual, political, economic and social conditions of industrial society.

2.1 Distinguishing Between Social Thought and Sociological Thought

(a) (b) (c) (d)

Figure 2.1*. 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.

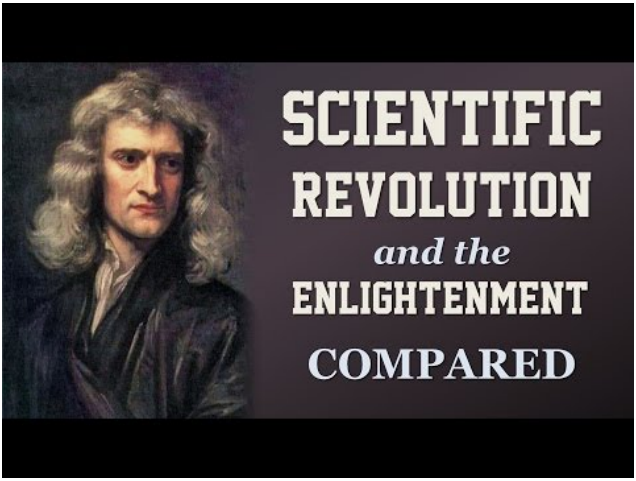
Figure 2.2. *Newton, William Blake, (1795). (Newton-WilliamBlake by William Blake is in the public domain)*

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.



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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."

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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 Classical Sociological Thought

2.2.1 August Comte: The Father of Sociology

Figure 2.3. *Auguste Comte is considered by many to be the father of sociology.* (*Auguste Comte* *is in 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).

2.2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on the Formation of Modern Society

Figure 2.4*. Image of the T. Eaton Co. department store in Toronto, Canada from the back cover of the 1901 Eaton's catalogue.* [Long Description] *(Image of the T. Eaton Co. department store in Toronto, Ontario, Canada from the back cover of the 1901 Eaton's catalogue is in the public domain)*

While many sociologists have contributed to research on society and social interaction, three thinkers provide the basis of modern-day perspectives. Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber developed different theoretical approaches to help us understand the development of modern capitalist society. In the following discussion of modern *society*, we examine Durkheim's, Marx's and Weber's analytical focus on a foundational sociological concept: **social structure**.

As discussed in Module One, social structures can be defined as

general patterns of social behaviour and organization that persist through time. Here Durkheim's analysis focuses on the impacts of the growing division of labour as a uniquely modern social structure, Marx's on the economic structures of capitalism (private property, class, competition, crisis, etc.), and Weber's on the rationalized structures of modern organization. While the aspect of modern structure that Durkheim, Marx and Weber emphasize differs, their common approach is to stress the impact of social structure on culture and ways of life rather than the other way around. This remains a key element of sociological explanation today.

Émile Durkheim: The Pathologies of the Social Order and Functionalism

Figure 2.5. *Émile Durkheim.* (*Emile Durkheim 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.

Émile Durkheim and Functionalism

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.

***Figure 2.6**. The chalice is at the center of Catholic religious ritual and practice. In what way is it an example of a social fact? How does it function to bind the community of the faithful?* (*Chalice Silver with gilding depicting a youthful Christ with cruciform halo and saints Byzantine* *used under* CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Durkheim was very influential in defining the subject matter of the new discipline of sociology. For Durkheim, sociology was not about just any phenomena to do with the life of human beings, but only those phenomena which pertained exclusively to a *social level* of analysis. It was not about the biological or psychological dynamics of human life, for example, but about the external *social facts* through which the lives of individuals were constrained. Moreover, the dimension of human experience described by social

facts had to be explained in its own terms. It could not be explained by biological drives or psychological characteristics of individuals. It was a dimension of reality *sui generis* (of its own kind, unique in its characteristics). It could not be explained by, or reduced to, its individual components without missing its most important features. As Durkheim put it, "a social fact can only be explained by another social fact" (Durkheim, 1895/1964).

This is the framework of Durkheim's famous study of suicide. In *Suicide*: A *Study in Sociology* (1897/1997), Durkheim attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his rules of social research by examining suicide statistics in different police districts. Suicide is perhaps the most personal and most individual of all acts. Its motives would seem to be absolutely unique to the individual and to individual psychopathology. However, what Durkheim observed was that statistical rates of suicide remained fairly constant, year by year and region by region. Moreover, there was no correlation between rates of suicide and rates of psychopathology. Suicide rates did vary, however, according to the social context of the suicides. For example, suicide rates varied according to the religious affiliation of suicides. Protestants had higher rates of suicide than Catholics, even though both religions equally condemn suicide. In some jurisdictions Protestants killed themselves 300% more often than Catholics. Durkheim argued that the key factor that explained the difference in suicide *rates* (i.e., the statistical rates, not the purely individual motives for the suicides) were the different degrees of *social integration* of the different religious communities, measured by the degree of authority religious beliefs hold over individuals, and the amount of collective ritual observance and mutual involvement individuals engage in in religious practice. A social fact — suicide rates — was explained by another social fact — degree of social integration.

The key social function of religion was to integrate individuals by linking them to a common external doctrine and to a greater spiritual reality outside of themselves. Religion created moral communities. In this regard, he observed that the degree of

authority that religious beliefs held over Catholics was much stronger than for Protestants, who from the time of Luther had been taught to take a critical attitude toward formal doctrine. Protestants were more free to interpret religious belief and in a sense were were more individually responsible for supervising and maintaining their own religious practice. Moreover, in Catholicism the ritual practice of the sacraments, such as confession and taking communion, remained intact, whereas in Protestantism ritual was reduced to a minimum. Participation in the choreographed rituals of religious life created a highly visible, public focus for religious observance, forging a link between private thought and public belief. Because Protestants had to be more individualistic and self-reliant in their religious practice, they were not subject to the strict discipline and external constraints of Catholics. They were less integrated into their communities and more thrown back on their own resources. They were more prone to what Durkheim termed **egoistic suicide**: suicide which results from the individual ego having to depend on itself for self-regulation (and failing) in the absence of strong social bonds tying it to a community.

Durkheim's study was unique and insightful because he did not try to explain suicide rates in terms of individual psychopathology. Instead, he regarded the regularity of the suicide rates as a social fact, implying "the existence of collective tendencies exterior to the individual" (Durkheim, 1897/1997), and explained their variation with respect to another social fact: social integration. He wrote, "Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part" (Durkheim, 1897/1997).

Contemporary research into suicide in Canada shows that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 34 (behind death by accident) (Navaneelan, 2012). The greatest increase in suicide since the 1960s has been in the age 15-19 age group, increasing by 4.5 times for males and by 3 times for females. In 2009, 23% of deaths among adolescents aged 15-19 were caused by suicide, up from 9% in 1974, (although this difference in percentage is because the rate of suicide remained

fairly constant between 1974 and 2009, while death due to accidental causes has declined markedly). On the other hand, married people are the least likely group to commit suicide. Single, never-married people are 3.3 times more likely to commit suicide than married people, followed by widowed and divorced individuals respectively. How do sociologists explain this?

It is clear that adolescence and early adulthood is a period in which social ties to family and society are strained. It is often a confusing period in which teenagers break away from their childhood roles in the family group and establish their independence. Youth unemployment is higher than for other age groups and, since the 1960s, there has been a large increase in divorces and single parent families. These factors tend to decrease the quantity and the intensity of ties to society. Married people on the other hand have both strong affective affinities with their marriage partners and strong social expectations placed on them, especially if they have families: their roles are clear and the norms which guide them are well-defined. According to Durkheim's proposition, suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration of social groups. Adolescents are less integrated into society, which puts them at a higher risk for suicide than married people who are more integrated. It is interesting that the highest rates of suicide in Canada are for adults in midlife, aged 40-59. Midlife is also a time noted for crises of identity, but perhaps more significantly, as Navaneelan (2012) argues, suicide in this age group results from the change in marital status as people try to cope with the transition from married to divorced and widowed.

Karl Marx: The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing

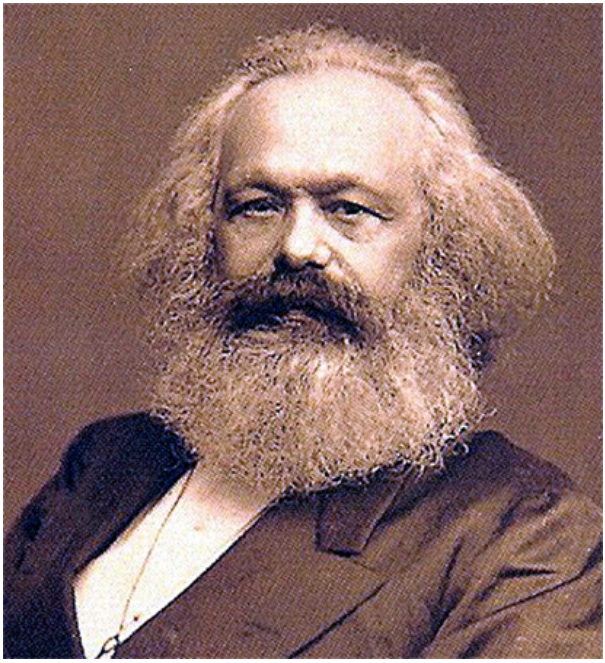

***Figure 2.7**. Karl Marx was one of the founders of sociology. His ideas about social conflict are still relevant today. (Photo courtesy of John Mayall and is in the Public Domain.)*

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** (discussed more fully in Module Three).

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.

Karl Marx and Critical Sociology

For Marx, the creation of modern society was tied to the emergence of capitalism as a global economic system. In the mid-19th century, as industrialization was expanding, Karl Marx (1818–1883) observed that the conditions of labour became more and more exploitative. The large manufacturers of steel were particularly ruthless, and their facilities became popularly dubbed "satanic mills" based on a poem by William Blake. Marx's colleague and friend, Frederick Engels, wrote *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* in 1844, which described in detail the horrid conditions.

Figure 2.8. *Photo of Karl Marx (left) by Friedrich Karl Wunder Photo of Friedrich Engels (right) by George Lester. Marx & Engels is in the public domain.*

Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. And such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world (1812).

Add to that the long hours, the use of child labour, and exposure to extreme conditions of heat, cold, and toxic chemicals, and it is no

wonder that Marx referred to capital as "dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (Marx, 1867/1995).

As we saw in Module One, Marx's explanation of the exploitative nature of industrial society draws on a more comprehensive theory of the development of human societies from the earliest hunter-gatherers to the modern era: *historical materialism*. For Marx, the underlying structure of societies and of the forces of historical change was predicated on the relationship between the "base and superstructure" of societies. In this model, society's economic structure forms its *base*, on which the culture and other social institutions rest, forming its *superstructure*. For Marx, it is the base—the economic ***mode of production***—that determines what a society's culture, law, political system, family form, and, most importantly, its typical form of struggle or conflict will be like. Each type of society—hunter-gatherer, pastoral, agrarian, feudal, capitalist—could be characterized as the total way of life that forms around different economic bases.

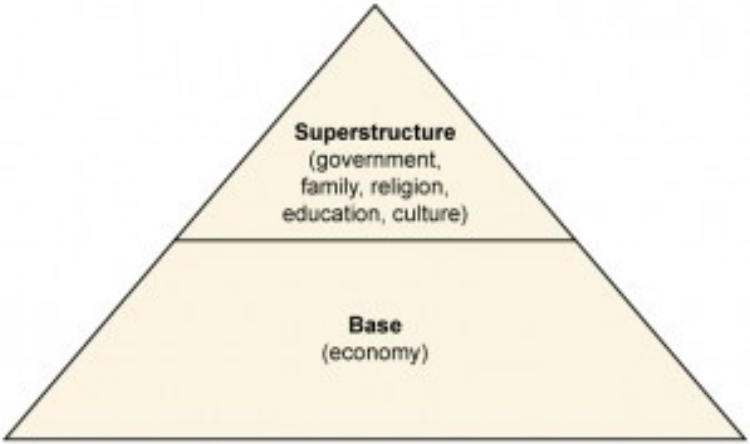

Figure 2.9. *Karl Marx asserted that all elements of a society's structure depend on its economic structure.*

Marx saw economic conflict in society as the primary means of change. The base of each type of society in history — its economic mode of production — had its own characteristic form of economic struggle. This was because a mode of production is essentially two things: the ***means of production*** of a society — anything that is used in production to satisfy needs and maintain existence (e.g., land, animals, tools, machinery, factories, etc.) — and the ***relations of production*** of a society — the division of society into economic *classes* (the social roles allotted to individuals in production). Marx observed historically that in each epoch or type of society since the early "primitive communist" foraging societies, only one class of persons has owned or monopolized the means of production. Different epochs are characterized by different forms of ownership and different class structures: hunter-gatherer (classless/common ownership), agricultural (citizens/slaves), feudal (lords/peasants), and capitalism (capitalists/"free" labourers). As a result, the relations of production have been characterized by relations of domination since the emergence of private property in the early Agrarian societies. Throughout history, societies have been divided into classes with opposed or contradictory interests. These "class antagonisms," as he called them, periodically lead to periods of social revolution in which it becomes possible for one type of society to replace another.

The most recent revolutionary transformation resulted in the end of feudalism. A new revolutionary class emerged from among the freemen, small property owners, and middle-class burghers of the medieval period to challenge and overthrow the privilege and power of the feudal aristocracy. The members of the **bourgeoisie** or capitalist class were revolutionary in the sense that they represented a radical change and redistribution of power in European society. Their power was based in the private ownership of industrial property, which they sought to protect through the struggle for property rights, notably in the English Civil War (1642–1651) and the French Revolution (1789–1799). The development of capitalism inaugurated a period of world transformation and

incessant change through the destruction of the previous class structure, the ruthless competition for markets, the introduction of new technologies, and the globalization of economic activity.

As Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment." It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation.... The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society (1848/1977).

However, the rise of the bourgeoisie and the development of capitalism also brought into existence the class of "free" wage labourers, or the **proletariat**. The proletariat were made up largely of guild workers and serfs who were freed or expelled from their indentured labour in feudal guild and agricultural production and migrated to the emerging cities where industrial production was centred. They were "free" labour in the sense that they were no longer bound to feudal lords or guildmasters. The new labour relationship was based on a contract. However, as Marx pointed out, this meant in effect that workers could sell their labour as a commodity to whomever they wanted, but if they did not sell their labour they would starve. The capitalist had no obligations to provide them with security, livelihood, or a place to live as the feudal lords had done for their serfs. The source of a new class antagonism developed based on the contradiction of fundamental interests between the bourgeois owners and the wage labourers: where the owners sought to reduce the wages of labourers as far as possible to reduce the costs of production and remain competitive,

the workers sought to retain a living wage that could provide for a family and secure living conditions. The outcome, in Marx and Engel's words, was that "society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (1848/1977).

Marx and the Theory of Alienation

Figure 2.10. *Assembly of notebook hard drives in Seagate's "clean room." Wuxi China (Seagate's clean room by Robert Scoble used under CC BY 2.0 licence)*

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.

To summarise, for Marx, the development of capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries was utterly revolutionary and unprecedented in

the scope and scale of the societal transformation it brought about. In his analysis, capitalism is defined by a unique set of features that distinguish it from previous modes of production like feudalism or agrarianism:

- The means of production (i.e., productive property or capital) are privately owned and controlled.
- Capitalists purchase labour power from workers for a wage or salary.
- The goal of production is to profit from selling commodities in a competitive-free market.
- Profit from the sale of commodities is appropriated by the owners of capital. Part of this profit is reinvested as capital in the business enterprise to expand its profitability.
- The competitive accumulation of capital and profit leads to capitalism's dynamic qualities: constant expansion of markets, globalization of investment, growth and centralization of capital, boom and bust cycles, economic crises, class conflict, etc.

These features are structural, meaning that they are built-into, and reinforced by, the institutional organization of the economy. They are structures, or persistent patterns of social relationship that exist, in a sense, prior to individuals' personal or voluntary choices and motives. As structures, they can be said to define the rules or internal logic that underlie the surface or observable characteristics of a capitalist society: its political, social, economic, and ideological formations. Some isolated cases may exist where some of these features do not apply, but they define the overall system that has come to govern the contemporary global economy.

Marx's analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism is *historical* and *materialist* because it focuses on the changes in the economic mode of production to explain the transformation of the social order. The expansion of the use of money, the development of commodity markets, the introduction of rents, the accumulation

and investment of capital, the creation of new technologies of production, and the early stages of the manufactory system, etc. led to the formation of a new class structure (the bourgeoisie and the proletariat), a new political structure (the nation state), and a new ideological structure (science, human rights, individualism, rationalization, the belief in progress, etc.). The unprecedented transformations that created the modern era — urbanization, colonization, population growth, resource exploitation, social and geographical mobility, etc. — originated in the transformation of the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism. "Only the capitalist production of commodities revolutionizes … the entire economic structure of society in a manner eclipsing all previous epochs" (Marx, 1878). In the space of a couple of hundred years, human life on the planet was irremediably and radically altered. As Marx and Engels put it, capitalism had "create[d] a world after its own image" (1848/1977).

Max Weber: Verstehende Soziologie

Figure 2.11. *Max Weber.* (*Max Weber 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.

Max Weber and Interpretive Sociology

Like the other social thinkers discussed here, Max Weber (1864–1920) was concerned with the important changes taking place in Western society with the advent of capitalism. Arguably, the primary focus of Weber's entire sociological *oeuvre* was to determine how and why Western civilization and capitalism developed, and where and when they developed. Why was the West the West? Why did the capitalist system develop in Europe and not elsewhere? Like Marx and Durkheim, he feared that capitalist industrialization would have negative effects on individuals but his analysis differed from theirs in significant respects. Key to the

answer to his questions was the concept of **rationalization**. If other societies had failed to develop modern capitalist enterprise, modern science, and modern, efficient organizational structures, it was because in various ways they had impeded the development of rationalization. Weber's question was: what are the consequences of rationality for everyday life, for the social order, and for the spiritual fate of humanity?

Unlike Durkheim's functionalist emphasis on the sources of social solidarity and Marx's critical emphasis on the materialist basis of class conflict, Weber's interpretive perspective on modern society emphasizes the development of a rationalized *worldview* or *stance*, which he referred to as 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" (1919/1969). In other words, the processes of rationalization and disenchantment refer principally to the mode in which modern individuals and institutions *interpret* or analyze the world and the problems that confront them. Rationalization refers to the general tendency in modern society for all institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of rational principles of efficiency and calculation. It overcomes forms of magical thinking and replaces them with cold, objective calculations based on principles of technical efficiency. Older styles of social organization, based on traditional principles of religion, morality, or custom, cannot compete with the efficiency of rational styles of organization and are gradually replaced.

To Weber, capitalism itself became possible through the processes of rationalization. The emergence of capitalism in the West required the prior existence of rational, calculable procedures like double-entry bookkeeping, free labour contracts, free market exchange, and predictable application of law so that it could operate as a form of rational enterprise. Unlike Marx who defined capitalism in terms of the ownership of private property, Weber defined it in terms of its rational processes. For Weber, capitalism is as a form of continuous, calculated economic action in which every element

is examined with respect to the logic of investment and return. As opposed to previous types of economic action in which wealth was acquired by force and spent on luxuries, capitalism rested "on the expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange, that is, on (formally) peaceful chances for profit." This implied a continual rationalization of commercial procedures in terms of the logic of capital accumulation. "Where capitalist acquisition is rationally pursued, the corresponding action is adjusted to calculations in terms of capital" (Weber, 1904/1958).

Weber's analysis of rationalization did not exclusively focus on the conditions for the rise of capitalism however. Capitalism's "rational" reorganization of economic activity was only one aspect of the broader process of rationalization and disenchantment. Modern science, law, music, art, bureaucracy, politics, and even spiritual life could only have become possible, according to Weber, through the systematic development of precise calculations and planning, technical procedures, and the dominance of "quantitative reckoning." He felt that other non-Western societies, however highly sophisticated, had impeded these developments by either missing some crucial element of rationality or by holding to non-rational organizational principles or some element of magical thinking. For example, Babylonian astronomy lacked mathematical foundations, Indian geometry lacked rational proofs, Mandarin bureaucracy remained tied to Confucian traditionalism and the Indian caste system lacked the common "brotherhood" necessary for modern citizenship.

Weber argued however that although the process of rationalization leads to efficiency and effective, calculated decision making, it is in the end an irrational system. The emphasis on rationality and efficiency ultimately has negative effects when taken to its conclusion. In modern societies, this is seen when rigid routines and strict adherence to performance-related goals lead to a mechanized work environment and a focus on efficiency for its own sake. To the degree that rational efficiency begins to undermine the substantial human values it was designed to serve

(i.e., the ideals of the good life, ethical values, the integrity of human relationships, the enjoyment of beauty and relaxation) rationalization becomes irrational.

Figure 2.12*. Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times (1936). Has technology made this type of labour more or less alienating? (Charlie Chaplin by Insomnia Cured Here used under CC BY SA 2.0 license)*

An example of the extreme conditions of rationality can be found in Charlie Chaplin's classic film *Modern Times* (1936). Chaplin's character works on an assembly line twisting bolts into place over and over again. The work is paced by the unceasing rotation of the conveyor belt and the technical efficiency of the division of labour. When he has to stop to swat a fly on his nose all the tasks down the line from him are thrown into disarray. He performs his routine task to the point where he cannot stop his jerking motions even after the whistle blows for lunch. Indeed, today we even have a recognized medical condition that results from such tasks, known as "repetitive stress syndrome."

For Weber, the culmination of industrialization and rationalization results in what he referred to as the **iron cage**, in which the individual is trapped by the systems of efficiency that were designed to enhance the well-being of humanity. We are trapped in a cage, or literally a "steel housing"(*stahlhartes Gehäuse*), of efficiently organized processes because rational forms of organization have become indispensable. We must continuously hurry and be efficient because there is no time to "waste." Weber argued that even if there was a social revolution of the type that Marx envisioned, the bureaucratic and rational organizational structures would remain. There appears to be no alternative. The modern economic order "is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force" (Weber, 1904/1958).

Figure 2.13. *Cubicles are used to maximize individual work space in an office. Such structures may be rational, but they are also isolating and dehumanizing.* (*I Love Cubicles by Tim Patterson used under CC BY 2.0 license*)

Figure 2.14. *Puritan soap flakes. (Puritan soap packet by Paul Townsend used under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 license)*

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 predestination, 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).

Georg Simmel: A Sociology of Forms

Figure 2.15. *Georg Simmel.* (*Georg Simmel 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 (Micro-level approaches in sociology are developed more fully in Sociology 112.3). 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.

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).

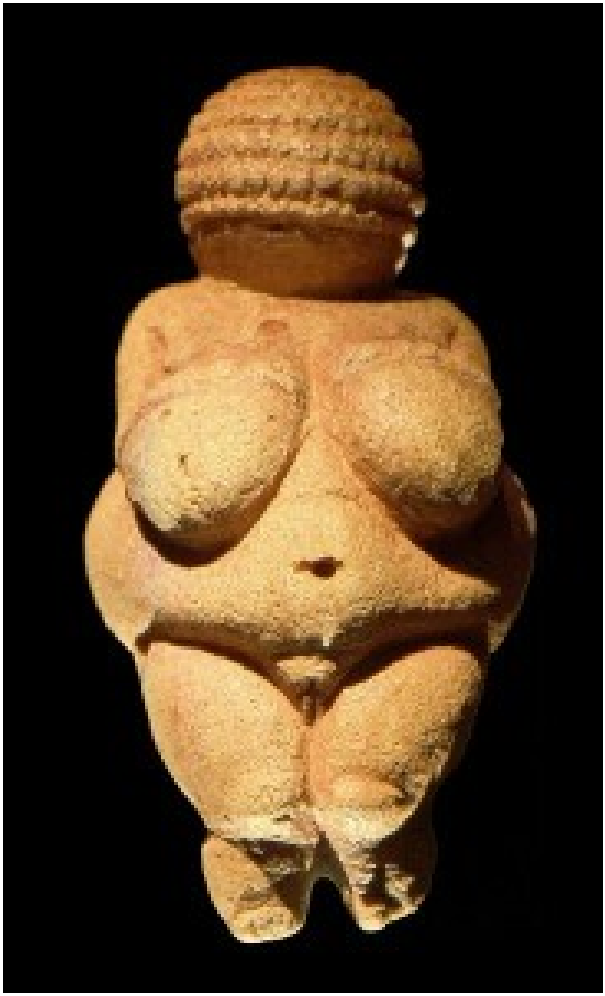

Figure 2.16*. The Venus of Willendorf discovered in Willendorf, Austria, is thought to be 25,000 years old. It is widely assumed to be a fertility goddess and indicative of the central role of women in Paleolithic society. (Venus of Willendorf by MatthiasKabel used under CC BY SA 3.0 license)*

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. 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%).

Harriet Martineau: The First Woman Sociologist?

Figure 2.17. *Harriet Martineau.* (*Harriet Martineau portrait 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).

2.3 What is the Relevance of Classical Sociological Perspectives in the 21st Century?

At the beginning of this module the perspective of the sociological imagination was located within the context of recent investigations into the structure, process and context of the evolution of human knowledge. Secondly, a selection of classical sociological perspectives on the formation of modern society were examined,

highlighting the central concepts that individual thinkers developed and applied in their efforts to explain how the historical transition to modern society was impacting the experiences of individuals and the relationship between individuals and society. The module concludes with a brief explanation of why classical sociological perspectives remain relevant within the context of post-industrial and post-natural societies.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=933

Key Terms and Concepts

Social Structure: general patterns of social behaviour and organization that persist through time.

Anomie: a lack of norms that give clear direction and purpose to individual actions.

Social Facts: things like law, custom, morality, religious rites, language, money, business practices, etc. that are defined externally to the individual. They 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.

Social Functions:

Social Solidarity:

Collective Conscience: the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society shared by all.

Social Integration: the strength of ties that people have to their social groups.

Mechanical Solidarity: a minimal division of labour and a shared collective consciousness with harsh punishment for deviation from the norms.

Organic Solidarity: a complex system of interrelated

parts, working together to maintain stability, i.e., like an organism.

Historical Materialism:

Mode of Production: mode of production is essentially two things: the means of production of a society, and the relations of production of a society.

Means of Production: anything that is used in production to satisfy needs and maintain existence (e.g., land, animals, tools, machinery, factories, etc.).

Relations of Production: the division of society into economic classes (the social roles allotted to individuals in production).

Alienation: the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self and common humanity.

False Consciousness: a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest.

Class Consciousness: the awareness of their actual material and political interests as members of a unified class.

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.

Social Action: actions to which individuals attach subjective meanings.

Rationalization:

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" (Weber, M. 1919).

Iron Cage: in which the individual is trapped by the systems of efficiency that were designed to enhance the well-being of humanity.

Formal Sociology:

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3. Module 3: Research Design: Investigating Society, Structure and Process

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between Scientific and non-scientific reasoning
- Elaborate the meaning of Merton's acronym, CUDOS
- Explain why critical thinking is an essential skill for researchers to develop
- Explain what epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions are and discuss why they are important within sociological research
- Distinguish between positivist, interpretive and critical approaches to research design
- Explain why certain sociological research topics are better suited to different sociological perspectives

3.0 Introduction to Research Design

When sociologists apply sociological perspectives 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 strategies 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 may be used to address any of the three basic interests or purposes of sociological knowledge: the **positivist** interest in quantitative factual evidence to determine effective social policy decisions, the **interpretive** interest in qualitative evidence to understand the meanings of human behaviour which foster mutual understanding and consensus, and the **critical** interest in knowledge (qualitative and/or quantitative evidence) useful for challenging power relations and emancipating people from conditions of servitude. While it might seem strange to use scientific practices to study social phenomena, the systematic approaches that research design and research methodologies provide are crucial to the development of sociological knowledge, and its evaluation.

3.1 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 3.1. 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.


The Call

A WINGED SHIP IN THE SKY.

It Cleaves the Air With Pinions Like a Huge Condor.

ALL SACRAMENTO SEES THE NEW WONDER.

The Inventor's Lawyer Describes the Machine and Says It Is Genuine.

IT WAS SEEN SOARING NEAR SAN JOSE AT MIDNIGHT.

The Great Airship That Is Startling the People of Many Cities. Drawn From Descriptions of the Inventor's Attorney, George D. Collins.

LOSS OF THE SAN BENITO

Figure 3.1 *"A Winged Ship in the Sky" seen by all in Sacramento in 1896 (Photo 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. In general terms, the scientific method is a formalization of the qualities and skills of critical thinking, outlined in the Youtube video, "Critical Thinking".

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=935

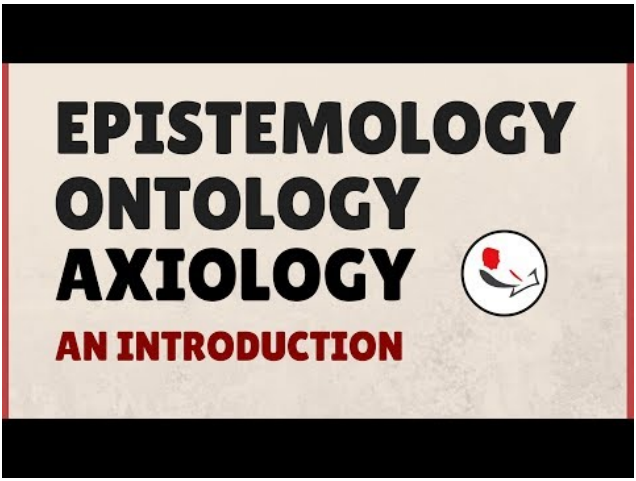
The last four paragraphs on the four types of non-scientific reasoning adapted from Amy Blackstone, *Sociological Inquiry Principles: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* (V. 1.0). Used under Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0 License.

Sociologists often begin the research process by asking a question about how or why 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 process (research design) to answer it. Depending on the nature of the topic and the goals of the research, sociologists have a

variety of general research designs and associated methodologies to choose from. In particular, in deciding how to conduct sociological inquiry, the researcher may adopt a **positivist methodology** or an **interpretive methodology**. Both types of methodology can be useful for **critical research strategies**. The following sections describe these approaches to acquiring knowledge.

3.2 The Logic of Research Design

As stated in Module One, sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns at multiple levels of social reality. They then develop theories to explain why these occur and what can result from them. In sociology, a **theory** is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and create testable propositions about society (Allan, 2006). For example, Durkheim's proposition, that differences in suicide rate can be explained by differences in the degree of social integration in different communities, is a theory. Different social theories, are embedded within underlying philosophical assumptions (meta-theoretical assumptions) about what is real or what we can know (these are **Ontological** assumptions, a theory of reality), how we can know that reality (these are **Epistemological** assumptions, a theory of knowledge) and the value relations of knowledge and researchers (these are **Axiological** assumptions, a theory of value). A fuller description of the meaning of these philosophical concepts and their relationship to the research process is provided by Alex Lyon (2017) "Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology in Research."



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As the brief survey of the history of sociology (provided in Module Two) suggested, there is considerable diversity in the philosophical assumptions and theoretical 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 or models used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the empirical 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). Talcott Parsons' reformulation of Durkheim's and others work as **structural functionalism** in the 1950s is an example of a sociological paradigm because it provided a general model of analysis suited to an unlimited number of research topics. Parsons

proposed that any identifiable social structure (e.g., roles, families, religions, or states) could be explained by the particular function it performed in maintaining the operation of society as a whole. **Critical sociology** and **symbolic interactionism** are two other sociological paradigms which formulate the explanatory framework and research problem differently. The different paradigms, however, may be applied to the same social issue or sociological problem to produce a more holistic understanding of the complexity of social reality.

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 3.2 *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!"* (*Blindmen by MIke Kline used under 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 paradigmatic 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 or paradigms 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 (each aligned with a different set of meta-theoretical assumptions outlined above), we will discuss a selection of perspectives of sociological thinking within: Positivist sociology (**quantitative sociology, structural functionalism)**, Interpretive sociology (**symbolic interactionism)** and Critical sociology (**historical materialism**, **feminism)**. In this course emphasis is placed on positivist and critical approaches to macro and global level social phenomena, while various interpretive approaches to micro and meso levels of social phenomena such as symbolic interactionism are elaborated more fully in Sociology 112.

3.2.1 Positivism

The **positivist perspective** in sociology — introduced in Module Two 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. (Independent and dependent variables will be discussed below). 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.

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.

3.2.2 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 (developed more fully in Sociology 112). 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. 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 or work 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. As noted above, additional schools of interpretive thought and associated methodologies are discussed in much fuller detail in Sociology 112.

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 the use of the sociological imagination.

3.2.3 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 somewhat misleading to reduce critical sociology to "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 3.3 *The Last of the Clan painted by Thomas Faed, (1865). [Long Description] (The Last of the Clan 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).

A useful summary of the value of learning and using different theoretical perspectives for the conduct of sociological research and inquiry is provided in the YouTube video "Major Paradigms in Sociology".

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=935

3.3 Summary

Sociological perspectives and their founders. Long description available.

***Figure 3.4**. 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 emphasis 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.

Key Terms and Concepts

Theory: In sociology, a theory is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and create testable propositions about society (Allan, 2006).

Epistemological Assumptions: a theory of knowledge.

Ontological Assumptions: a theory of reality.

Axiological Assumptions: a theory of value.

Paradigms: are philosophical and theoretical frameworks or models used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the empirical research performed in support of them.

Positivist Sociology: focuses on generating types of knowledge useful for controlling or administering social life.

Quantitative Sociology: 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.

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.

Interpretive Sociology: focuses on types of knowledge useful for promoting greater mutual understanding and consensus among members of society.

Critical Sociology: focuses on types of knowledge useful for changing and improving the world, for emancipating people from conditions of servitude.

Historical Materialism: concentrates on the study of how our everyday lives are structured by the connection between relations of power and economic processes.

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).

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.

Standpoint Theory: proposes that authority is rooted in individuals' knowledge (their perspectives), and the power that such authority exerts.

Dual consciousness:

3.4 References

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Talcott Parsons (1954)

4. Module 4: Research Design: Collecting and Interpreting Data for Quantitative Inquiry

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between 'science' and 'pseudo-science'
- Describe the scientific method and distinguish between positivist, interpretivist and critical applications of the scientific method
- Define what reliability, validity, correlation and causation mean in a quantitative research study
- Differentiate between four kinds of research methods: surveys, experiments, field research, and secondary data or textual analysis
- Describe how complexity science paradigm, models and computational methods may revolutionize the social sciences
- Discuss the various ethical issues and decisions that arise as part of the development of research design
- Comment on the kinds of ethical issues that may arise with accessing and using big data for social

4.0 Introduction to Sociological Research Methodologies

Figure 4.1*. Harriet Martineau. Painting by Richard Evans (1834) . (Photo courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.)*

As noted in Module One, Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was one of the first women sociologists in the 19th century. Particularly innovative was her early work on sociological methodology, *How to Observe Manners and Morals* (1838). Interestingly, Martineau's work was published 57 years prior to Emile Durkheim's book, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, yet it is Durkheim's text rather than Martineau's that is frequently identified as the first text in sociological methodology. In this volume she developed the ground work for a systematic social-scientific approach to studying human behaviour. She recognized that the issues of the researcher — subject relationship would have to be addressed differently in a social science as opposed to a natural science. The observer, or "traveller," as she put it, needed to respect three criteria to obtain valid

research: impartiality, critique, and sympathy. The impartial observer could not allow herself to be "perplexed or disgusted" by foreign practices that she could not personally reconcile herself with. Yet at the same time she saw the goal of sociology to be the fair but critical assessment of the moral status of a culture. In particular, the goal of sociology was to challenge forms of racial, sexual, or class domination in the name of autonomy: the right of every person to be a "self-directing moral being." Finally, what distinguished the science of social observation from the natural sciences was that the researcher had to have unqualified sympathy for the subjects being studied (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). This later became a central principle of Max Weber's interpretive sociology, although it is not clear that Weber read Martineau's work.

A large part of her research in the United States analyzed the situations of contradiction between stated public morality and actual moral practices. For example, she was fascinated with the way that the formal democratic right to free speech enabled slavery abolitionists to hold public meetings, but when the meetings were violently attacked by mobs, the abolitionists and not the mobs were accused of inciting the violence (Zeitlin, 1997). This emphasis on studying contradictions followed from the distinction she drew between morals — society's collective ideas of permitted and forbidden behaviour — and manners — the actual patterns of social action and association in society. As she realized the difficulty in getting an accurate representation of an entire society based on a limited number of interviews, she developed the idea that one could identify key "Things" experienced by all people — age, gender, illness, death, etc. — and examine how they were experienced differently by a sample of people from different walks of life (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2007). Martineau's sociology, therefore, focused on surveying different attitudes toward "Things" and studying the anomalies that emerged when manners toward them contradicted a society's formal morals.

In the 21st century, sociologists continue to confront the challenge of producing objective, explanatory and predictive

knowledge about a social reality that is characterized by complexity, contingency and contradiction. Added to this challenge is the relatively popular and widespread assumption that disciplines within the category of social science produce and communicate knowledge that is nothing more than 'common sense' or subjective opinion. But is it? Just exactly what is common sense? Duncan Watts, Physicist, Engineer, Sociologist and Computer Scientist weighs in on these issues with some interesting insights into why such popular assumptions may be misguided. Watts also points to how new and emerging technologies may be revolutionizing knowledge production within the social sciences in ways analogous to how with the telescope and microscope revolutionized knowledge production within the physical and natural sciences.

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4.1 The Scientific Method

In the conduct of sociological inquiry, 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 developing and testing theories about the 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**.

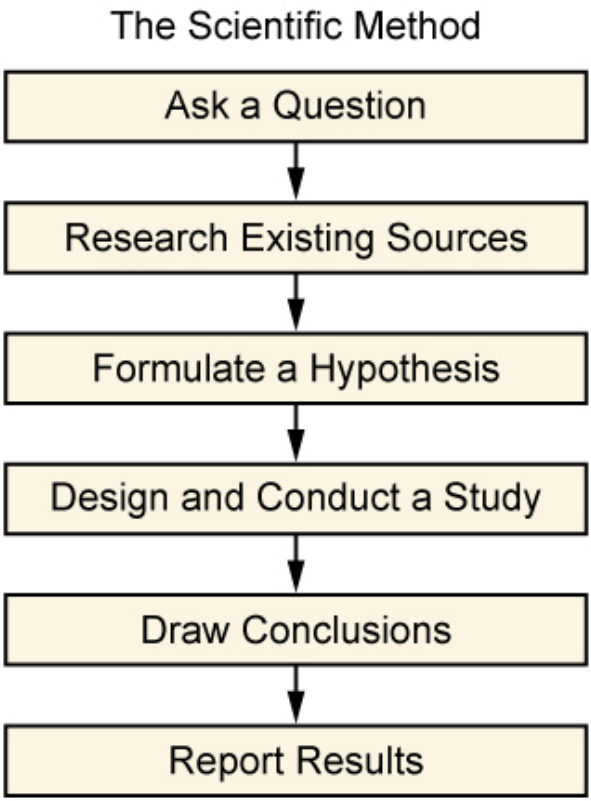

Figure 4.2*. The research cycle passes through a series of steps. The conclusions and reporting typically generate a new set of questions, which renews the cycle.*

The philosophical principles that inform the steps outlined in the scientific method and distinguish science from pseudo-science are summarized for you in the following video.

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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 what it was designed to measure).

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.

4.1.1 Ask a 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.

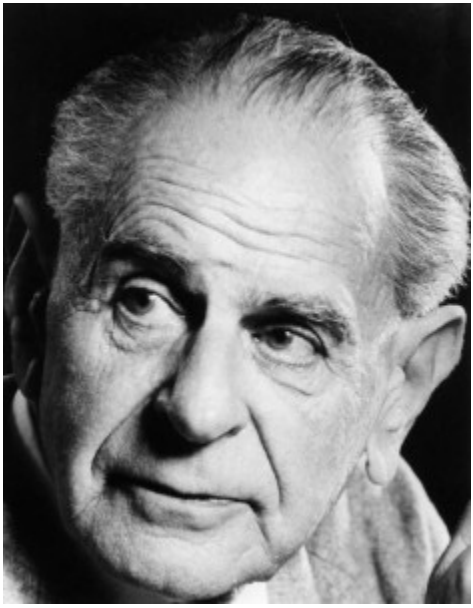

Figure 4.3. *Karl Popper (Photo courtesy of the LSE Library no known copyright restrictions.)*

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. As indicated in the previous video, 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."

4.1.2 Research Existing Sources

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 systematic of credible online databases 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 design. In the video, "Tips for Writing a Literature Review" you are introduced to the two primary questions that researchers use to focus their review of the literature that is relevant to their research question.

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4.1.3 Formulate a Hypothesis

A **hypothesis** is an informed prediction about how two or more variables are related; it makes a conjectural statement about the relationship between those variables. It is an educated guess because it is not random but based on theory, observations, patterns of experience, or the existing literature. The hypothesis formulates this best guess in the form of a testable proposition. However, how the hypothesis is handled differs between the positivist and interpretive approaches. Positivist methodologies are often referred to as **hypothetico-deductive methodologies**. A hypothesis is derived from a theoretical proposition. On the basis of the hypothesis a prediction or generalization is logically deduced.

In positivist sociology, the hypothesis predicts how one variable influences another. How does being a black driver affect the number of times the police will pull you over?

Successful prediction will determine the adequacy of the hypothesis and thereby test the theoretical proposition. Typically positivist approaches operationalize variables as **quantitative data**; that is, by translating a social phenomenon like health into a quantifiable or numerically measurable variable like "number of visits to the hospital." This permits sociologists to formulate their predictions using mathematical language like regression formulas to present research findings in graphs and tables, and to perform mathematical or statistical techniques to demonstrate the validity of relationships.

Variables are examined to see if there is a **correlation** between them. When a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable there is a correlation. This does not necessarily indicate that changes in one variable causes a change in another variable, however; just that they are associated. A key distinction here is between independent and dependent variables. In research, **independent variables** are the cause of the change. The **dependent variable** is the effect, or thing that is changed. For example, in a basic study, the researcher would establish one form of human behaviour as the independent variable and observe the influence it has on a dependent variable. How does gender (the independent variable) affect rate of income (the dependent variable)? How does one's religion (the independent variable) affect family size (the dependent variable)? How is social class (the dependent variable) affected by level of education (the independent variable)?

For it to become possible to speak about **causation**, three criteria must be satisfied:

- There must be a relationship or correlation between the independent and dependent variables.
- The independent variable must be prior to the dependent variable.

- There must be no other **intervening variable** responsible for the causal relationship.

It is important to note that while there has to be a correlation between variables for there to be a causal relationship, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. The relationship between variables can be the product of a third intervening variable that is independently related to both. For example, there might be a positive relationship between wearing bikinis and eating ice cream, but wearing bikinis does not cause eating ice cream. It is more likely that the heat of summertime causes both an increase in bikini wearing and an increase in the consumption of ice cream.

The distinction between causation and correlation can have significant consequences. For example, Indigenous Canadians are overrepresented in prisons and arrest statistics. In 2013, Indigenous people accounted for about 4 percent of the Canadian population, but they made up 23.2 percent of the federal penitentiary population (Correctional Investigator Canada, 2013). There is a positive correlation between being an Indigenous person in Canada and being in jail. Is this because Indigenous people are racially or biologically predisposed to crime? No. In fact there are at least four intervening variables that explain the higher incarceration of Indigenous people (Hartnagel, 2004): Indigenous people are disproportionately poor and poverty is associated with higher arrest and incarceration rates; Indigenous lawbreakers tend to commit more detectable "street" crimes than the less detectable "white collar" crimes of other segments of the population; the criminal justice system disproportionately profiles and discriminates against Indigenous people; and the legacy of colonization has disrupted and weakened traditional sources of social control in Indigenous communities.

Table 4.1. Examples of Dependent and Independent Variables. Typically, the Independent Variable Causes the Dependent Variable to Change in Some Way.

Hypothesis	**Variable**	**Dependent Variable**
The greater the availability of affordable housing, the lower the homeless rate.	Affordable Housing	Homeless Rate
The greater the availability of math tutoring, the higher the math grades.	Math Tutoring	Math Grades
The greater the police patrol presence, the safer the neighbourhood.	Police Patrol Presence	Safer Neighbourhood
The greater the factory lighting, the higher the productivity.	Factory Lighting	Productivity
The greater the amount of public auditing, the lower the amount of political dishonesty.	Auditing	Political Dishonesty

A researcher's **operational definitions** allow for the measurement of the variables. In a study asking how tutoring improves grades, for instance, one researcher might define "good" grades as a C or better, while another uses a B+ as a starting point for good. Another operational definition might describe "tutoring" as "one-on-one assistance by an expert in the field, hired by an educational institution." Those definitions set limits and establish cut-off points, ensuring consistency and replicability in a study. As the above chart shows, an independent variable is the one that causes a dependent variable to change. For example, a researcher might hypothesize that teaching children proper hygiene (the independent variable) will boost their sense of self-esteem (the dependent variable). Or rephrased, a child's sense of self-esteem depends, in part, on the quality and availability of hygienic resources.

Of course, this hypothesis can also work the other way around. Perhaps a sociologist believes that increasing a child's sense of self-esteem (the independent variable) will automatically increase or improve habits of hygiene (now the dependent variable). Clearly identifying the independent and dependent variables in your study is very important. As the hygiene example shows, simply identifying

two topics, or variables, is not enough: Their prospective relationship must be part of the hypothesis. Just because a sociologist forms an educated prediction of a study's outcome doesn't mean data contradicting the hypothesis are not welcome. Sociologists analyze general patterns in response to a study, but they are equally interested in exceptions to patterns.

In a study of education, a researcher might predict that high school dropouts have a hard time finding a rewarding career. While it has become at least a cultural assumption that the higher the education, the higher the salary and degree of career happiness, there are certainly exceptions. People with little education have had stunning careers, and people with advanced degrees have had trouble finding work. A sociologist prepares a hypothesis knowing that results will vary.

Hypothesis Formation in Qualitative Research

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.

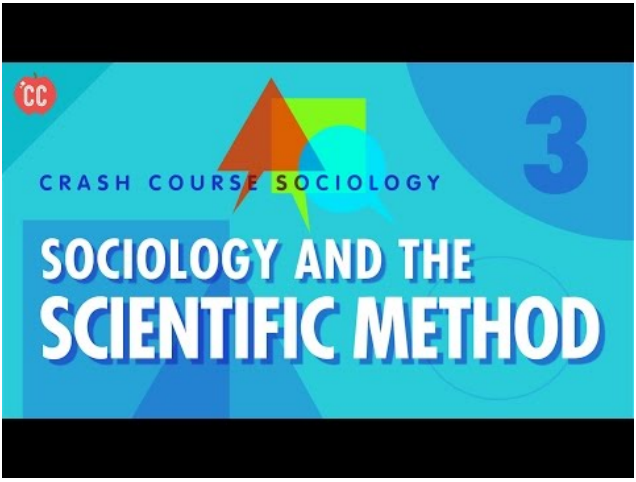
Interpretive research is generally more descriptive or narrative in its findings than positivist research. It can begin from a deductive approach by deriving a hypothesis from theory and then seeking to confirm it through methodologies like in-depth interviews.

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.

Application of the scientific method and the different types of empirical evidence that are required within different schools of

sociological inquiry are described further in the YouTube video, "Sociology and the Scientific Method: Crash Course Sociology".



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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 below.

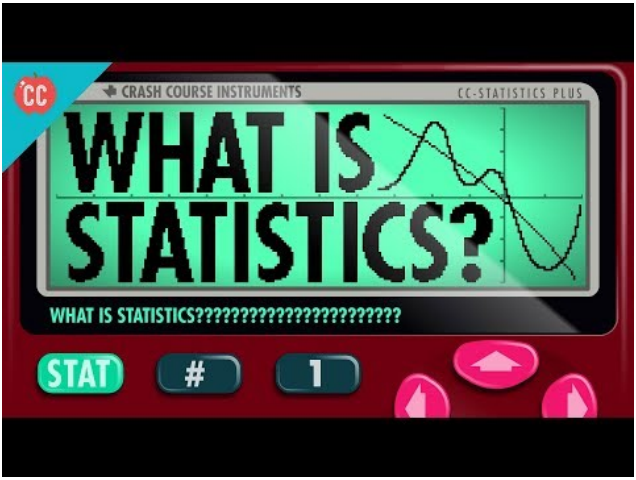
4.2 Research Methods

Sociologists examine the world, see a problem or interesting pattern, 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, or perhaps an ethnographic study utilizing an interpretive framework. Planning the **research design** is a key step in any sociological study. When entering a particular social environment, a researcher must be careful. There are times to remain anonymous and times to be overt. There are times to conduct interviews and times to simply observe. Some participants need to be thoroughly informed; others should not know that they are being observed. A researcher would not stroll into a crime-ridden neighbourhood at midnight, calling out, "Any gang members around?" And if a researcher walked into a coffee shop and told the employees they would be observed as part of a study on work efficiency, the self-conscious, intimidated baristas might not behave naturally. The unique nature of human research subjects is that they can react to the researcher and change their behaviour under observation. As described in the YouTube video, "Sociology and the Scientific Method" the reactivity of human research subjects to the presence of researchers has come to be known as the **Hawthorne effect.**

In planning a study's design, sociologists generally choose from four widely used methods of social investigation: survey, experiment, field research, and textual or secondary data analysis (or use of existing sources). Every research method comes with pluses and minuses, and the topic of study, research question and conceptual framework that informs the research strongly influence which method or methods are put to use. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that different different methods of data collection will require different methods of data analysis. Qualitative methods of data collection produce data or empirical evidence that is rich in meaning and generally descriptive (e.g., narrative, image, etc.). Consequently, these methods of data collection draw on the analytical procedures and interpretive strategies that are used in the humanities and arts. Alternatively, quantitative methods of data collection produce empirical evidence that is represented in a numerical form that allows researchers to draw on the analytical procedures and interpretive strategies that

are used in the fields of mathematics and statistics. As quantitative research methods of data collection and analysis are a primary focus in this course, it is informative to reflect on what statistics are and the kinds of roles they play in the conduct of sociological inquiry.



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4.2.1 Surveys

As a research method, a **survey** collects data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviours and opinions, often in the form of a written questionnaire. The survey is one of the most widely used sociological research methods. The standard survey format allows individuals a level of anonymity in which they can express personal ideas.

***Figure 4.4**. Questionnaires are a common research method. The Statistics Canada census is a well-known example.* (Photo *by Khosrow Ebrahimpour* CC BY 2.0)

At some point or another, everyone responds to some type of survey. The Statistics Canada census is an excellent example of a large-scale survey intended to gather sociological data. Customers also fill out questionnaires at stores or promotional events, responding to questions such as "How did you hear about the event?" and "Were the staff helpful?" You have probably picked up the phone and heard a caller ask you to participate in a political poll or similar type of survey: "Do you eat hot dogs? If yes, how many per month?" Not all surveys would be considered sociological research. Marketing polls help companies refine marketing goals and strategies; they are generally not conducted as part of a scientific study, meaning they are not designed to test a hypothesis or to contribute knowledge to the field of sociology. The results are not published in a refereed scholarly journal where design, methodology, results, and analyses are vetted.

Often, polls on TV do not reflect a general population, but are merely answers from a specific show's audience. Polls conducted by programs such as *American Idol* or *Canadian Idol* represent the

opinions of fans but are not particularly scientific. A good contrast to these are the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) (now called Numeris) ratings, which determine the popularity of radio and television programming in Canada through scientific market research. Their researchers ask a large random sample of Canadians, age 12 and over, to fill out a television or radio diary for one week, noting the times and the broadcasters they listened to or viewed. Based on this methodology they are able to generate an accurate account of media consumers preferences, which are used to provide broadcast ratings for radio and television stations and define the characteristics of their core audiences.

Sociologists conduct surveys under controlled conditions for specific purposes. Surveys gather different types of information from people. While surveys are not great at capturing the ways people really behave in social situations, they are a great method for discovering how people feel and think — or at least how they say they feel and think. Surveys can track attitudes and opinions, political preferences, individual behaviours such as sleeping, driving, dietary, or texting habits, or factual information such as employment status, income, and education levels. A survey targets a specific **population**, people who are the focus of a study, such as university athletes, international students, or teenagers living with type 1 (juvenile-onset) diabetes.

Most researchers choose to survey a small sector of the population, or a **sample**: That is, a manageable number of subjects who represent a larger population. The success of a study depends on how well a population is represented by the sample. In a **random sample**, every person in a population has the same chance of being chosen for the study. According to the laws of probability, random samples represent the population as a whole. The larger the sample size, the more accurate the results will be in characterizing the population being studied. For practical purposes, however, a sample size of 1,500 people will give acceptably accurate results even if the population being researched was the entire adult population of Canada. For instance, an Ipsos Reid poll, if conducted as a

nationwide random sampling, should be able to provide an accurate estimate of public opinion whether it contacts 1,500 or 10,000 people.

Typically surveys will include a figure that gives the margin of error of the survey results. Based on probabilities, this will give a range of values within which the true value of the population characteristic will be. This figure also depends on the size of a sample. For example, a political poll based on a sample of 1,500 respondents might state that if an election were called tomorrow the Conservative Party would get 30% of the vote plus or minus 2.5% based on a confidence interval of 95%. That is, there is a 5% chance that the true vote would fall outside of the range of 27.5% to 32.5%, or 1 time out of 20 if you were to conduct the poll 20 times. If the poll was based on a sample of 1,000 respondents, the margin of error would be higher, plus or minus 3.1%. This is significant, of course, because if the Conservatives are polling at 30% and the Liberals are polling at 28% the poll would be inconclusive about which party is actually ahead with regard to actual voter preferences.

Problems with accuracy or *validity* can result if sample sizes are too small because there is a stronger chance the sample size will not capture the actual distribution of characteristics of the whole population. In small samples the characteristics of specific individuals have a greater chance of influencing the results. The validity of surveys can also be threatened when part of the population is inadvertently excluded from the sample (e.g., telephone surveys that rely on land lines exclude people that use only cell phones) or when there is a low response rate. There is also a question of what exactly is being measured by the survey. In the BC election of 2013, polls found that the NDP had the largest popular support but on election day many people who said they would vote NDP did not actually vote, which resulted in a Liberal majority government.

After selecting subjects, the researcher develops a specific plan to ask a list of standardized questions and record responses. It is

important to inform subjects of the nature and purpose of the study upfront. If they agree to participate, researchers thank the subjects and offer them a chance to see the results of the study if they are interested. The researchers present the subjects with an instrument or means of gathering the information. A common instrument is a structured written questionnaire in which subjects answer a series of set questions. For some topics, the researcher might ask yes-or-no or multiple-choice questions, allowing subjects to choose possible responses to each question.

This kind of **quantitative data** — research collected in numerical form that can be counted — is easy to tabulate. Just count up the number of "yes" and "no" answers or tabulate the scales of "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," etc. responses and chart them into percentages. This is also the chief drawback of questionnaires, however: their artificiality. In real life, there are rarely any unambiguously yes or no answers. Questionnaires can also ask more complex questions with more complex answers beyond yes, no, agree, strongly agree, or another option next to a check box. In those cases, the answers are subjective, varying from person to person. How do you plan to use your university education? Why do you follow Justin Bieber on Twitter? Those types of questions require short essay responses, and participants willing to take the time to write those answers will convey personal information about their beliefs, views, and attitudes.

Some topics that reflect internal subjective perspectives are impossible to observe directly. Sometimes they can be sensitive and difficult to discuss honestly in a public forum or with a stranger. People are more likely to share honest answers if they can respond to questions anonymously. This type of information is **qualitative data** — results that are subjective and often based on what is experienced in a natural setting. Qualitative information is harder to organize and tabulate. The researcher will end up with a wide range of responses, and some of which may be surprising. The benefit of written opinions, though, is the wealth of material that they provide.

An **interview** is a one-on-one conversation between the

researcher and the subject, and is another way of conducting surveys on a topic. Interviews are similar to the short answer questions on surveys in that the researcher asks subjects a series of questions. They can be quantitative if the questions are standardized and have numerically quantifiable answers: Are you employed? (Yes=0, No=1); On a scale of 1 to 5 how would you describe your level of optimism? They can also be qualitative if participants are free to respond as they wish, without being limited by predetermined choices. In the back-and-forth conversation of an interview, a researcher can ask for clarification, spend more time on a subtopic, or ask additional questions. In an interview, a subject will ideally feel free to open up and answer questions that are often complex. There are no right or wrong answers. The subject might not even know how to answer the questions honestly. Questions such as "How did society's view of alcohol consumption influence your decision whether or not to take your first sip of alcohol?" or "Did you feel that the divorce of your parents would put a social stigma on your family?" involve so many factors that the answers are difficult to categorize. A researcher needs to avoid steering or prompting the subject to respond in a specific way; otherwise, the results will prove to be unreliable. Obviously, a sociological interview is also not supposed to be an interrogation. The researcher will benefit from gaining a subject's trust by empathizing or commiserating with a subject, and by listening without judgement–an insight highlighted in Martineau's 1838 publication, *How to Observe Manners and Morals.* Additional insights into the design and use of surveys for the purpose of research are addressed in the following video.

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4.2.2 Experiments

You have probably tested personal social theories. "If I study at night and review in the morning, I'll improve my retention skills." Or, "If I stop drinking soda, I'll feel better." Cause and effect. If this, then that. When you test a theory, your results either validate or falsify your hypothesis. One way researchers test social theories is by conducting an **experiment**, meaning they investigate relationships to test a hypothesis — a scientific approach. There are two main types of experiments: lab-based experiments, and natural or field experiments.

In a lab setting the research can be controlled so that, perhaps, more data can be recorded in a certain amount of time. In a natural

or field-based experiment, the generation of data cannot be controlled, but the information might be considered more accurate since it was collected without interference or intervention by the researcher. As a research method, either type of sociological experiment is useful for testing if-then statements: *if* a particular thing happens, *then* another particular thing will result.

To set up a lab-based experiment, sociologists create artificial situations that allow them to manipulate variables. Classically, the sociologist selects a set of people with similar characteristics, such as age, class, race, or education. Those people are divided into two groups. One is the experimental group and the other is the **control group**. The experimental group is exposed to the independent variable(s) and the control group is not. This is similar to pharmaceutical drug trials in which the experimental group is given the test drug and the control group is given a placebo or sugar pill.

Figure 4.5. *Mincome was a large-scale experiment conducted in Dauphin, Manitoba, between 1974 and 1979 to explore the effect of having a universal guaranteed annual income on the incentive to work and other social indicators.* (Photo *by Bobak Ha'Eri*, CC BY 3.0)

A real-life example will help illustrate the experimental process in sociology. Between 1974 and 1979 an experiment was conducted in the small town of Dauphin, Manitoba (the "garden capital of Manitoba"). Each family received a modest monthly guaranteed income — a "mincome" — equivalent to a maximum of 60 percent

of the "low-income cut-off figure" (a Statistics Canada measure of poverty, which varies with family size). The income was 50 cents per dollar less for families who had incomes from other sources. Families earning over a certain income level did not receive mincome. Families that were already collecting welfare or unemployment insurance were also excluded. The test families in Dauphin were compared with control groups in other rural Manitoba communities on a range of indicators such as number of hours worked per week, school performance, high school drop out rates, and hospital visits (Forget, 2011). A guaranteed annual income was seen at the time as a less costly, less bureaucratic public alternative for addressing poverty than the existing employment insurance and welfare programs. Today it is an active proposal being considered in Switzerland (Lowrey, 2013).

Intuitively, it seems logical that lack of income is the cause of poverty and poverty-related issues. One of the main concerns, however, was whether a guaranteed income would create a disincentive to work. The concept appears to challenge the principles of the Protestant work ethic as elaborated by Max Weber. The study did find very small decreases in hours worked per week: about 1 percent for men, 3 percent for married women, and 5 percent for unmarried women. Forget (2011) argues this was because the income provided an opportunity for people to spend more time with family and school, especially for young mothers and teenage girls. There were also significant social benefits from the experiment, including better test scores in school, lower high school drop out rates, fewer visits to hospital, fewer accidents and injuries, and fewer mental health issues.

Ironically, due to lack of guaranteed funding (and lack of political interest by the late 1970s), the data and results of the study were not analyzed or published until 2011. The data were archived and sat gathering dust in boxes. The mincome experiment demonstrated the benefits that even a modest guaranteed annual income supplement could have on health and social outcomes in communities. People seem to live healthier lives and get a better

education when they do not need to worry about poverty. In her summary of the research, Forget notes that the impact of the income supplement was surprisingly large given that at any one time only about a third of the families were receiving the income and, for some families, the income amount would have been very small. The income benefit was largest for low-income working families, but the research showed that the entire community profited. The improvement in overall health outcomes for the community suggest that a guaranteed income would also result in savings for the public health system.

The Stanford Prison Experiment is perhaps one of the most famous sociological experiments ever conducted. In 1971, 24 healthy, middle-class male university students were selected to take part in a simulated jail environment to examine the effects of social setting and social roles on individual psychology and behaviour. They were randomly divided into 12 guards and 12 prisoners. The prisoner subjects were arrested at home and transported blindfolded to the simulated prison in the basement of the psychology building on the campus of Stanford University. Within a day of arriving the prisoners and the guards began to display signs of trauma and sadism respectively. After some prisoners revolted by blockading themselves in their cells, the guards resorted to using increasingly humiliating and degrading tactics to control the prisoners through psychological manipulation. The experiment had to be abandoned after only six days because the abuse had grown out of hand (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). While the insights into the social dynamics of authoritarianism it generated were fascinating, the Stanford Prison Experiment also serves as an example of the ethical issues that emerge when experimenting on human subjects. Additional insights into the design and use of experiments in the conduct of sociological research inquiry are addressed in the following video.

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4.2.3 Field Research

***Figure 4.6**. Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Photo by Patrick CC BY 2.0)*

The work of sociology 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. In Sociology 112.3 various types of field research methods of data collection and analysis are examined in greater detail including, participant observation, ethnography and institutional ethnography, and case study research.

***Figure 4.7**. Crack cocaine users in downtown Vancouver. (Photo from Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)*

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 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.

4.2.4 Secondary Data or Textual Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through **secondary data** or **textual analysis**. Secondary data do not result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are drawn from the already-completed work of other researchers. Sociologists might study texts written by historians, economists, teachers, or early sociologists. They might search through 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.

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).

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.

Reading Tables

Table 4.2. Firearm-Related Violent Crime, by Selected Offences, in Canada and the United St

[Skip

Country	Offence	Number	Percent o
	Homicide	172	33
Canada	Major assault	1,459	4
	Robbery	2,368	12
	Homicide	8,813	69
United States	Major assault	143,119	22
	Robbery	122,174	41

One of the common forms in which one encounters secondary data is the **contingency table**. A contingency table provides a frequency distribution of at least two variables that allows the researcher to

see at a glance how the variables are related. Table 2.3 shows the frequency of different types of firearm crime for Canada and the United States. In this table, the independent variable (the causal variable) is the country, either Canada or the United States. The dependent variable, displayed in the columns, is the frequency of offences that involve firearms in the two countries. This is given as an absolute number ("number"), as a percentage of the total number of crimes in that category (i.e., as a percentage of the total number of homicides, major assaults and robberies; "percent of total offences"), and as rate calculated per 100,000 population ("rate").To interpret the table, the researcher has to pay attention to what adds up to 100%. In this table we have not been given the complete information in each column, but it is straight forward to recognize that if 33% of the homicides in Canada involved the use of a firearm, another 67% of homicides did not. The table, therefore, does not say that 33% of all firearm crimes in Canada were homicides. From these figures one can also calculate the total number of homicides that took place in Canada in 2012 by a simple ratio: If the 172 homicides that involved firearms represents 33% or 1/3 of all the Canadian homicides, then there were (approximately) 516 homicides in Canada in 2012.

The table suggests that there is a definite correlation between country and firearm-related violent crime. Violent crime in the United States tends to involve firearms much more frequently than violent crime in Canada. With respect to homicides, there were 8,813 homicides involving firearms in the United States in 2012, accounting for 69% of all homicides, while in Canada, firearms accounted for 33% of homicides. The column that gives the rates of firearm violence per 100,000 population allows the researcher to identify a comparison figure that takes into account the different population sizes of the two countries. The rate of firearm-related homicide in the United States was about seven times higher than in Canada in 2012 (0.5 per 100,000 compared to 3.5 per 100,000), firearm-related major assault was about ten times higher (53 per 100,000 compared to 5 per 100,000), and firearm-related robbery

was about five times higher (8.9 per 100,000 compared to 45.1 per 100,000).

The question that this data raises is about causation. Why are firearm-related violent crimes so much lower in Canada than in the United States? One key element are the legal restrictions on firearm possession in the two countries. Canadian law requires that an individual has a valid license under the Firearms Act in order to own or possess a firearm or to purchase ammunition. Until 2012, all firearms also had to be registered, but with the repeal of the national gun registry provisions for long guns (rifles and shot guns), currently only hand guns and prohibited weapons (assault weapons, fully automatic firearms, and sawed-off rifles or shotguns) have to be registered. In the United States firearm regulations are state-specific and only a few states place restrictions on the possession of firearms. In 2007, there were 89 firearms for every 100 citizens in the United States, which is the highest rate of gun ownership of any country (Cotter, 2014). Nevertheless, as Canada's firearm-related homicide rate is higher than several peer countries, most notably Japan and the United Kingdom, variables other than gun control legislation might be a factor.

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4.3 Sociological Research in an Era of Complexity Science

Since its' emergence in the 19th century, positivist and interpretive approaches to sociological inquiry have drawn on the principles and procedures of the traditional scientific method to guide the production of sociological knowledge. However, as noted at the beginning of this module, the particular qualities of the subject of sociological research establish a strong basis for exploring why progress within social science cannot be equated with progress in 'rocket science'.

Not only are there a variety of theoretical perspectives in sociology, but also a diversity of research methodologies that can be used in studying the social. In large part, the choice of research methodology follows from the choice of the research question. Of course, the choice of the research question itself depends on the same sort of underlying values and decisions about the nature of the world that divide the theoretical perspectives in sociology. In addition, the choice of the research question involves both the character of the social phenomenon being studied and the purpose of the research in the first place.

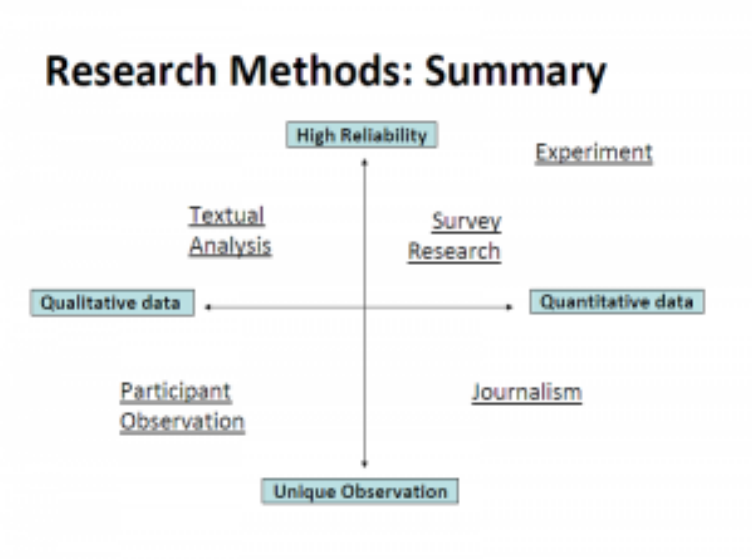

Figure 4.8. *Research methods summary. (Source: William Little)*

It is useful to map out the different methodologies in a diagram. We can position them along two axes according to: (a) whether the subject matter or purpose of the research calls for highly reliable findings — consistent between research contexts (high reliability) — or for highly valid and nuanced findings true to the specific social situation under observation (unique observation), and (b) whether

the nature of the object of research can be meaningfully operationalized and measured using quantitative techniques (quantitative data) or is better grasped in terms of the texture of social meanings that constitute it (qualitative data). The advantages and disadvantages of the different methodologies are summarized in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.3. Main Sociological Research Methods. Sociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

[Skip Table]

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Survey	• Questionnaires • Interviews	• Yields many responses • Can survey a large sample • Data generalizable • Quantitative data are easy to chart	• Can be time consuming • Can be difficult to encourage participant response • Captures what people think and believe, but not necessarily how they behave in real life
Field Work	• Observation • Participant observation • Ethnography • Case study	• Yields detailed, accurate, real-life information	• Time consuming • Data are often descriptive and not conducive to generalization • Researcher bias is difficult to control for • Qualitative data are difficult to organize

[Skip Table]

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Experiment	• Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores	• Tests cause and effect relationships	• Hawthorne effect • Artificial conditions of research • Ethical concerns about people's wellbeing
Secondary Data Analysis	• Analysis of government data (census, health, crime statistics) • Research of historic documents • Content analysis	• Makes good use of previous sociological information	• Data could be focused on a purpose other than yours • Data can be hard to find • Taking into account the historical or cultural context of texts

More recently there is growing interest within the domain of the social sciences to explore how new paradigms, models and computational methods are revolutionizing the conduct of research inquiry by making previously invisible dimensions of society and social interaction accessible for observation and analysis. A selection of these new developments are introduced in the video, "Social Complexity Overview".

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4.4 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. You can access their website at the following url, https://www.csa-scs.ca/

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.

Recent opportunities created by 'big data' for the revolutionary development of methodologies within the social sciences, however, do not come without significant issues arising in the domain of

research ethics. A selection of these concerns are explored in the YouTube video, " Intro to Big Data: Crash Course Statistics # 38".

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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). A similar position had been expressed by Harriet Martineau in her 1838 manuscript, *How to Observe Manners and Morals*, as indicated at the outset of this module. 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 argued by Jürgen Habermas (1972) 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. However, is there any human knowledge that is truly disinterested knowledge, given the close historical ties of military, industry and government to the domains of the physical and natural sciences, biomedical sciences and social sciences? This does not discredit the results of research in general, or of sociological research in particular, but allows readers to take into account the perspective of the research when judging the validity and applicability of its outcomes whatever the discipline.

Key Terms and Concepts

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

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

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.

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.

contingency table: A statistical table that provides a frequency distribution of at least two variables.

control group: An experimental group that is not exposed to the independent variable.

correlation: When a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation.

dependent variable: Variable changed by another variable.

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

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

experiment: The testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions.

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.

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.

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

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

intervening variable: An underlying variable that explains the correlation between two other variables.

interview: A one-on-one conversation between a researcher and a subject.

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.

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

population: A defined group serving as the subject of a study.

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.

random sample: A study's participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population **reliability** a measure of a study's consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced **research design** a detailed, systematic method for conducting research and obtaining data.

sample: Small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population.

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.

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

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

surveys: Data collections from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviours and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire.

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

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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5. Module 5: Power and Politics

***Figure 5.1**. In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest the humiliation of having the goods from his street vending stall confiscated, sparking the Tunisian revolution of 2011. How did this act of desperation become a pivotal political act? (In memory of Bouazizi by Chris Belsten used under CC BY SA 2.0 license)*

Learning Objectives

- Define and differentiate between government, power, and authority.
- Identify and describe Weber's three types of authority.
- Explain the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy.
- Describe the dynamic of political demand and political supply in determining the democratic "will of the people."
- Identify and describe factors of political exception that affect contemporary political life.
- Compare and contrast how functionalists, critical sociologists, and symbolic interactionists view government and politics.

5.0 Introduction to Power and Politics

In one of Max Weber's last public lectures — "Politics as a Vocation" (1919) — he asked, what is the meaning of political action in the context of a whole way of life? (More accurately, he used the term *Lebensführung*: what is the meaning of political action in the context of a whole *conduct* of life, a theme we will return to in the next

section). He asked, what *is* political about political action and what is the place of "the political" in the ongoing conduct of social life?

Until recently we might have been satisfied with an answer that examined how various political institutions and processes function in society: the state, the government, the civil service, the courts, the democratic process, etc. However, in the last few years, among many other examples we could cite, we have seen how the events of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt (2010–2011) put seemingly stable political institutions and processes into question. Through the collective action of ordinary citizens, the long-lasting authoritarian regimes of Ben Ali, Gadhafi, and Mubarak were brought to an end through what some called "revolution." Not only did the political institutions all of a sudden not function as they had for decades, they were also shown not to be at the center of political action at all. What do we learn about the place of politics in social life from these examples?

Revolutions are often presented as monumental, foundational political events that happen only rarely and historically: the American revolution (1776), the French revolution (1789), the Russian revolution (1917), the Chinese revolution (1949), the Cuban revolution (1959), the Iranian revolution (1979), etc. But the events in North Africa remind us that revolutionary political action is always a possibility, not just a rare political occurrence. Samuel Huntington defines **revolution** as:

> a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies. Revolutions are thus to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups, and wars of independence (Huntington 1968, p. 264).

What is at stake in revolution is also, therefore, the larger question that Max Weber was asking about political action. In a sense, the question of the role of politics in a whole way of life asks how a whole way of life comes into existence in the first place.

How do revolutions occur? In Tunisia, the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after his produce cart was confiscated. The injustice of this event provided an emblem for the widespread conditions of poverty, oppression, and humiliation experienced by a majority of the population. In this case, the revolutionary action might be said to have originated in the way that Bouazizi's act sparked a radicalization in people's sense of **citizenship** and power: their internal feelings of individual dignity, rights, and freedom and their capacity to act on them. It was a moment in which, after living through decades of deplorable conditions, people suddenly felt their own power and their own capacity to act. Sociology is interested in studying the conditions of such examples of citizenship and power.

5.1 Power and Authority

Figure 5.2. *The Parliament Buildings in Ottawa symbolize the authority of the Canadian state.* (*Canadian Parliament Buildings Ottawa by West Annex News used under CC BY SA 2.0 license*)

The nature of political control — what we will define as power and authority — is an important part of society.

Sociologists have a distinctive approach to studying governmental power and authority that differs from the perspective of political scientists. For the most part, political scientists focus on studying how power is distributed in different types of political systems. They would observe, for example, that the Canadian political system is a constitutional monarchy divided into three distinct branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial), and might explore how public opinion affects political parties, elections, and the political process in general. Sociologists, however, tend to be more interested in **government** more generally; that is, the various means and strategies used to direct or *conduct* the behaviour and actions of others (or of oneself). As Michel Foucault described it, government is the "conduct of conduct," the way some seek to act upon the conduct of others to change or channel that conduct in a certain direction (Foucault 1982, pp. 220-221).

Government implies that there are *relations of power* between rulers and ruled, but the context of rule is not limited to the state. Government in this sense is in operation whether the power relationship is between states and citizens, institutions and clients, parents and children, doctors and patients, employers and employees, masters and dogs, or even oneself and oneself. (Think of the training regimes, studying routines, or diets people put themselves through as they seek to change or direct their lives in a particular way). The role of the state and its influence on society (and vice versa) is just one aspect of governmental relationships.

On the other side of governmental power and authority are the various forms of resistance to being ruled. Foucault (1982) argues that without this latitude for resistance or independent action on the part of the one over whom power is exercised, there is no relationship of power or government. There is only a relationship of violence or force. One central question sociological analysis asks therefore is: Why do people obey, especially in situations when it is not in their objective interests to do so? "Why do men fight for their

servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" as Gilles Deleuze once put it (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, p. 29). This entails a more detailed study of what we mean by power.

5.1.1 What Is Power?

Figure 5.3. *Prince William is in the line of succession to become head of state in Canada and Great Britain, but he will have limited involvement in the day-to-day operations of government. (Royal Wedding by Herry Lawford used under a CC BY 2.0 License)*

For centuries, philosophers, politicians, and social scientists have explored and commented on the nature of power. Pittacus (c. 640–568 BCE) opined, "The measure of a man is what he does with power," and Lord Acton perhaps more famously asserted, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" (1887). Indeed, the concept of power can have decidedly negative connotations, and the term itself is difficult to define. There are at least two

definitions of power, which we will refer to below as power (1) and power (2).

As we noted above, power relationships refer in general to a kind of strategic relationship between rulers and the ruled: a set of practices by which states seek to govern the life of their citizens, managers seek to control the labour of their workers, parents seek to guide and raise their children, dog owners seek to train their dogs, doctors seek to manage the health of their patients, chess players seek to control the moves of their opponents, individuals seek to keep their own lives in order, etc. Many of these sites of the exercise of power fall outside our normal understanding of power because they do not seem "political" — they do not address fundamental questions or disagreements about a "whole way of life" — and because the relationships between power and resistance in them can be very fluid. There is a give and take between the attempts of the rulers to direct the behaviour of the ruled and the attempts of the ruled to resist those directions. In many cases, it is difficult to see relationships as power relationships at all unless they become fixed or authoritarian. This is because our conventional understanding of power is that one person or one group of people *has* power *over* another. In other words, when we think about somebody, some group, or some institution having power over us, we are thinking about a relation of *domination*.

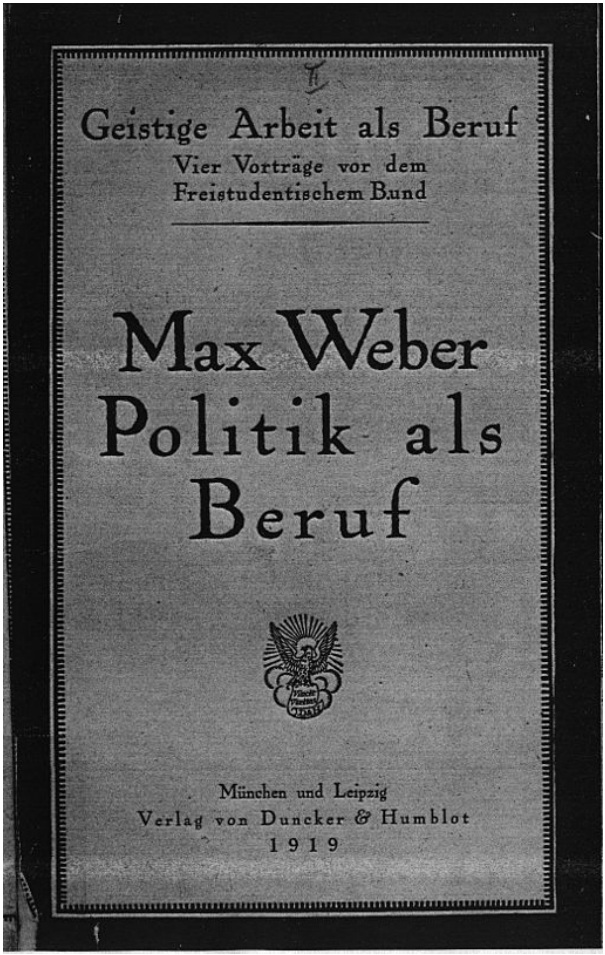

Figure 5.4. *Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" (1919). (Politik als Beruf is in public domain)*

Max Weber defined **power (1)** as "the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber 1919a, p. 180). It is the varying degrees of ability one has to exercise one's will over others. When these "chances" become

structured as forms of **domination**, the give and take between power and resistance is fixed into more or less permanent hierarchical arrangements. They become institutionalized. As such, power affects more than personal relationships; it shapes larger dynamics like social groups, professional organizations, and governments. Similarly, a government's power is not necessarily limited to control of its own citizens. A dominant nation, for instance, will often use its clout to influence or support other governments or to seize control of other nation states. Efforts by the Canadian government to wield power in other countries have included joining with other nations to form the Allied forces during World Wars I and II, entering Afghanistan in 2001 with the NATO mission to topple the Taliban regime, and imposing sanctions on the government of Iran in the hopes of constraining its development of nuclear weapons.

Endeavours to gain power and influence do not necessarily lead to domination, violence, exploitation, or abuse. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, for example, commanded powerful movements that affected positive change without military force. Both men organized nonviolent protests to combat corruption and injustice and succeeded in inspiring major reform. They relied on a variety of nonviolent protest strategies such as rallies, sit-ins, marches, petitions, and boycotts.

It is therefore important to retain the distinction between domination and power. Politics and power are not "things" that are the exclusive concern of "the state" or the property of an individual, ruling class, or group. At a more basic level, **power (2)** is a *capacity* or *ability* that each of us has to create and act. As a result, power and politics must also be understood as the *collective capacities* we have to create and build new forms of community or "commons" (Negri, 2004). Power in this sense is the power we think of when we speak of an *ability* to do or create something — a potential. It is the way in which we collectively give form to the communities that we live in, whether we understand this at a very local level or a global level.

Power establishes the things that we can do and the things that we cannot do.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle's original notion of politics is the idea of a freedom people grant themselves to rule themselves (Aristotle, 1908). Therefore, power is not *in principle* domination. It is the give and take we experience in everyday life as we come together to construct a better community — a "good life" as Aristotle put it. When we ask why people obey even when it is not in their best interests, we are asking about the conditions in which power is exercised as domination. Thus the critical task of sociology is to ask how we might free ourselves from the constraints of domination to engage more actively and freely in the creation of community.

[JR: Please insert YouTube video, Eric Liu, (2014) "How to Understand Power" at url https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Eutci7ack}

5.1.2 Politics and the State

Figure 5.6. *The ancient Acropolis in Athens, Greece (Acropolis in Athens by Adam L. Clevenger used under CC BY SA 2.5 license)*

What is politics? What is political? The words *politics* and *political* refer back to the ancient Greek *polis* or city-state. For the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE), the polis was the ideal *political form* that collective life took. Political life was life oriented toward the "good life" or toward the collective achievement of noble qualities. The term "politics" referred simply to matters of concern to the running of the polis. Behind Aristotle's idea of the polis is the concept of an autonomous, self-contained community in which people rule themselves. The people of the polis take it upon themselves to collectively *create* a way of living together that is conducive to the achievement of human aspirations and good life. **Politics (1)** is the means by which form is given to the life of a

people. The individuals give themselves the responsibility to create the conditions in which the good life can be achieved. For Aristotle, this meant that there was an ideal size for a polis, which he defined as the number of people that could be taken in in a single glance (Aristotle 1908). The city-state was for him therefore the ideal form for political life in ancient Greece.

Today we think of the **nation-state** as the form of modern political life. A nation-state is a political unit whose boundaries are co-extensive with a society, that is, with a cultural, linguistic or ethnic *nation*. Politics is the sphere of activity involved in running the state. As Max Weber defines it, **politics (2)** is the activity of "striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state" (Weber 1919b, p. 78). This might be too narrow a way to think about politics, however, because it often makes it appear that politics is something that only happens far away in "the state." It is a way of giving form to politics that takes control out of the hands of people.

In fact, the modern nation-state is a relatively recent political form. Foraging societies had no formal state institution, and prior to the modern age, feudal Europe was divided into a confused patchwork of small overlapping jurisdictions. Feudal secular authority was often at odds with religious authority. It was not until the Peace of Westphalia (1648) at the end of the Thirty Years War that the modern nation-state system can be said to have come into existence. Even then, Germany, for example, did not become a unified state until 1871. Prior to 1867, most of the colonized territory that became Canada was owned by one of the earliest corporations: the Hudson's Bay Company. It was not governed by a state at all. If politics is the means by which form is given to the life of a people, then it is clear that this is a type of activity that has varied throughout history. Politics is not exclusively about the state or a property of the state. The question is, Why do we come to think that it is?

The modern state is based on the principle of *sovereignty* and the sovereign state system. **Sovereignty** is the political form in which a

single, central "sovereign" or supreme lawmaking authority governs within a clearly demarcated territory. The **sovereign state system** is the structure by which the world is divided up into separate and indivisible sovereign territories. At present there are 193 member states in the United Nations (United Nations 2013). The entire globe is thereby divided up into separate states except for the oceans and Antarctica.

Figure 5.7. *The frontispiece from Hobbes's Leviathan (1651). The Leviathan was a sea monster in the Bible but is here shown in the form of a crowned monarch whose body is composed of individuals. (Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes is in public domain).*

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) is the early modern English political philosopher whose *Leviathan* (1651) established modern thought on the nature of sovereignty. Hobbes argued that social order, or what

we would call today "society" ("peaceable, sociable and comfortable living" (Hobbes 1651, p.146), depended on an unspoken *contract* between the citizens and the "sovereign" or ruler. In this contract, individuals give up their natural rights to use violence to protect themselves and further their interests and cede them to a sovereign. In exchange, the sovereign provides law and security for all (i.e., for the "commonwealth"). For Hobbes, there could be no society in the absence of a sovereign power that stands above individuals to "over-awe them all" (1651, p. 112). Life would otherwise be in a "state of nature" or a state of "war of everyone against everyone" (1651, p. 117). People would live in "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man [would be] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (1651, p. 113).

It is worthwhile to examine these premises, however, because they continue to structure our contemporary political life even if the absolute rule of monarchs has been replaced by the democratic rule of the people. (An **absolute monarchy** is a government wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power.) The implication of Hobbes's analysis is that the people must acquiesce to the absolute power of a single sovereign or sovereign assembly, which, in turn, cannot ultimately be held to any standard of justice or morality outside of its own guarantee of order. Therefore, democracy always exists in a state of tension with the authority of the sovereign state. Similarly, while order is maintained by "the sovereign" *within* the sovereign state, *outside* the state or between states there is no sovereign to over-awe them all. The international sovereign state *system* is always *potentially* in a state of war of all against all. It offered a neat solution to the problem of confused and overlapping political jurisdictions in medieval Europe, but is itself inherently unstable.

Figure 5.8*. May 1968 protest poster from Paris, France, decrying the use of force by state authorities. (Les Affiches de mai 68 ou l'Imagination graphique by Charles Perussaux is in public domain)*

Hobbes' definition of sovereignty is also the context of Max Weber's definition of the state. Weber defines the **state**, not as an institution or decision-making body, but as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" (Weber 1919b, p. 78). Weber's definition emphasizes the way in which the state is founded on the control of territory through the use of force. In his lecture "Politics as a Vocation," he argues, "The decisive means for politics is violence" (Weber 1919b, p. 121). However, as we have seen above,

power is not always exercised through the use of force. Nor would a modern sociologist accept that it is conferred through a mysterious "contract" with the sovereign, as Hobbes argued. Therefore, why *do* people submit to rule? "When and why do men obey?" (Weber 1919b), p. 78). Weber's answer is based on a distinction between the concepts of power and authority.

Prior to examining Weber's insights into the relationship of power and and different types of authority, it is instructive to take a moment to reflect on the historical evolution of governance in Canada.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=939

5.1.3 Types of Authority

***Figure 5.9**. Nazi leader Adolf Hitler (right) was one of the most powerful and destructive dictators in modern history, pictured here with fascist Benito Mussolini of Italy. Both Hitler and Mussolini were regarded as popular charismatic leaders. (Hitler and Mussolini June 1940 by Eva Braun is in the Public Domain.)*

The protesters in Tunisia and the civil rights protesters of Mahatma Gandhi's day had influence apart from their position in a government. Their influence came, in part, from their ability to advocate for what many people held as important values. Government leaders might have this kind of influence as well, but they also have the advantage of wielding power associated with their position in the government. As this example indicates, there is more than one type of authority in a community.

If Weber defined *power* as the ability to achieve desired ends despite the resistance of others (Weber, 1919a, p. 180), *authority* is when power or domination is perceived to be legitimate or justified rather than coercive. **Authority** refers to accepted power — that is,

power that people agree to follow. People listen to authority figures because they feel that these individuals are worthy of respect. Generally speaking, people perceive the objectives and demands of an authority figure as reasonable and beneficial, or true.

A citizen's interaction with a police officer is a good example of how people react to authority in everyday life. For instance, a person who sees the flashing red and blue lights of a police car in his or her rearview mirror usually pulls to the side of the road without hesitation. Such a driver most likely assumes that the police officer behind him serves as a legitimate source of authority and has the right to pull him over. As part of the officer's official duties, he or she has the power to issue a speeding ticket if the driver was driving too fast. If the same officer, however, were to command the driver to follow the police car home and mow his or her lawn, the driver would likely protest that the officer does not have the authority to make such a request.

Not all authority figures are police officers or elected officials or government authorities. Besides formal offices, authority can arise from tradition and personal qualities. Max Weber realized this when he examined individual action as it relates to authority, as well as large-scale structures of authority and how they relate to a society's economy. Based on this work, Weber developed a classification system for authority. His three types of authority are traditional authority, charismatic authority, and rational-legal authority (Weber 1922).

Table 5.1. Max Weber identified and explained three distinct types of authority.

	Traditional	Charismatic	Rational-Legal
Source of authority	Legitimized by long-standing custom	Based on a leader's personal qualities	Authority resides in the office, not the person
Authority Figure/ Figures	Patriarch	Dynamic personality	Bureaucratic officials
Examples	Patrimonialism (traditional positions of authority)	Jesus Christ, Hitler, Martin Luther King, Jr., Pierre Trudeau	Parliament, Civil Service, Judiciary

Traditional authority is usually understood in the context of pre-modern power relationships. According to Weber, the power of **traditional authority** is accepted because that has traditionally been the case; its legitimacy exists because it has been accepted for a long time. People obey their lord or the church because it is customary to do so. The authority of the aristocracy or the church is conferred on them through tradition, or the "authority of the 'eternal yesterday'" (Weber 1919b, p. 78). Britain's Queen Elizabeth, for instance, occupies a position that she inherited based on the traditional rules of succession for the **monarchy**, a form of government in which a single person, or monarch, rules until that individual dies or abdicates the throne. People adhere to traditional authority because they are invested in the past and feel obligated to perpetuate it. However, in modern society it would also be fair to say that obedience is in large part a function of a customary or "habitual orientation to conform," in that people do not generally question or think about the power relationships in which they participate.

For Weber though, modern authority is better understood to oscillate between the latter two types of legitimacy: rational-legal and charismatic authority. On one hand, as he puts it, "organized domination" relies on "continuous administration" (1919, p. 80) and in particular, the rule-bound form of administration known as

bureaucracy. Power made legitimate by laws, written rules, and regulations is termed **rational-legal authority**. In this type of authority, power is vested in a particular system, not in the person implementing the system. However irritating bureaucracy might be, we generally accept its legitimacy because we have the expectation that its processes are conducted in a neutral, disinterested fashion, according to explicit, written rules and laws. Rational-legal types of rule have authority because they *are* rational; that is, they are unbiased, predictable, and efficient.

On the other hand, people also obey because of the charismatic personal qualities of a leader. In this respect, it is not so much a question of obeying as following. Weber saw charismatic leadership as a kind of antidote to the machine-like rationality of bureaucratic mechanisms. It was through the inspiration of a charismatic leader that people found something to believe in, and thereby change could be introduced into the system of continuous bureaucratic administration. The power of **charismatic authority** is accepted because followers are drawn to the leader's personality. The appeal of a charismatic leader can be extraordinary, inspiring followers to make unusual sacrifices or to persevere in the midst of great hardship and persecution. Charismatic leaders usually emerge in times of crisis and offer innovative or radical solutions. They also tend to hold power for short durations only because power based on charisma is fickle and unstable.

Of course the combination of the administrative power of rational-legal forms of domination and charisma have proven to be extremely dangerous, as the rise to power of Adolf Hitler shortly after Weber's death demonstrated. We might also point to the distortions that a valuing of charisma introduces into the contemporary political process. There is increasing emphasis on the need to create a public "image" for leaders in electoral campaigns, both by "tweaking" or manufacturing the personal qualities of political candidates — Stephen Harper's sudden propensity for knitted sweaters, Jean Chretian's "little guy from Shawinigan" persona, Jack Layton's moustache — and by character assassinations

through the use of negative advertising — Stockwell Day's "scary, narrow-minded fundamentalist" characterization, Paul Martin's "Mr. Dithers" persona, Michael Ignatieff's "the fly-in foreign academic" tag, Justin Trudeau's "cute little puppy" moniker. **Image management,** or the attempt to manage the impact of one's image or impression on others, is all about attempting to manipulate the qualities that Weber called charisma. However, while people often decry the lack of rational debate about the facts of policy decisions in image politics, it is often the case that it is only the political theatre of personality clashes and charisma that draws people in to participate in political life.

Figure 5.10*. Pierre Elliott Trudeau (left) was seen as a charismatic leader in the 1960s and 1970s. Does his son Justin (right) have the same qualities of charismatic leadership? Or have the conditions of contemporary public life and image politics changed the nature of charisma and politics? (Pierre Trudeau B&W is in public domain (left) and Justin Trudeau is in public domain (right))*

5.1.4 Politics and the Image

Figure 5.11. *Is the staging of image events a legitimate tactic in contemporary politics? (Get your head out of the Tarsands by Tavis Ford used under CC BY 2.0).*

Politicians, political parties, and other political actors are also motivated to claim symbolic meanings for themselves or their issues. A Canadian Taxpayer Federation report noted that the amount of money spent on communication staff (or "spin doctors") by the government in 2014 approached the amount spent on the total House of Commons payroll ($263 million compared to $329

million per year) (Thomas, 2014). While most sectors of the civil service have been cut back, "information services" have continued to expand.

This practice of calculated symbolization through which political actors attempt to control or manipulate the impressions they make on the public is known as **image management** or image branding. Erving Goffman (1972) described the basic processes of image management in the context of small scale, face-to-face settings. In social encounters, he argued, individuals present a certain "face" to the group — "this is who I am" — by which they lay claim to a "positive social value" for themselves. It is by no means certain that the group will accept the face the individual puts forward, however. Individuals are therefore obliged during the course of interactions to continuously manage the impression they make in light of the responses, or *potential* responses of others — making it consistent with the "line" they are acting out. They continually make adjustments to cover over inconsistencies, incidents, or gaffs in their performance and use various props like clothing, hair styles, hand gestures, demeanour, forms of language, etc. to support their claim. The key point that Goffman makes is that one's identity, face, or impression is not something intrinsic to the individual but is a social phenomenon, radically in the hands of others. The "presentation of self in everyday life" is a tricky and uncertain business.

On the political stage, especially in the age of mass-mediated interactions, image management and party branding are subject to sophisticated controls, calculations, and communications strategies. In effect, political image management is the process by which concrete, living historical events and processes — what politicians actually say and do in the public sphere day-to-day, how government policies are implemented, and what their effects on stakeholders and social processes are — are turned into ahistorical, "mythic" events and qualities: heroic struggles of good versus evil, prudence versus wastefulness, change and renewal versus stagnation and decline, or archetypal symbolic qualities of personal

integrity, morality, decisiveness, toughness, feistiness, wisdom, tenacity, etc. Politicians and political parties claim a "positive social value" for themselves by attempting to plant a symbolic, mythic image in the minds of the public and then carefully scripting public performances to support that image. As Goffman points out with respect to face-to-face interactions, however, it is by no means certain that the public or the news media will accept these claims. The Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day's Jet Ski photo op during the 2000 federal election undermined his credibility as potential prime ministerial material, just as Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield's football fumble on the airport tarmac in the 1974 federal election undermined his bid to appear more youthful (Smith, 2012).

Critics point to the way the focus on image in politics replaces political substance with superficial style. Using image to present a political message is seen as a lower, even fraudulent form of political rhetoric. Symbolic interactionists (discussed below) would note however that the ability to attribute persuasive meaning to political claims is a communicative process that operates at multiple levels. Determining what is and what is not a "substantial" issue is in fact a crucial component of political communication. Deluca (1999) argues that as a result of being locked out of the process of political communication, groups like environmental social movements can effectively bring marginalized issues into the public debate by staging **image events**. In the language of Greenpeace founder Robert Hunter, these are events that take the form of powerful visual imagery. They explode "in the public's consciousness to transform the way people view their world" (cited in Deluca, 1999, p. 1). Greenpeace's use of small inflatable Zodiac boats to get between whaling vessels and whales is one prominent example of an image event that creates a visceral effect in the audience.

Commenting on singer-songwriter Neil Young's 2014 "Honour the Treaties" tour in Canada, Gill notes that the effectiveness of this type of image event is in the emotional resonance it establishes between the general public and aboriginal groups fighting tar sands

development. “Plainly put, our governments don’t fear environmentalists, even icons like David Suzuki. But governments fear emotion, which they can’t regulate, and who but our artists are capable of stirring our emotions, giving them expression, and releasing the trapped energy in our national psyche?” (Gill, 2014). So, do image politics, image management, and image events necessarily make democratic will formation less substantial and less issues oriented? As Deluca puts it, “To dismiss image events as rude and crude is to cling to ‘presuppositions of civility and rationality underlying the old rhetoric,’ a rhetoric that supports those in positions of authority and thus allows civility and decorum to serve as masks for the protection of privilege and the silencing of protest (Deluca, 1999, pp. 14-15).

5.2 Democratic Will Formation

Figure 5.12. *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). "Politics is the science of liberty: man's government of his fellow-man, no matter the name under which it lurks, is oppression: society's highest perfection lies in the marriage of order and anarchy" (1840, p. 54). (Pierre-Jospeh Proudhon is in public fomain).*

Most people presume that **anarchy**, or the absence of organized government, does not facilitate a desirable living environment for society. They have in the back of their minds the Hobbesian view that the absence of sovereign rule leads to a state of chaos, lawlessness, and war of all against all. However, anarchy literally means "without leader or ruler." **Anarchism** therefore refers to the political principles and practice of organizing social life without

formal or state leadership. As such, the radical standpoint of anarchism provides a useful standpoint from which to examine the sociological question of why leadership in the form of the state is needed in the first place. We will return to this question in the final section of this module.

The tradition of anarchism developed in Europe in the 19th century in the work of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) and others. It promoted the idea that states were both artificial and malevolent constructs, unnecessary for human social organization (Esenwein 2004). Anarchists proposed that the natural state of society is one of self-governing collectivities, in which people freely group themselves in loose affiliations with one another rather than submitting to government-based or human-made laws. They had in mind the way rural farmers came together to organize farmers' markets or the cooperative associations of Swiss watchmakers in the Jura mountains. For the anarchists, anarchy was not violent chaos but the cooperative, egalitarian society that would emerge when state power was destroyed.

The anarchist program was (and still is) to maximize the personal freedoms of individuals by organizing society on the basis of voluntary social arrangements. These arrangements would be subject to continual renegotiation. As opposed to right-wing libertarianism, the anarchist tradition argued that the conditions for a cooperative, egalitarian society were the destruction of both the power of the state and of private property (i.e., capital). One of Proudhon's famous anarchist slogans was "Private property is theft!" (Proudhon 1840).

***Figure 5.13**. In 1894, the anarchist Emile Henry blew up a bomb in the Café Terminus in Paris where wealthy patrons were known to gather, killing 1 and wounding 20. When asked in court why he wanted to kill innocent civilians he responded, "There are no innocent bourgeois" (CBC Radio 2011). (Attentat de l'hôtel Terminus by Osvaldo Tofani is in public domain).*

In practice, 19th century anarchism had the dubious distinction of inventing modern political **terrorism**, or the use of violence on civilian populations and institutions to achieve political ends (CBC

Radio 2011). This was referred to by Mikhail Bakunin as "propaganda by the deed" (1870). Clearly not all or even most anarchists advocated violence in this manner, but it was widely recognized that the hierarchical structures and institutions of the old society had to be destroyed before the new society could be created.

Nevertheless, the principle of the anarchist model of government is based on the participatory or **direct democracy** of the ancient Greek Athenians. In Athenian direct democracy, decision making, even in matters of detailed policy, was conducted through assemblies made up of all citizens. These assemblies would meet a minimum of 40 times a year (Forrest 1966). The root of the word democracy is *demos*, Greek for "people." **Democracy** is therefore *rule by the people*. Ordinary Athenians directly ran the affairs of Athens. (Of course "all citizens," for the Greeks, meant all adult men and excluded women, children, and slaves.)

Direct democracy can be contrasted with modern forms of **representative democracy**, like that practised in Canada. In representative democracy, citizens elect representatives (MPs, MLAs, city councillors, etc.) to promote policies that favour their interests rather than directly participating in decision making themselves. It is based on the idea of *representation* rather than direct citizen *participation*. Critics note that the representative model of democracy enables distortions to be introduced into the determination of the will of the people: elected representatives are typically not socially representative of their constituencies as they are dominated by white men and elite occupations like law and business; corporate media ownership and privately funded advertisement campaigns enable the interests of privileged classes to be expressed rather than those of average citizens; and lobbying and private campaign contributions provide access to representatives and decision-making processes that is not afforded to the majority of the population. The distortions that intrude into the processes of representative democracy — for example, whose interests really get represented in government policy? — are no doubt behind the famous comment of the former British Prime

Minister Winston Churchill who once declared to the House of Commons, "Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government … except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (Shapiro 2006).

Democracy however is not a static political form. Three key elements constitute democracy as a dynamic system: the **institutions of democracy** (parliament, elections, constitutions, rule of law, etc.), **citizenship** (the internalized sense of individual dignity, rights, and freedom that accompanies formal membership in the political community), and the **public sphere** (or open "space" for public debate and deliberation). On the basis of these three elements, rule by the people can be exercised through a process of **democratic will formation.**

Jürgen Habermas (1998) emphasizes that democratic will formation in both direct and representative democracy is reached through a deliberative process. The general will or decisions of the people emerge through the mutual interaction of citizens in the public sphere. The underlying *norm* of the democratic process is what Habermas (1990) calls the **ideal speech situation**. An ideal speech situation is one in which every individual is permitted to take part in public discussion equally: to question assertions and introduce ideas. Ideally no individual is prevented from speaking (not by arbitrary restrictions on who is permitted to speak, nor by practical restrictions on participation like poverty or lack of education). To the degree that everyone accepts this norm of openness and inclusion, in free debate the best ideas will "rise to the top" and be accepted by the majority. On the other hand, when the norms of the ideal speech situation are violated, the process of democratic will formation becomes distorted and open to manipulation.

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5.2.1 Political Demand and Political Supply

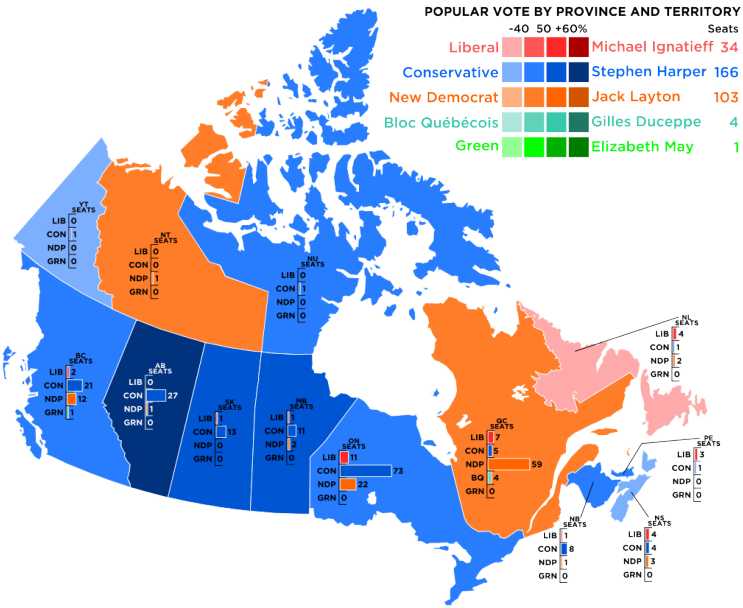

Figure 5.14. *The outcome of political party competition in the 2011 election. (Canada 2011 Federal Election is in CC BY SA 2.5).*

In practice democratic will formation in representative democracies takes place largely through political party competition in an electoral cycle. Two factors explain the dynamics of democratic party systems (Kitschelt 1995). Firstly, **political demand** refers to the underlying societal factors and social changes that create constituencies of people with common interests. People form common political preferences and interests on the basis of their common positions in the social structure. For example, changes in the types of jobs generated by the economy will affect the size of electoral support for labour unions and labour union politics.

Secondly, **political supply** refers to the strategies and organizational capacities of political parties to deliver an appealing political program to particular constituencies. For example, the Liberal Party of Canada often attempts to develop policies and political messaging that will position it in the middle of the political spectrum where the largest group of voters potentially resides. In the 2011 election, due to leadership issues, organizational difficulties, and the strategies of the other political parties, they were not able to deliver a credible appeal to their traditional centrist constituency and suffered a large loss of seats in Parliament (see Figure 17.13). In the 2015 election, the Conservative Party's program and messaging consolidated its "right wing" constituency of social conservatives and free market proponents but failed to appeal to people in the center of the Canadian political spectrum (see Figure 17.14).

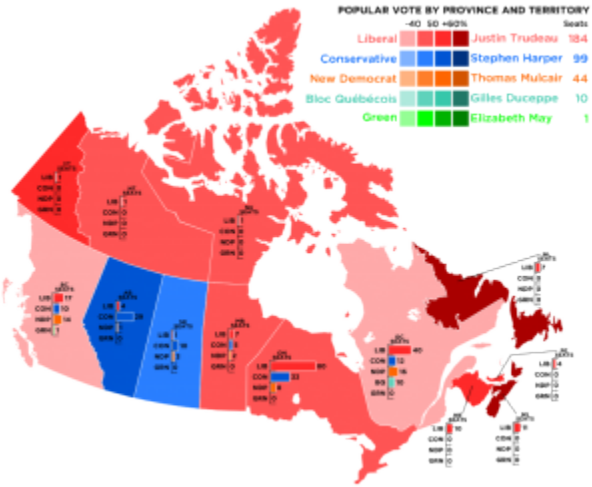

***Figure* 5.15**. *The outcome of political party competition in the 2015 election. (Canada 2015 Federal Election used under CC BY SA 2.5 licence).*

The relationship between political demand and political supply

factors in democratic will formation can be illustrated by mapping out constituencies of voters on a left/right spectrum of political preferences (Kitschelt 1995; see Figure 17.14). While the terms "left wing" and "right wing" are notoriously ambiguous (Ogmundson 1972), they are often used in a simple manner to describe the basic political divisions of modern society.

In Figure 17.15, one central axis of division in voter preference has to do with the question of how scarce resources are to be distributed in society. At the right end of the spectrum are economic conservatives who advocate minimal taxes and a purely spontaneous, competitive market-driven mechanism for the distribution of wealth and essential services (including health care and education), while at the left end of the spectrum are socialists who advocate progressive taxes and state redistribution of wealth and services to create social equality or "equality of condition." A second axis of division in voter preference has to do with social policy and "collective decision modes." At the right end of the spectrum is authoritarianism (law and order, limits on personal autonomy, exclusive citizenship, hierarchical decision making, etc.), while at the left end of the spectrum is individual autonomy or expanded democratization of political processes (maximum individual autonomy in politics and the cultural sphere, equal rights, inclusive citizenship, extra-parliamentary democratic participation, etc.). Along both axes or spectrums of political opinion, one might imagine an elliptically shaped distribution of individuals, with the greatest portion in the middle of each spectrum and far fewer people at the extreme ends. The dynamics of *political supply* in political party competition follow from the way political parties try to position themselves along the spectrum to maximize the number of voters they appeal to while remaining distinct from their political competitors.

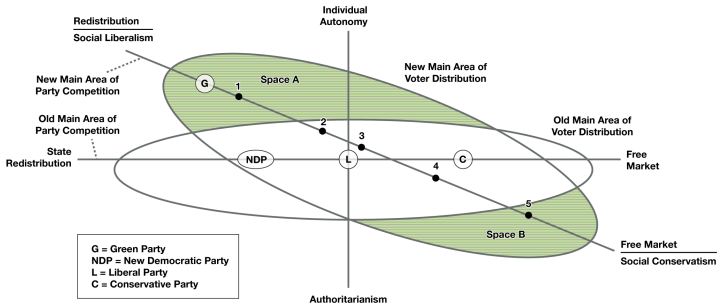

Figure 5.16. *The space of political competition in public will formation. (Adapted from Kitschelt 1995 by H. Anggraeni).*

Sociologists are typically more interested in the underlying social factors contributing to changes in political demand than in the day-by-day strategies of political supply. One influential theory proposes that since the 1960s, contemporary political preferences have shifted away from older, materialist concerns with economic growth and physical security (i.e., survival values) to **postmaterialist** concerns with quality of life issues: personal autonomy, self-expression, environmental integrity, women's rights, gay rights, the meaningfulness of work, habitability of cities, etc. (Inglehart 2008). From the 1970s on, postmaterialist social movements seeking to expand the domain of personal autonomy and free expression have encountered equally postmaterialist responses by neoconservative groups advocating the return to traditional family values, religious fundamentalism, submission to work discipline, and tough-on-crime initiatives. This has led to a new postmaterialist cleavage structure in political preferences.

In Figure 17.14 we have represented this shift in political preferences in the difference between the ellipse centred on the free-market/state redistribution axis and the ellipse centred on the free-market-social-conservativism/ redistribution-social-liberalism axis (Kitschelt 1995). As a result of the development of

postmaterialist politics, the "left" side of the political spectrum has been increasingly defined by a cluster of political preferences defined by redistributive policies, social and multicultural inclusion, environmental sustainability, and demands for personal autonomy, etc., while the "right" side has been defined by a cluster of preferences including free-market policies, tax cuts, limits on political engagement, crime policy, and social conservative values, etc.

What explains the emergence of a postmaterialist axis of political preferences? Arguably, the experience of citizens for most of the 20th century was defined by economic scarcity and depression, the two world wars, and the Cold War resulting in the materialist orientation toward the economy, personal security, and military defence in political demand. The location of individuals within the industrial class structure is conventionally seen as the major determinant of whether they preferred working-class-oriented policies of economic redistribution or capitalist-class-oriented policies of free-market allocation of resources. In the advanced capitalist or post-industrial societies of the late 20th century, the underlying class conditions of voter preference are not so clear however. Certainly the working-class does not vote en masse for the traditional working class party in Canada, the NDP, and voters from the big business, small business, and administrative classes are often divided between the Liberals and Conservatives (Ogmundson 1972).

Kitschelt (1995) notes two distinctly influential dynamics in western European social conditions that can be applied to the Canadian situation. Firstly, in the era of globalization and free trade agreements people (both workers and managers) who work in and identify with sectors of the economy that are exposed to international competition (non-quota agriculture, manufacturing, natural resources, finances) are likely to favour free market policies that are seen to enhance the global competitiveness of these sectors, while those who work in sectors of the economy sheltered from international competition (public-service sector, education,

and some industrial, agricultural and commercial sectors) are likely to favour redistributive policies. Secondly, in the transition from an industrial economy to a postindustrial service and knowledge economy, people whose work or educational level promotes high levels of communicative interaction skills (education, social work, health care, cultural production, etc.) are likely to value personal autonomy, free expression, and increased democratization, whereas those with more instrumental task-oriented occupations (manipulating objects, documents, and spreadsheets) and lower or more skills-oriented levels of education are likely to find authoritarian and traditional social settings more natural. In Figure 17.14, new areas of political preference are shown opening up in the shaded areas labelled Space A and Space B.

The implication Kitschelt draws from this analysis is that as the conditions of political demand shift, the strategies of the political parties (i.e., the political supply) need to shift as well (see Figure 17.14). Social democratic parties like the NDP need to be mindful of the general shift to the right under conditions of globalization, but to the degree that they move to the centre (2) or the right (3), like British labour under Tony Blair, they risk alienating much of their traditional core support in the union movement, new social movement activists, and young people. The Green Party is also positioned (1) to pick up NDP support if the NDP move right. On the other side of the spectrum, the Conservatives do not want to move so far to the right (5) that they lose centrist voters to the Liberals or NDP (as was the case in the Ontario provincial election in 2014 and the federal election in 2015). However, to the degree they move to the centre they risk being indistinguishable from the Liberals and a space opens up to the right of them on the political spectrum. The demise of the former Progressive Conservative party after the 1993 election was precipitated by the emergence of postmaterialist conservative parties further to the right (Reform and the Canadian Alliance).

This model of democratic will formation in Canada is not without its problems. For one thing, Kitschelt's model of the spectrum of

political party competition is based on European politics. It does not take into account the important role of regional allegiances that cut across the left/right division and make Canada an atypical case (in particular the regional politics of Quebec and western Canada). Similarly, the argument that political preferences have shifted from materialist concerns with economic growth and distribution to postmaterialist concerns with quality-of-life issues is belied by opinion polls which consistently indicate that Canadians rate the economy and unemployment as their greatest concerns, (although climate change and health care often rank highly in opinion polls). On the other hand, it is probably the case that postmaterialist concerns are not addressed effectively in current formal political processes and political party platforms. Canadians have been turning increasingly to nontraditional political activities like protests and demonstrations, signing petitions, and boycotting or "boycotting" to express their political grievances and aspirations. With regard to the distinction between direct democracy and representative democracy, it is interesting to note that in the current era of declining voter participation in elections, especially among young people, people (especially young people) are turning to more direct means of political engagement (See Figure 17.15).

N/A means not applicable. * means statistically different from 22 to 29-year-olds ($p<0.05$).

Table 5.2. The nature of Canadians' political participation varies by age group (Milan 2005). At 59%, Canadians aged 15 to 21 had the highest participation rate in non-conventional political activities (albeit by a very slim margin). (Table courtesy of Statistics Canada).

[Skip Table]

Types of political participation	Percentage of Political Participation					
	Total	**15 to 21**	**22 to 29**	**30 to 44**	**45 to 64**	**65 or older**
Follow news and current affairs daily	68*	35*	51	66*	81*	89*
Voted in at least one election	77*	N/A	59	71*	85*	89*
Voted in the last federal election	74*	N/A	52	68*	83*	89*
Voted in the last provincial election	73*	N/A	50	66*	82*	88*
Voted in the last municipal or local election	60*	N/A	35	52*	70*	79*
At least one non-voting political behaviour	54*	59	58	57	56	39*
Searched for information on a political issue	26*	36	32	26*	25*	17*
Signed a petition	28*	27*	31	31	29	16*
Boycotted a product or chose a product for ethical reasons	20*	16*	25	25	21*	8*
Attended a public meeting	22*	17	16	23*	25*	20*
Expressed his/her views on an issue by contacting a newspaper or a politician	13*	8	9	13*	16*	12*
Participated in a demonstration or march	6*	12*	8	6	6*	2*
Spoke out at a public meeting	8*	4	5	9*	10*	7*
Volunteered for a political party	3	2	3	2	4*	4

Note: Voting rates will differ from those of Elections Canada, which calculates voter participation rates based on number of eligible voters.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2003.

What might that more direct form of participation look like? In the following videos you are introduced to one form of citizen participation in the formation of policy. Can you think of other examples of how citizens can influence the formation of policy in contemporary democratic states?

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5.3 The De-Centring of the State: Terrorism, War, Empire, and Political Exceptionalism

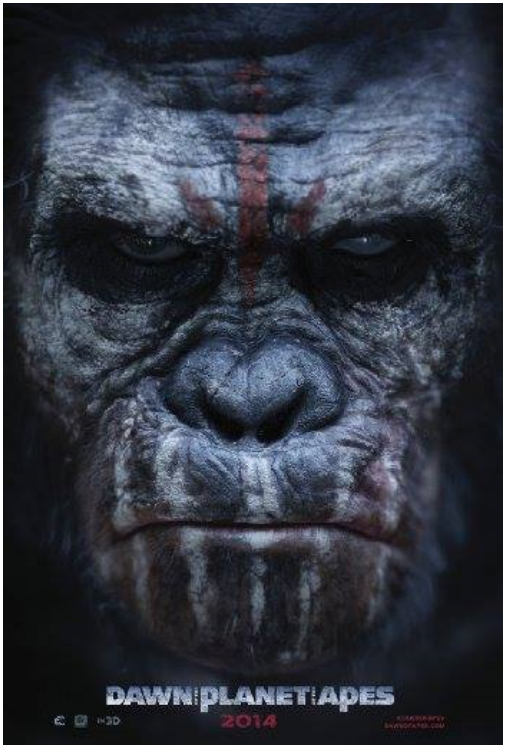

***Figure 5.17**. Dawn of the Planet of the Apes (2014), like many Hollywood thrillers since 9/11, takes war and political exceptionalism as its theme. (Dawn of the Planet of the Apes by Global Panorama used under CC BY SA 2.0).*

In *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), the post-apocalyptic narrative of brewing conflict between the apes — descendants of animal experimentation and genetic manipulation — and the

remaining humans — survivors of a human-made ape virus pandemic — follows a familiar political story line of mistrust, enmity, and provocation between opposed camps. The film may be seen as a science fiction allegory of any number of contemporary cycles of violence, including the 2014 Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was concurrent with the film's release. In the first part of the movie, we see the two communities in a kind of pre-political state, struggling in isolation from one another in an effort to survive. There is no real internal conflict or disagreement within them that would have to be settled politically. The communities have leaders, but leaders who are listened to only because of the respect accorded to them. However, when the two communities come into contact unexpectedly, a political dynamic begins to emerge in which the question becomes whether the two groups will be able to live in peace together or whether their history and memory of hatred and disrespect will lead them to conflict. It is a story in which we ask whether it is going to be the regulative moral codes that govern everyday social behaviour or the friend/enemy dynamics of politics and war that will win the day. The underlying theme is that when the normal rules that govern everyday behaviour are deemed no longer sufficient to conduct life, politics as an exception in its various forms emerges.

The concept of politics as exception has its roots in the origins of sovereignty (Agamben, 1998). It was articulated most clearly in the 1920s in the work of Carl Schmitt (1922) who later became juridical theorist aligned with the German Nazi regime in the 1930s. Schmitt argued that the authentic activity of politics–the sphere of "the political"–only becomes clear in moments of crisis when leaders are obliged to make a truly political decision, (for example, to go to war). This occurs when the normal rules that govern decision making or the application of law appear no longer adequate or applicable to the situation confronting society. Specifically, we refer to a **state of exception** when the law or the constitution is temporarily suspended during a time of crisis so that the executive leader can claim emergency powers. Schmitt eventually applied this principle

to justify the German National Socialist Party's suspension of the Weimar constitution in 1933, as well as the *Führerprinzip* (principle of absolute leadership) that characterized the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler. Nevertheless political exceptionalism is a reoccurring theme in politics and as situations of crisis have become increasingly normal in recent decades — the war on terror, failed states, the erosion of sovereign power, etc. — it becomes necessary for sociologists to examine the role of politics under conditions of social crisis.

A subplot in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* involves the relationship between the leader of the apes, Caesar, and Koba, whose life as a victim of medical experimentation leads him to hate humans and challenge Caesar's attempts to find reconciliation with them. Until the moment of contact, the apes are able govern themselves by a moral code and mutual agreement on decisions. It is an ideal, peaceful pre-political society. One central tenet of the apes' moral identity was that "ape does not kill ape," unlike the humans whose society disintegrated into violent conflict following the global pandemic. However, when Koba's betrayal of Caesar leads to a war with the humans that threatens the apes' survival, Caesar is forced to make an impossible decision: break the moral code and kill Koba, or risk further betrayal and dissension that will undermine his ability to lead. Caesar's solution is to kill Koba but only after making a crucial declaration that keeps the apes' moral code intact: "Koba not ape!" He essentially declares that Koba's transgression of the apes' way of life was so egregious that he could no longer be considered an ape and therefore he can be killed.

This is an example of political exceptionalism. In this case, Caesar suspends the law of the apes and dispenses with Koba in his first act of emergency power. Caesar decides who is and who is not an ape; who is and who is not protected by ape law. The law is preserved, but it is revealed to be radically fluid and dependent on Caesar's decision.

This possibility of the state of exception is built in to the structure of the modern state. The modern state system, based on the

concept of state sovereignty, came into existence after the Thirty Years War in Europe (1618–1648) as a solution to the problem of continual, generalized states of war. The principle of state sovereignty is that within states, peace is maintained by a single rule of law, while war (i.e., the absence of law) is expelled to the margins of society as a last resort in times of exception. The concept of "society" itself, as a peaceable space of normative interaction, depends on this expulsion of violent conflict to the borders of society (Walker, 1993). When society is threatened however, from without or within, the conditions of a temporary state of exception emerge. Constitutional governments often provide a formal mechanism for declaring a state of exception or emergency powers, like the former Canadian War Measures Act. Many observers of contemporary global conflict have noted, however, that what were once *temporary* states of exception — wars between states, wars within states, wars by non-state actors, and wars or crises resulting in the suspension of laws — have become increasingly permanent and normalized in recent years. The exception is increasingly becoming the norm (Agamben 2005; Hardt and Negri, 2004).

Several phenomena of current political life allow us to examine political exceptionalism: global terrorism, the contemporary nature of war, the re-emergence of Empire, and the routine use of states of exception.

5.3.1 Terrorism: War by non-state actors

Since 9/11, the role of terrorism in restructuring national and international politics has become apparent. As we defined it earlier, *terrorism* is the use of violence on civilian populations and institutions to achieve political ends. Typically we see this violence as a product of non-state actors seeking radical political change by resorting to means outside the normal political process. They challenge the state's legitimate monopoly over the use of force in a

territory. Al-Qaeda for example is an international organization that had its origin in American-funded efforts to organize an insurgency campaign against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Its attacks on civilian and military targets, including the American embassies in East Africa in 1998, the World Trade Center in 2001, and the bombings in Bali in 2002, are means to demand the end of Western influence in the Middle East and the establishment of fundamentalist Wahhabi Islamic caliphates. On a much smaller scale the FLQ (Front de libération du Québec) resorted to bombing mailboxes, the Montreal Stock Exchange, and kidnapping political figures to press for the independence of Quebec.

Terrorism is an ambiguous term, however, because the definition of who or what constitutes a terrorist differs depending on who does the defining. There are three distinct phenomena that are defined as terrorism in contemporary usage: the use of political violence as a means of revolt by non-state actors against a legitimate government, the use of political violence by governments themselves in contravention of national or international codes of human rights, and the use of violence in war that contravenes established rules of engagement, including violence against civilian or non-military targets (Hardt and Negri 2004). Noam Chomsky argues, for example, that the United States government is the most significant terrorist organization in the world because of its support for illegal and irregular wars, its backing of authoritarian regimes that use illegitimate violence against their populations, and its history of destabilizing foreign governments and assassinating foreign political leaders (Chomsky 2001; Chomsky and Herman 1979).

[JR: Please insert Youtube video, Free Will, (2020), "Noam Chomsky on Terrorism" at url, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae4UQ4V1iKc&pp=QAA%3D]

5.3.2 War: Politics by other means

Even before there were modern nation-states, political conflicts arose among competing societies or factions of people. Vikings attacked continental European tribes in search of loot, and later, European explorers landed on foreign shores to claim the resources of indigenous peoples. Conflicts also arose among competing groups within individual sovereignties, as evidenced by the bloody English and American civil wars and the Riel Rebellion in Canada. Nearly all conflicts in the past and present, however, are spurred by basic desires: the drive to protect or gain territory and wealth, and the need to preserve liberty and autonomy. They are driven by an inside/outside dynamic that provides the underlying political content of war. **War** is defined as a form of organized group violence between politically distinct groups. As the 19th century military strategist Carl von Clausewitz (1832) said, war is merely the continuation of politics by other means.

Figure 5.18. *Although military technology has evolved considerably over the course of history, the fundamental causes of organized violent conflict remains essentially the same. The difference is in the number of deaths due to armed conflict (Valiant Shield – B2 Stealth bomber from Missouri leads ariel formation by Jordon R. Beesley is in the Public Domain).*

In the 20th century, 9 million people were killed in World War I and another 61 million people were killed in World War II. The death tolls in these wars were of such magnitude that the wars were considered at the time to be unprecedented. World War I, or "the Great War," was described as the war that would end all wars, yet the manner in which it was settled led directly to the conditions responsible for the declaration of World War II. In fact, the wars were not unprecedented. Since the establishment of the modern centralized state in Europe, there have been six European wars involving alliances between multiple nation-states at approximately half-century intervals. Prior to World War I and World War II, there was the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), the War of Spanish Succession (1702–1713), the Seven Years War (1756–1763), and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815) (Dyer, 2014). The difference in the two 20th century world wars is that advances in military technology and the strategy of *total war* (involving the targeting of civilian as well as military targets) led to a massive increase in casualties. The total dead in 20th century wars is estimated at 111 million, approximately two-thirds of the 175 million people killed in total in war in the thousand years between 1000 and 2000 CE (Tepperman, 2010).

War is typically understood as armed conflict that has been openly declared between or within states. However recent warfare, like Canada's involvement in the NATO mission in Afghanistan (from 2001 to 2014), more typically takes the form of asymmetrical conflict between professional state armies and insurgent groups who rely on guerilla tactics (Hardt and Negri, 2004). **Asymmetrical warfare** is defined by the lack of symmetry between the sides of a violent military conflict. There is a significant imbalance of technical and military means between combatants, which has been referred to by American military strategists as *full spectrum dominance*. This shifts the nature of the conflict to insurgency and counter-insurgency tactics in which the dominant, professional armies aim their efforts of deterrence against both the military operations of their opponents and the potentially militarized population. Counter-

insurgency strategies seek not only to defeat the enemy army militarily but to control it with social, political, ideological, and psychological weapons. The Canadian army's "model village" clear, hold, and build strategy in Afghanistan is an example of this, combining conventional military action with humanitarian aid and social and infrastructure investment (Galloway, 2009). On the other side, the insurgent armies compensate for their military weakness with the unpredictable tactics of guerilla war in which maximum damage can be done with a minimum of weaponry (Hardt and Negri, 2004).

One of the outcomes of contemporary warfare has been the creation of a condition of global **post-security** in which, as Hardt and Negri put it, "lethal violence is present as a constant potentiality, ready always and everywhere to erupt" (2004, p. 4). Partly as a reaction to this phenomenon and partly as a cause, we can speak of the development of war systems, or the **normalization of militarization**. This is "the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence" (Geyer, 1989). This process involves an intensification of the conceptual division between the outsides and insides of nation-states, the demonization of enemies who threaten "us" from the outside (or the inside), the normalization of military ways of thinking and military perspectives on policy, and the propagation of ideologies that romanticize, sanitize, and validate military violence as a solution to problems or as a way of life (Graham, 2011). As many commentators have noted, Canada's relationship to military action has shifted during the Afghan operation from its Lester Pearson era of peacekeeping to a more militant stance in line with the normalization of militarization (Dyer, 2014).

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5.3.3 Empire

The breakdown of states due to warfare or internal civil conflict is one way in which the sovereign nation-state is undermined in times of exception. Another way in which the sovereignty of the state has been undermined is through the creation of supra-state forces like global capitalism and international trade agreements that reduce or constrain the decision-making abilities of national governments. When these supranational forces become organized on a formal basis, we might begin to speak about the re-emergence of *empires* as a type of political exception. Empires have existed throughout human history, but arguably there is something very unique about the formation of the contemporary global Empire. In general an

empire (1) refers to a geographically widespread organization of individual states, nations, and people that is ruled by a centralized government, like the Roman Empire or the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, some argue that the formation of a contemporary global order has seen the development of a new unbounded and centre-less type of empire. **Empire (2)** today refers to a supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose territory is the entire globe and whose organization forms around the nodes of a network form of power. These nodes include the dominant nation-states, supranational institutions (the UN, IMF, GATT, WHO, G7, etc.), major capitalist corporations, and international Non-Governmental Organizations or NGOs (*Medecins* San *Frontieres*, Amnesty International, CUSO, Oxfam, etc.) (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

As a result of the formation of this type of global empire, war, for example, is increasingly not fought between independent sovereign nation-states but increasingly as a kind of global-scale *police* action in which several states — or "coalitions of the willing" — intervene on humanitarian or security grounds to suppress dissent or conflict in different parts of the globe. Key to this shift in the nature of the use of force is the way in which military action, traditionally understood as armed combat *between* sovereign states, is reconceptualized as police action, traditionally understood as the legitimate use of force *within* a sovereign state. As the borders between states erode, the entire globe is reconceived as a single, vast, internal sovereign state to be managed and governed as a domestic problem.

5.3.4 Normalization of Exception

As we noted above, a state of exception refers to a situation when the law or the constitution is temporarily suspended during a time of crisis so that the executive leader can claim emergency powers. During warfare for example, it is typical for governments to

temporarily suspend the normal rule of law and institute martial law. However, when times of crisis become the norm, this modality of power is resorted to more frequently and more permanently both on a large scale and small scale.Perhaps the most famous example of normalized political exceptionalism was the suspension of the Weimar Constitution by the Nazis in Germany between 1933 and 1945. On the basis of Hitler's *Decree for the Protection of the People and the State*, the personal liberties of Germans were "legally" suspended, making the concentration camps for political opponents, the confiscation of property, and the Holocaust in some sense lawful actions. Under Alfredo Stroessner's regime in Paraguay in the 1960s and 1970s, this form of legal illegality was taken to the extreme. Citing the state of emergency created by the global Cold War struggle between communism and democracy, Stroessner suspended Paraguay's constitutional protection of rights and freedoms permanently except for one day every four years when elections were held (Zizek 2002). On a smaller scale, albeit with global implications, U.S. President George Bush's 2001 military order that authorized the trial by military tribunal and indefinite detention of "unlawful combatants" and individuals suspected of being involved in terrorist activities enabled a similar suspension of constitutional and international laws. The U.S. detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where individuals were tortured and held without trial or due process, is a legally authorized space that is nevertheless outside of the jurisdiction and protection of the law (Agamben 2005).

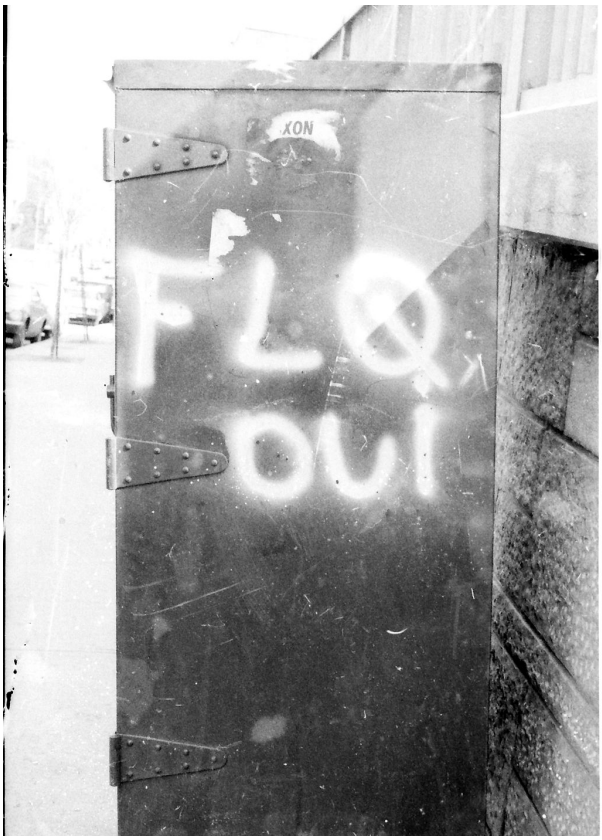

Figure 5.19. *"FLQ Oui" (FLQ Yes) spray-painted on a postal drop box several months after the 1970 October Crisis ended (*"FLQ oui" (FLQ yes)* by Harryzilber used under* CC BY SA 3.0 license*).*

Canada's most famous incident of peacetime state of exception was Pierre Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act in 1970 during the October Crisis. The War Measures Act was used to suspend civil liberties and mobilize the military in response to a state of "apprehended insurrection" following the FLQ's kidnapping of Quebec politician Pierre Laporte and British diplomat James Cross. During the period of the War Measures Act, 3,000 homes were

searched and 497 individuals were arrested without due process, including several people in Vancouver who were found distributing the FLQ's manifesto. Only 62 people were ever charged with offences, and the FLQ cells responsible for the kidnappings did not number more than a handful of individuals (Clément 2008). Although this incident is the most famous example of political exceptionalism in Canada, there are a number of pieces of legislation and processes that involve the mechanism of localized suspension of the law, notably the use of Ministerial Security Certificates under the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act, which enables the indefinite detention of suspected terrorists; the Public Works Protection Act, which was used to detain protesters at the Toronto G20 Summit in 2010; and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002), which enables the routine confinement and detention of stateless refugees and "boat people" arriving in Canada.

[JR: Please insert Youtube video, (2017), "Noam Chomsky: Neoliberalism is Destroying out Democracy" at url, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/noam-chomsky-neoliberalism-destroying-democracy/]

5.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Government and Power

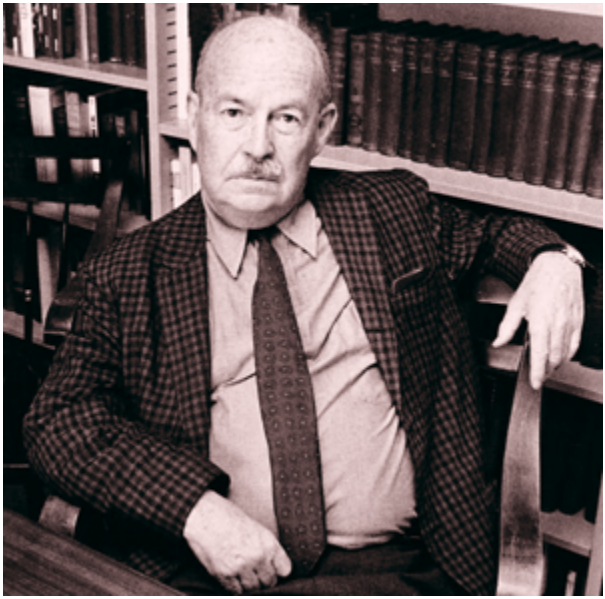

***Figure 5.20**. American structural functionalist Talcott Parsons: "I conceive of political organization as functionally organized about the attainment of collective goals, i.e., the attainment or maintenance of states of interaction between the system and its environing situation that are relatively desirable from the point of view of the system" (1961, p. 435). (Talcott Parsons is in CC BY SA 3.0).*

There has been considerable disagreement among sociologists about the nature of power, politics, and the role of the state in society. This is not surprising as any discussion of power and politics is bound to be political itself, that is to say divisive or "politicized." It is arguably the case that we are better positioned today, after a period of prolonged political exceptionalism, to see the nature of power and the state more clearly than during periods

of peace or détente. It is during moments when the regular frameworks of political practice and behaviour are disrupted — through revolution, suspension of the law, the failure of states, war, or counter-insurgency — that the underlying basis of the relationship between the social and the political, or society and the state can be revealed and rethought.

Earlier in this chapter, we noted that the radical standpoint of anarchism provides a useful standpoint from which to examine the sociological question of the state. A key sociological question posed by anarchism is: Why is government in the form of the state needed in the first place? Could we not do just as well without state government? What is the state for? On these questions, the organizational frameworks or paradigms that characterize the sociological tradition — here we have been examining structural functionalism, critical sociology, and symbolic interactionism — have provided different approaches and answers.

5.4.1 Functionalism

Talcott Parsons, in a classic statement of structural functionalism, wrote: "I conceive of political organization as functionally organized about the attainment of collective goals, i.e., the attainment or maintenance of states of interaction between the system and its environing situation that are relatively desirable from the point of view of the system" (Parsons, 1961, p. 435). From the *viewpoint of the system*, the "polity" exists to perform specific functions and meet certain needs generated by society. In particular, it exists to provide a means of attaining "desirable" collective goals by being the site of collective decision making. According to functionalism, modern forms of government have four main purposes: planning and directing society, meeting collective social needs, maintaining law and order, and managing international relations.

The abstractness of Parsons's language is both a strength and

weakness of the functionalist approach to government and the state. It is a strength in the sense that it enables functionalist sociologists to abstract from particular societies to examine how the function of collective decision making and goal attainment is accomplished in different manners in different types of society. It does not presuppose that there is a "proper" institutional (or other) structure that defines government per se, nor does it presuppose what a society's collective goals are. The idea is that the social *need* for collective goal attainment is the same for all societies, but it can be met in a variety of different ways. In this respect it is interesting to note that many nomadic or hunter-gather societies developed mechanisms that specifically *prevent* formal, enduring state organizations from developing. The typical "headman" structure in hunter-gatherer societies is a mechanism of collective decision making in which the headman takes a leadership role, but only on the provisional basis of his recognized prestige, his ability to influence or persuade, and his attunement with the group's desires. The polity function is organized in a manner that actively fends off the formation of a permanent state institution (Clastres, 1989). Similarly Parsons's own analysis of the development and differentiation of the institutions of the modern state (legislative, executive, judiciary) shows how political organization in Western societies emerged from a period of "religio-political-legal unity" in which the functions performed by church and state were not separate.

The weakness in Parsons's abstraction is that it allows functionalists to speak about functions and needs from the "point of view of the system" as if the system had an independent or neutral existence. A number of very important aspects of power disappear from view by a kind of sleight of hand when sociologists attempt to take this viewpoint. One dominant functionalist framework for understanding why the state exists is **pluralist theory**. In pluralist theory, society is made up of numerous competing interest groups — capital, labour, religious fundamentalists, feminists, LGBTQ, small business, homeless people, taxpayers, elderly, military, pacifists, etc.

— whose goals are diverse and often incompatible. In democratic societies, power and resources are widely distributed, albeit unevenly, so no one group can attain the power to permanently dominate the entire society. Therefore, the state or government has to act as a neutral mediator to negotiate, reconcile, balance, find compromise, or decide among the divergent interests. From the point of view of the system, it maintains equilibrium between competing interests so that the functions of social integration and collective goal attainment can be accomplished. In this model, the state is an autonomous institution that acts on behalf of society as a whole. It is independent of any particular interest group.On one hand, the pluralist model seems to conform to commonsense understandings of democracy. Sometimes one group wins, sometimes another. Usually there are compromises. Everyone has the potential to have input into the political decision-making process. However, critics of pluralist theory note that what disappears from an analysis that attempts to take the neutral point of view of the system and its functions is, firstly, the fact that the system itself is not disinterested — it is structured to maintain inequality; secondly, that some competing interests are not reconcilable or balanceable — they are fundamentally antagonistic; and, thirdly, that *politics* is not the same as administration or government — it is *in essence* disruptive of systems and equilibrium. The difficulty Parsons has in accounting for these aspects of political life comes out in his discussion of the use of force to maintain the state's legally sanction normative order (i.e., the "the highest order of norms regulating the behaviour of units within the society"). Parsons (1961) writes,

> No society can afford to permit any other normative order to take precedence over that sanctioned by "politically organized society." Indeed, the promulgation of any such alternative order is a revolutionary act, and the agencies responsible for it must assume the responsibility of political organization (p. 435).

He suggests that an alternative normative order is not simply the product of a competing social interest that might be balanced with others, but a revolutionary threat to the entire system. From the "point of view of the system," an alternative normative order is inadmissible and must be either violently suppressed or permitted to take responsibility for founding a new political organization of society.

5.4.2 Critical Sociology

The question of why the state exists has been answered in a variety of different ways by critical sociologists. In the Marxist tradition, the power of the state is principally understood as a means by which the economic power of capital is exercised and maintained. The state itself is in many respects subservient to the interests of capital. As Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*, "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (1848, p. 223). While the state appears to be the place where power is "held," the power of the state is in a sense secondary to the power of capital.

In the analysis of Nicos Poulantzas (1973), the state performs a key role in maintaining the integration of capitalist society, which is otherwise threatened by class conflict and even conflict within the capitalist class itself. In particular, the state performs three functions that serve the interests of the dominant classes: an **accumulation function** in which the state maintains the economic conditions for sustained capitalist investment and profitability, a **legitimation function** in which the state promotes the legitimacy of the social order (including its inequalities and power structures) and secures social harmony and the consent of the public to be ruled, and (3) a **coercive function** in which, "in the last instance," the state intervenes by use of force to repress sources of social unrest and disorder (Panitch 1977). Poulantzas emphasizes that the state is not

under the *direct* control of the capitalist class however. He is not describing a conspiracy theory. Rather the state often intervenes in ways that seem to contradict the immediate interests of capitalists, especially when it implements taxes, welfare provisions, unemployment insurance, labour union rights, environmental protections, etc., or promotes policies that privilege one sector of the economy over another (e.g., resource extraction over manufacturing). Poulantzas notes that whereas the immediate interests of specific corporations might be to maximize profits in the short term, the role of the state is to maintain the long-term interests of capital as a whole (i.e., the stability of the *system* of private property and private accumulation of profit).

A second type of critical sociology is feminism. Catherine MacKinnon argued that "feminism has no theory of the state" (MacKinnon 1989, p. 157). The feminist understanding of the state's role in society and gender hierarchies is ambiguous. That is in part because the state has at times been an important ally for addressing feminist concerns and at other times an important mechanism for maintaining patriarchal power. One of the central organizational forums in the development of second-wave feminism in Canada was the formation of Status of Women committees that pressed the Lester Pearson government in the 1960s to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970). The founding of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women as a "big tent" organization that included many different women's groups can be seen as a result of the Royal Commission in that it formed to lobby subsequent governments to implement the commission's recommendations (Rebick 2005). In this case, the state is regarded as an institution that can be used to transform gender relations through legislation on sexual equality, maternity leave, access to birth control, reproductive rights, child care, etc. The consciousness raising around the Royal Commission was also a pivotal event in which the private troubles of women were collectively recognized as public issues of social structure.

On the other hand, the state has a history of family and sexual

policy that has reinforced women's unpaid labour in the household, their subordinate status outside the household, and the intense moral regulation of women's lives. This is not an accidental circumstance. MacKinnon (1982) argues, for example, that state power is in crucial respects sexual power, a power that institutionalizes male domination by enforcing the assumptions and social requirements of heterosexuality. While instances of overt male sexual abuse and coercion like rape, incest, sexual harassment, child pornography, and procurement for prostitution are subject to prosecution, this is only to protect the underlying male sexual dominance and female subordination of heterosexual relationships. "[T]he state protects male power [by] appearing to prohibit its excesses when necessary to its normalization" (MacKinnon 1989, p. 167). MacKinnon argues that the dominant concepts of jurisprudence that regulate the relation of law and life (i.e., the neutrality of the law, the protection of abstract rights and freedoms, etc.) have to be challenged from the point of view of women's concrete experience of everyday sexual inequality. For example, protecting the pornographer's "freedom of speech" enables the continued exploitation, use, and abuse of actual girls and women who often do not have a meaningful choice to refuse such "employment."

Figure 5.21*. Michel Foucault: "In political thought and analysis we still have not cut off the head of the king" (Michel Foucault used under CC BY SA 3.0 license).*

A third critical sociological perspective on the state can be found in the work of Michel Foucault who argues that the idea of the state is an abstraction that conceals a far more widespread and pernicious operation of power. The power of the state, understood to operate through the formulation and enforcement of rights and laws, relies on an order that is in fact produced by a multitude of non-state "micro-power" relationships that extend throughout society. These power relationships are disciplinary in nature, focused on fostering the capacities of human "life and what it can do" through the

implementation of regimens or practices of improvement: in schools, hospitals, armies, families, prisons, etc. Foucault (1980a) argues that the focus on the state as a site of centralized power, "allow[s] a system of right to be superimposed upon the mechanisms of discipline in such a way as to conceal its actual procedures, the element of domination inherent in its techniques, and to guarantee to everyone, by virtue of the sovereignty of the state, the exercise of his proper sovereign rights…[T]his democratization of sovereignty [is] fundamentally determined by and grounded in mechanisms of disciplinary coercion" (p.105). The challenge to power must not be addressed towards the state, Foucault argues, but to the local sites, practices, relationships, discourses, and institutions where the effects of power are directly experienced. "In political thought and analysis we still have not cut off the head of the king" (1980b, pp. 88-89).

5.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism

Other sociologists study government and power by relying on the framework of symbolic interactionism, which is grounded in the works of Max Weber and George H. Mead. In this school, the meaning of the state and politics emerges through processes of communicative interaction. Only on the basis of the meanings attributed to politics can coherent political courses of action and behaviour be undertaken individually or collectively.

Symbolic interactionism, as it pertains to government, therefore focuses its attention on figures, emblems, or individuals that represent power and authority. Many diverse entities in larger society can be considered symbolic: trees, doves, wedding rings. Images that represent the power and authority of Canada include the Parliament Buildings, the beaver, and the Canadian flag. The Canadian national anthem, sung at sports events and official assemblies, incites respect and reverence in many Canadians. The

symbolic nature of political discourses and political emblems are of course open to manipulation, which is often referred to as *image politics*. In fact the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan proposed that "Politics will eventually be replaced by imagery. The politician will be only too happy to abdicate in favour of his image, because the image will be much more powerful than he could ever be" (Newman, 1971, p. 42).

Overall, symbolic interactionists are not interested in large structures such as "the government" or "the state" as if they existed independently of the ongoing interactions that constitute them. One side of this, as we have seen, is their attention to the ongoing creation of symbols that give meaning to political life and activity. But as micro-sociologists, they are also interested in the face-to-face aspects of politics. In reality, much of politics consists of face-to-face backroom meetings and lobbyist efforts. What the public often sees is the front stage of politics that is sanitized by the media through gatekeeping. Symbolic interactionists are most interested in the meaningful interaction between the small groups who make decisions, or in the case of some recent parliamentary committees, who demonstrate the inability to interact meaningfully. The heart of politics is the result of small-scale exchanges between individuals and small groups over periods of time.

The long-standing complaint of increasing incivility in House of Commons debates, question period, and committee work points to the way that give-and-take interactions between parliamentarians have been severely curtailed in recent years (Samara 2011). These interactions are essential for creating mutual understanding and consensus as well as producing new meanings and perspectives that individuals use to make sure there are future interactions. To the degree that they break down or communication becomes dysfunctional, the elementary components that enable the legislative function of government to perform its activity independent of direct control by the Office of the Prime Minister (i.e., the executive function) are threatened and democracy itself is curtailed.

Key Terms and Concepts

absolute monarchy: Government wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power.

accumulation function: The role of the state in maintaining the economic conditions for sustained capitalist investment and profitability.

anarchism: The political principles and practice of social organization without formal or state leadership**anarchy** the absence of any organized government.

asymmetrical warfare: Violent military conflict in which there is a significant imbalance of technical and military means between combatants.

authority: Power that people accept because it comes from a source that is perceived as legitimate.

charismatic authority: Power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities.

citizenship: The internalized sense of individual dignity, rights, and freedom that accompanies formal membership in the political community.

coercive function: The role of the state in maintaining social order by use of force.

constitutional monarchies: National governments that

recognize monarchs but require these figures to abide by the laws of a greater constitution.

democracy: Rule by the people.

democratic will formation: The deliberative process by which the will or decisions of the people are determined.

dictatorship: A form of government in which a single person (or a very small group) wields complete and absolute authority over a government or populace after the dictator rises to power, usually through economic or military might.

direct democracy: A form of government in which decision making, even in matters of detail, is conducted through assemblies made up of all citizens.

domination: A situation in which power and resistance are fixed into a more or less permanent hierarchical arrangement.

empire: A geographically widespread organization of individual states, nations, and peoples that is ruled by a centralized government; the contemporary supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose territory is the entire globe and whose nodes in "its network form of power" include the dominant nation-states, supranational institutions, and major capitalist corporations.

government: The various means and strategies used to direct the behaviour and actions of others (or of oneself).

ideal speech situation: The ideal situation for democratic discussion in which every subject is permitted to take part in public discussion, to question assertions, to introduce assertions, and to express attitudes, desires, and needs; no subject can be prevented from speaking.

image event: An event staged using primarily visual material as a means of public persuasion.

image management: The process of controlling the impact of one's appearance to others.

institutions of democracy: The institutions that organize the regular processes of democracy including Parliament, the civil service, electoral procedures, constitutions, rule of law, etc.

legitimation function: The role of the state in securing social harmony and the consent of the public to be ruled.

monarchy: A form of government in which a single person, or monarch, rules until that individual dies or abdicates the throne.

nation-state: A political unit whose boundaries are co-extensive with a society.

normalization of militarization: The contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence.

oligarchy: A form of government in which power is held by a small, elite group.

one person, one vote: A concept holding that each person's vote should be counted equally.

patrimonialism: A type of authority wherein military and administrative factions enforce the power of the master.

pluralist theory: The state acts as a neutral mediator to balance the competing interests and demands of divergent interest groups in society.

politics: The means by which form is given to the life of a people; the activity of striving to share power or striving to

influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.

political demand: The underlying societal factors and social changes that create constituencies of people with common interests.

political supply: The strategies and organizational capacities of political parties to deliver an appealing political program to particular constituencies.

postmaterialist: Concerns with quality-of-life issues: personal autonomy, self-expression, environmental integrity, women's rights, gay rights, the meaningfulness of work, habitability of cities, etc.

post-security: A condition in which lethal violence is present as a constant potentiality, always and everywhere ready to erupt.

power: The ability to exercise one's will over others; the capacity or to create and act.

public sphere: An open space for public debate and deliberation.

rational-legal authority: Power that is legitimized by rules, regulations, and laws.

representative democracy: A government wherein citizens elect officials to represent their interests.

revolution: A rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the way of life, social structure, and political institutions of a society.

sovereign state system: The system by which the world is divided up into separate and indivisible sovereign territories.

sovereignty: The political form in which a single, central "sovereign" or supreme lawmaking authority governs within a clearly demarcated territory.

state: A human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.

state of exception: A condition of crisis in which the law or the constitution is temporarily suspended so that the executive leader can claim emergency powers.

terrorism: The use of violence on civilian populations and institutions to achieve political ends.

totalitarian dictatorship: An extremely oppressive form of dictatorship in which most aspects of citizens' lives are controlled by the leader.

traditional authority: Power legitimized on the basis of long-standing customs.

war: A violent armed conflict between politically distinct groups.

5.5 Summary

Sociologists examine government and politics in terms of their impact on individuals and larger social systems. Power refers to both an individual's ability to control or direct others and the capacity each person has to act and create. Forms of domination occur when the give and take between these two types of power become fixed into permanent hierarchies. Modern states are institutions that organize relationships or power and domination

according to the principle of sovereignty. Authority is influence that is predicated on perceived legitimacy. Max Weber studied power and authority, differentiating between the two concepts and formulating a system for classifying types of authority: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic.

Nations are governed by different political systems, including monarchies, oligarchies, dictatorships, and democracies. Democracies are based on the principle of rule by the people, although how democratic will formation is achieved and implemented has changed from the original direct democracy of the Greeks to modern forms of representative democracy. Three components are central to the understanding of democratic societies: the institutions of democracy, the internalized sense of citizenship, and the public sphere. Sociologists model the process of democratic will formation and political party competition by examining social factors that affect political demand and political supply.

The modern state system emerged in Europe in response to the instability that arose through conflict between competing authorities and overlapping jurisdictions and powers. The ability of the state to regularize social life and provide a stable container for society is undermined however by states of exception such as terrorism and war or the formation of supra-national entities such as empires. The challenges to state authority have intensified in recent years, leading to the observation that states of exception have become the norm.

Sociologists use frameworks to gain perspective on data and observations related to the study of power and government. Durkheim's functionalism suggests that societal power and structure is predicated on cooperation, interdependence, and shared goals or values. Critical theory, rooted in Marxism, asserts that societal structures are the result of social groups competing for wealth and influence. Symbolic interactionism examines a smaller realm of sociological interest: the individual's perception of symbols

of power and their subsequent reaction to the face-to-face interactions of the political realm.

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6. Module 6: Markets, Organizations and Work

Learning Objectives

- Describe the primary economic systems and their historical development within Agricultural, Industrial, and Postindustrial societies
- Compare and contrast capitalism and socialism both, in theory and in practice
- Describe Neoliberalism as both, ideology and practice
- Discuss how Neoliberalism is related to Embedded Liberalism and Classical Liberalism
- Explain why the monetization of value is strange
- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Distinguish between groups, networks, and organizations
- Describe the characteristics of bureaucracies
- Describe the current Canadian workforce and the trend of polarization

6.0 Introduction to Markets, Organizations and Work

Ever since the first people traded one item for another, there has been some form of economy in the world. It is how people optimize what they have to meet their wants and needs. **Economy** refers to the social institutions through which a society's resources (goods and services) are managed. **Goods** are the physical objects we find, grow, or make in order to meet our needs and the needs of others. Goods can meet essential needs, such as a place to live, clothing, and food, or they can be luxuries — those things we do not *need* to live but *want* anyway. Goods produced for sale on the market are called **commodities**. In contrast to these *objects*, **services** are *activities* that benefit people. Examples of services include food preparation and delivery, health care, education, and entertainment. These services provide some of the resources that help to maintain and improve a society. The food industry helps ensure that all of a society's members have access to sustenance. Health care and education systems care for those in need, help foster longevity, and equip people to become productive members of society. Alongside structures of power and governance, the economy is one of human society's earliest social structures. Our earliest forms of writing (such as Sumerian clay tablets) were developed to record transactions, payments, and debts between merchants. As societies grow and change, so do their economies. The economy of a small farming community is very different from the economy of a large nation with advanced technology. In this module, we will examine different types of economic systems and how they have functioned in various societies. Linked to the examination of economic systems is an examination of the organizational forms in which economic activity is conducted (i.e., governance and administrative) and the implications of these different forms for individuals, as workers, clients, citizens and consumers.

One of the key arguments that sociologists draw from Marx's

analysis is to show that capitalism is not simply an economic system but a social system. The dynamics of capitalism are not a set of obscure economic concerns to be relegated to the business section of the newspaper, but the architecture that underlies the newspaper's front page headlines; in fact, every headline in the paper. At the time when Marx was developing his analysis, **capitalism** was still a relatively new economic system, an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of goods and the means to produce them. It was also a system that was inherently unstable and prone to crisis, yet increasingly global in its reach. Today capitalism has left no place on earth and no aspect of daily life untouched.

As a social system, one of the main characteristics of capitalism is incessant change, which is why the culture of capitalism is often referred to as **modernity**. The cultural life of capitalist society can be described as a series of successive "presents," each of which defines what is modern, new, or fashionable for a brief time before fading away into obscurity like the 78 rpm record, the 8-track tape, and the CD. As Marx and Engels put it, "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty, and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fast-frozen relations … are swept away, all new ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air…" (1848/1977, p. 224). From the ghost towns that dot the Canadian landscape to the expectation of having a lifetime career, every element of social life under capitalism has a limited duration.

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

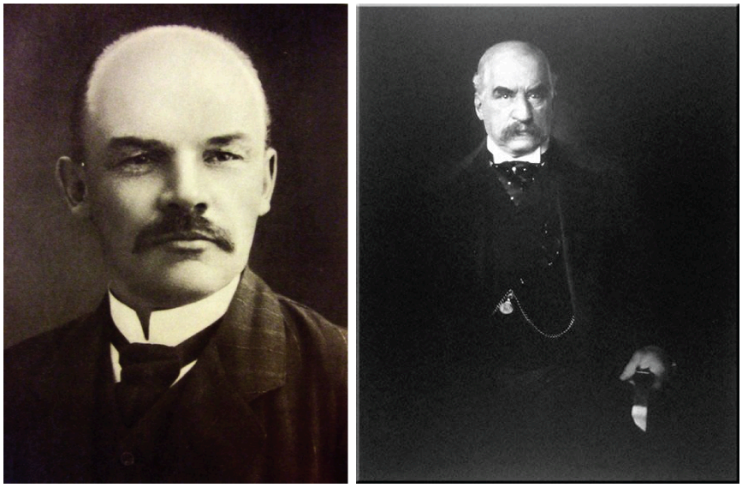
East were technically, scientifically, and culturally more advanced than the West?

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

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

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

6.1 Economic Systems



(a) (b)

Figure 6.1*. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was one of the founders of Russian communism. J.P. Morgan was one of the most influential capitalists in history. They had very different views on how economies should be run. (Photos (a: Lenin) by Aristodem and (b: Morgan) by SalomonCeb published at Wikimedia Commons)*

The dominant economic systems of the modern era have been

capitalism and socialism, and there have been many variations of each system across the globe. Countries have switched systems as their rulers and economic fortunes have changed. For example, Russia has been transitioning to a market-based economy since the fall of communism in that region of the world. Vietnam, where the economy was devastated by the Vietnam War, restructured to a state-run economy in response, and more recently has been moving toward a socialist-style market economy. In the past, other economic systems reflected the societies that formed them. Many of these earlier systems lasted centuries. These changes in economies raise many questions for sociologists. What are these older economic systems? How did they develop? Why did they fade away? What are the similarities and differences between older economic systems and modern ones?

6.1.1 Economics of Agricultural, Industrial, and Postindustrial Societies

Figure 6.2 *In an agricultural economy, crops are the most important commodity. (Bill Stagg turning up his beans) is in the Public Domain)*

Figure 6.3 *In a postindustrial society, the most valuable resource is information. (“Future call center operators” by MarcinMonko is licensed under CC BY 2.0)*

As discussed in Module 2, our earliest ancestors lived as hunter-gatherers. Small groups of extended families roamed from place to place looking for means to subsist. They would settle in an area for a brief time when there were abundant resources. They hunted animals for their meat and gathered wild fruits, vegetables, and cereals. They distributed and ate what they caught or gathered as soon as possible because they had no way of preserving or transporting it. Once the resources of an area ran low, the group had to move on, and everything they owned had to travel with them. Food reserves only consisted of what they could carry. Groups did not typically trade essential goods with other groups due to scarcity. The use of resources was governed by the practice of **usufruct**, the distribution of resources according to need. Bookchin (1982) notes that in hunter-gatherer societies “property of any kind, communal or otherwise, has yet to acquire independence from the claims of satisfaction” (p. 50).

The Agricultural Revolution

The first true economies arrived when people started raising crops and domesticating animals. Although there is still a great deal of disagreement among archeologists as to the exact timeline, research indicates that agriculture began independently and at different times in several places around the world. The earliest agriculture was in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East around 11,000–10,000 years ago. Next were the valleys of the Indus, Yangtze, and Yellow Rivers in India and China, between 10,000 and 9,000 years ago. The people living in the highlands of New Guinea developed agriculture between 9,000 and 6,000 years ago, while people were farming in sub-Saharan Africa between 5,000 and 4,000 years ago. Agriculture developed later in the western hemisphere, arising in what would become the eastern United States, central Mexico, and northern South America between 5,000 and 3,000 years ago (Diamond and Bellwood, 2003).

Agriculture began with the simplest of technologies — for example, a pointed stick to break up the soil — but really took off when people harnessed animals to pull an even more efficient tool for the same task: a plow. With this new technology, one family could grow enough crops not only to feed themselves but others as well. Knowing there would be abundant food each year as long as crops were tended led people to abandon the nomadic life of hunter-gatherers and settle down to farm. The improved efficiency in food production meant that not everyone had to toil all day in the fields. As agriculture grew, new jobs emerged, along with new technologies. Excess crops needed to be stored, processed, protected, and transported. Farming equipment and irrigation systems needed to be built and maintained. Wild animals needed to be domesticated and herds shepherded. Economies begin to develop because people now had goods and services to trade. As more people specialized in nonfarming jobs, villages grew into towns and then into cities. Urban areas created the need for

administrators and public servants. Disputes over ownership, payments, debts, compensation for damages, and the like led to the need for laws and courts — and the judges, clerks, lawyers, and police who administered and enforced those laws.

At first, most goods and services were traded as gifts or through bartering between small social groups (Mauss, 1922). Exchanging one form of goods or services for another was known as **bartering**. This system only works when one person happens to have something the other person needs at the same time. To solve this problem, people developed the idea of a means of exchange that could be used at any time: that is, money. **Money** refers to an object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged for payment. In early economies, money was often objects like cowry shells, rice, barley, or even rum. Precious metals quickly became the preferred means of exchange in many cultures because of their durability and portability. The first coins were minted in Lydia in what is now Turkey around 650–600 BCE (Goldsborough, 2010). Early legal codes established the value of money and the rates of exchange for various commodities. They also established the rules for inheritance, fines as penalties for crimes, and how property was to be divided and taxed (Horne, 1915). A symbolic interactionist would note that bartering and money are systems of symbolic exchange. Monetary objects took on a symbolic meaning, one that carries into our modern-day use of cheques and debit cards.

As city-states grew into countries and countries grew into empires, their economies grew as well. When large empires broke up, their economies broke up too. The governments of newly formed nations sought to protect and increase their markets. They financed voyages of discovery to find new markets and resources all over the world, ushering in a rapid progression of economic development. Colonies were established to secure these markets, and wars were financed to take over territory. These ventures were funded in part by raising capital from investors who were paid back from the goods obtained. Governments and private citizens also set up large trading companies that financed their enterprises

around the world by selling stocks and bonds. Governments tried to protect their share of the markets by developing a system called mercantilism. **Mercantilism** is an economic policy based on accumulating silver and gold by controlling colonial and foreign markets through taxes and other charges. The resulting restrictive practices and exacting demands included monopolies, bans on certain goods, high tariffs, and exclusivity requirements. Mercantilistic governments also promoted manufacturing and, with the ability to fund technological improvements, they helped create the equipment that led to the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution

Up until the end of the 18th century, most manufacturing was done using manual labour. This changed as research led to machines that could be used to manufacture goods. A small number of innovations led to a large number of changes in the British economy. In the textile industries, the spinning of cotton, worsted yarn, and flax could be done more quickly and less expensively using new machines with names like the Spinning Jenny and the Spinning Mule (Bond et al., 2003). Another important innovation was made in the production of iron: coke from coal could now be used in all stages of smelting rather than charcoal from wood, dramatically lowering the cost of iron production while increasing availability (Bond, 2003). James Watt ushered in what many scholars recognize as the greatest change, revolutionizing transportation and, thereby, the entire production of goods with his improved steam engine. As people moved to cities to fill factory jobs, factory production also changed. Workers did their jobs in assembly lines and were trained to complete only one or two steps in the manufacturing process. These advances meant that more finished goods could be manufactured with more efficiency and speed than ever before.

The Industrial Revolution also changed agricultural practices.

Until that time, many people practiced **subsistence farming** in which they produced only enough to feed themselves and pay their taxes. New technology introduced gasoline-powered farm tools such as tractors, seed drills, threshers, and combine harvesters. Farmers were encouraged to plant large fields of a single crop to maximize profits. With improved transportation and the invention of refrigeration, produce could be shipped safely all over the world. The Industrial Revolution modernized the world. With growing resources came growing societies and economies. Between 1800 and 2000, the world's population grew sixfold, while per capita income saw a tenfold jump (Maddison, 2003). While many people's lives were improving, the Industrial Revolution also birthed many societal problems. There were inequalities in the system. Owners amassed vast fortunes while labourers, including young children, toiled for long hours in unsafe conditions. Workers' rights, wage protection, and safe work environments are issues that arose during this period and remain concerns today.

Postindustrial Societies and the Information Age

Postindustrial societies, also known as information societies, have evolved in modernized nations. One of the most valuable goods of the modern era is information. Those who have the means to produce, store, and disseminate information are leaders in this type of society. One way scholars understand the development of different types of societies (like agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial) is by examining their economies in terms of four sectors: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Each has a different focus. The primary sector extracts and produces raw materials (like metals and crops). The secondary sector turns those raw materials into finished goods. The tertiary sector provides services: child care, health care, and money management. Finally, the quaternary sector produces ideas; these include the research

that leads to new technologies, the management of information, and a society's highest levels of education and the arts (Kenessey, 1987).

Modernization theory proposes a model of quasi-natural economic development, from undeveloped economies to advanced, to explain the difference in distribution of these sectors around the globe. In underdeveloped countries, the majority of the people work in the primary sector. As economies develop, more and more people are employed in the secondary sector. In well-developed economies, such as those in Canada, the United States, Japan, and western Europe, the majority of the workforce is employed in service industries. In Canada, for example, more than 75% of the workforce is employed in the tertiary sector (Statistics Canada, 2012). The rapid increase in computer use in all aspects of daily life is a main reason for the transition to an information economy. Fewer people are needed to work in factories because computerized robots now handle many of the tasks. Other manufacturing jobs have been outsourced to less-developed countries as a result of the developing global economy. The growth of the internet has created industries that exist almost entirely online. Within industries, technology continues to change how goods are produced. For instance, the music and film industries used to produce physical products like CDs and DVDs for distribution. Now those goods are increasingly produced digitally and streamed or downloaded at a much lower physical manufacturing cost. Information and the wherewithal to use it creatively become commodities in a postindustrial economy.

6.2 Dominant Economic Systems of the 20th Century

6.2.1 Capitalism

Figure 6.4 *Companies sell stock to raise capital that they can invest in new projects, improving the company and producing the means for further income generation. (The Toronto Stock Exchange by Paul B Toman used under CC BY SA 3.0)*

Scholars do not always agree on a single definition of capitalism. For our purposes, we will define **capitalism** as an economic system characterized by private ownership of property or capital (as opposed to state ownership), sale of commodities on the open market, the purchase of labour for wages, and the impetus to generate profit and thereby accumulate wealth. This is the type of economy in place in Canada today. Under capitalism, people invest capital (money or property invested in a business venture) in a business to produce a product or service that can be sold in a market to consumers. The investors in the company are generally entitled to a share of any profit made on sales after the costs of production and distribution are taken out. These investors often reinvest their profits to improve and expand the business or acquire new ones. To illustrate how this works, consider this example. Sarah, Antonio, and Chris each invest $250,000 into a start-up company offering an innovative baby product. When the company nets $1 million in profits its first year, a portion of that profit goes back to Sarah, Antonio, and Chris as a return on their investment. Sarah reinvests with the same company to fund the development of a second product line, Antonio uses his return to help another start-up in the technology sector, and Chris buys a small yacht for vacations. The goal for all parties is to maximize profits.

To provide their product or service, owners hire workers, to whom they pay wages. The cost of raw materials, the retail price they charge consumers, and the amount they pay in wages are determined through the law of supply and demand and by competition. This leads to the dynamic qualities of capitalism, including its instability and tendency toward crisis. When demand exceeds supply, prices tend to rise. When supply exceeds demand, prices tend to fall. When multiple businesses market similar products and services to the same buyers, there is competition. Competition can be good for consumers because it can lead to lower prices and higher quality as businesses try to get consumers to buy from them rather than from their competitors. However, competition also leads to key problems like the general tendency

for a falling rate of profit, periodic crises of investment, and stock market crashes where billions of dollars of economic value can disappear overnight.

Wages tend to be set in a similar way. People who have talents, skills, education, or training that is in short supply and is needed by businesses tend to earn more than people without comparable skills. Competition in the workforce helps determine how much people will be paid. In times when many people are unemployed and jobs are scarce, people are often willing to accept less than they would when their services are in high demand. In this scenario, businesses are able to maintain or increase profits by obliging workers to accept reduced wages. When fewer people are working or people are working for lower wages, the amount of money circulating in the economy decreases, reducing the demand for commodities and services and creating a vicious cycle of economic recession or depression. To sum up, capitalism is defined by a unique set of features that distinguish it from previous economic systems such as feudalism or agrarianism, or contemporary systems such as socialism or communism:

- The means of production (i.e., productive property or capital) are privately owned and controlled.
- Labour power is purchased from workers by capitalists for a wage or salary.
- The goal of production is to make a profit from selling commodities in a competitive free market.
- Profit from the sale of commodities is appropriated by the owners of capital. Part of this profit is reinvested as capital in the business enterprise in order to expand its profitability.
- The competitive accumulation of capital and profit leads to capitalism's dynamic qualities: constant expansion of markets, globalization of investment, growth and centralization of capital, boom and bust cycles, economic crises, class conflict, etc.

Capitalism in Practice

As capitalists began to dominate the economies of many countries during the Industrial Revolution, the rapid growth of businesses and their tremendous profitability gave some owners the capital they needed to create enormous corporations that could monopolize an entire industry. Many companies controlled all aspects of the production cycle for their industry, from the raw materials to the production to the stores in which they were sold. These companies were able to use their wealth to buy out or stifle any competition. In Canada, the predatory tactics used by these large monopolies caused the government to take action. In 1889, the government passed the Act for the Prevention and Suppression of Combinations Formed in the Restraint of Trade (precursor to the contemporary Competition Act of 1985), a law designed to break up monopolies and regulate how key industries — such as transportation, steel production, and oil and gas exploration and refining — could conduct business.

Canada is considered a capitalist country. However, the Canadian government has a great deal of influence on private companies through the laws it passes and the regulations enforced by government agencies. Through taxes, regulations on wages, guidelines to protect worker safety and the environment, plus financial rules for banks and investment firms, the government exerts a certain amount of control over how all companies do business. Provincial and federal governments also own, operate, or control large parts of certain industries, such as the post office, schools, hospitals, highways and railroads, and water, sewer, and power utilities. From the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s to the development of the Alberta tar sands in the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian government has played a substantial interventionist role in investing, providing incentives, and assuming ownership in the economy. Debate over the extent to which the government should be involved in the economy remains an issue

of contention today. Neoliberal economists and corporate-funded think tanks like the Fraser Institute criticize such involvements, arguing that they lead to economic inefficiency and distortion in free market processes of supply and demand. Others believe intervention is necessary to protect the rights of workers and the well-being of the general population.

6.2.2 Socialism

Socialism is an economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as "state run") of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth equally among the members of a society. Under socialism, everything that people produce, including services, is considered a social product. Everyone who contributes to the production of a good or to providing a service is entitled to a share in any benefits that come from its sale or use. To make sure all members of society get their fair share, government must be able to control property, production, and distribution. The focus in socialism is on benefiting society, whereas capitalism seeks to benefit the individual. Socialists claim that a capitalistic economy leads to inequality, with unfair distribution of wealth and individuals who use their power at the expense of society. Socialism strives, ideally, to control the economy to avoid the problems and instabilities inherent in capitalism. Within socialism, there are diverging views on the extent to which the economy should be controlled. The communist systems of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and China under Chairman Mao Tse Tung were organized so that all but the most personal items were public property. Contemporary democratic socialism is based on the socialization or government control of essential services such as health care, education, and utilities (electrical power, telecommunications, and sewage). This is essentially a mixed economy based on a free market system and with substantial

portions of the economy under private control. Farms, small shops, and businesses are privately owned, while the state might own large businesses in key sectors like energy extraction and transportation. The central component of democratic socialism, however, is the redistribution of wealth and the universal provision of services like child care, health care, and unemployment insurance through a progressive tax system.

The other area on which socialists disagree is on what level society should exert its control. In communist countries like the former Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, and North Korea, the national government exerts control over the economy centrally. They had the power to tell all businesses what to produce, how much to produce, and what to charge for it. Other socialists believe control should be decentralized so it can be exerted by those most affected by the industries being controlled. An example of this would be a town collectively owning and managing the businesses on which its populace depends. Because of challenges in their economies, several of these communist countries have moved from central planning to letting market forces help determine many production and pricing decisions. **Market socialism** describes a subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demands. This could involve situations like profits generated by a company going directly to the employees of the company or being used as public funds (Gregory and Stuart, 2003). Many eastern European and some South American countries have mixed economies. Key industries are nationalized and directly controlled by the government; however, most businesses are privately owned and regulated by the government.

State intervention in the economy has been a central component to the Canadian system since the founding of the country. Democratic socialist movements became prominent in Canadian politics in the 1920s. The efforts of the western agrarian movements, the labour union movement, and the social democratic parties like the CCF (the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation)

and its successor, the NDP (New Democratic Party), were instrumental in implementing many of the democratic socialist features of contemporary Canada such as universal health care, old age pensions, employment insurance, and welfare.

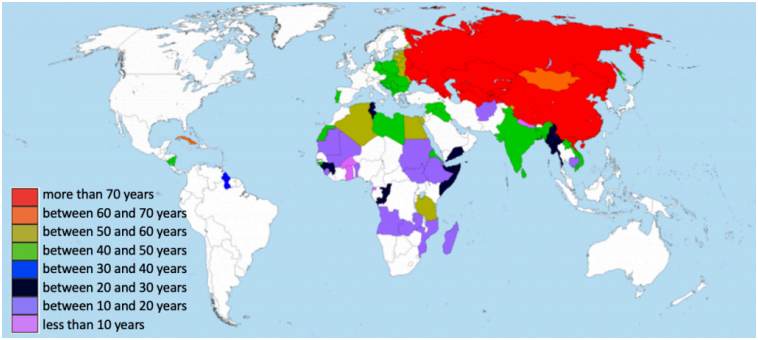


Figure 6.6 *This map shows countries that have adopted a socialist economy at some point. The colours indicate the duration that socialism prevailed. (Socialist states by duration by Braganza is in the Public Domain.)*

Socialism in Practice

As with capitalism, the basic ideas behind socialism go far back in history. Plato, in ancient Greece, suggested a republic in which people shared their material goods. Early Christian communities believed in common ownership, as did the systems of monasteries set up by various religious orders. Many of the leaders of the French Revolution called for the abolition of all private property, not just the estates of the aristocracy they had overthrown. Thomas More's *Utopia*, published in 1516, imagined a society with little private property and mandatory labour on a communal farm. Most experimental utopian communities had the abolition of private property as a founding principle. Modern socialism really began as a reaction to the excesses of uncontrolled industrial capitalism in the

1800s and 1900s. The enormous wealth and lavish lifestyles enjoyed by owners contrasted sharply with the miserable conditions of the workers. Some of the first great sociological thinkers studied the rise of socialism. Max Weber admired some aspects of socialism, especially its rationalism and how it could help social reform, but noted that social revolution would not resolve the issues of bureaucratic control and the "iron cage of future bondage" (Greisman and Ritzer, 1981).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) was an early anarchist who thought socialism could be used to create utopian communities. In his 1840 book, *What Is Property?*, he famously stated that "property is theft" (Proudhon, 1840). By this he meant that if an owner did not work to produce or earn the property or profit, then the owner was stealing it from those who did. Proudhon believed economies could work using a principle called **mutualism**, under which individuals and cooperative groups would exchange products with one another on the basis of mutually satisfactory contracts (Proudhon, 1840).

By far the most important influential thinker on socialism was Karl Marx (Marx and Engels, 1848). Through his own writings and those with his collaborator, industrialist Friedrich Engels, Marx used a *materialist analysis* to show that throughout history, the resolution of class struggles caused changes in economies. Materialist analyses focus on changes in the economic mode of production to explain the nature and transformation of the social order. Marx saw the history of class conflict developing dialectically from slave and owner, to serf and lord, to journeyman and master, to worker and owner. The resolution of one conflict was precipitated by the emergence of another. In the final epoch of class conflict, Marx argued that the development of capitalism would lead to the creation of a level of technology and economic organization sufficient to meet the needs of everyone in society equally. Scarcity, poverty, and the unequal distribution of resources were the increasingly anachronistic products of the institution of private property. However, capitalism also created the material conditions under which the working class, brought together en masse in

factories and other workplaces, would recognize their common interests in ending class exploitation (i.e., they would attain "class consciousness"). Once private property was socialized through the revolution of the working classes, Marx argued that not only would the exploitive relationships of capitalism come to an end, but classes and class conflict themselves would disappear.

Further discussion of the characteristics of capitalism and socialism and an elaboration of the strengths and weaknesses of the respective economic systems is provided by Richard Wolff in the Youtube video, "Economic Update: Capitalism vs Socialism" (April 29, 2019).

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6.3 Globalization and the Rise of

Neoliberalism

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6.3.1 Neoliberalism as Global Economic Policy

Figure 6.7 *Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighbourhoods. (* [PC3100351-Sandals White House, Jamaica](#) *by gailf548 under a* [CC-BY 2.0 License](#)*)*

As described by Chompsky in the video, " Neoliberalism is Destroying Democracy" at the end of Module Five, the neoliberal era that emerged in the 1970s produced a shift in government policy from a welfare state model of the redistribution of resources to a neoliberal model of free market distribution of resources. This transition does not take place in a vacuum, however. Just as global capitalism is an economic system characterized by constant change, so too is the relationship between global capitalism and national state policy. Throughout the 19th and first half of the 20th century, the role of the state in the wealthy Northern countries was typically

limited to providing the legal mechanisms and enforcement to protect private property. Capitalism itself was for the most part regulated by competition until the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s. From then on, an awareness grew that the capacity for producing commodities had far exceeded the ability of people to buy them (Harvey, 1989). The economic model of Fordism, adopted in the wealthy Northern countries, offered a solution to the crisis by creating a system of intensive mass production (maximum use of machinery and minute divisions of labour), cheap products, high wages, and mass consumption. This system required a disciplined work force and labour peace, however, which is one reason why states began to take a different role in the economy.

The post-World War II labour-management compromise or "accord" involved the recognition and institutionalization of labour unions, the mediation of the state in capital/labour disputes, the use of taxes and Keynesian economic policy to address economic recessions, and the gradual roll out of social safety net provisions. This set of policies collectively became known as the welfare state. In a high wage/high consumption economy, the ability of individuals to continue to consume even when misfortune struck was paramount, so unemployment insurance, pensions, health care, and disability provisions were important components of the new accord. The accord also reaffirmed the rights of private property or capital to introduce new technology, to reorganize production as they saw fit, and to invest wherever they pleased. Therefore, it was not a system of *economic* democracy or socialism. Nevertheless, the claims of full employment, continued prosperity, and the creation of a "just society" appeared plausible within the confines of the capitalist economic system.

Figure 6.8 *Pierre Trudeau (shown here in a photo from 1975) was elected leader of the Liberal Party at the 1968 convention — "Canada must be a just society" (Pierre Trudeau (1975) cropped by Rob Mieremet under a CC-BY-SA 3.0 Unported License.)*

When Fordism and the welfare state system began to break down in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the relationship between the state and the economy began to change again. In step with the development of the post-Fordist economy of lean production, precarious employment, and niche market consumption, the state began to withdraw from its guarantee of providing universal social services and social security. **Neoliberalism** is the term used to define the new rationality of government, which abandons the interventionist model of the welfare state to emphasize the use of "free market" mechanisms to regulate society.

Thus, neoliberalism is a set of policies in which the state reduces its role in providing public services, regulating industry,

redistributing wealth, and protecting "the commons" — i.e., the collective property that exists for everyone to share (the environment, public and community facilities, airwaves, etc.). These policies are promoted by advocates as ways of addressing the "inefficiency of big government," the "burden on the taxpayer," the "need to cut red tape," and the "culture of entitlement and welfare dependency." In the place of "big" government, the virtues of the competitive marketplace are extolled. The market is said to promote more efficiency, lower costs, pragmatic decision making, non-favouritism, and a disciplined work ethic, etc.

Of course the facts often tell a different story. For example, government-funded health care in Canada costs far less per person than private health care in the United States (OECD, 2015). A country like Norway, which has a much higher rate of taxation than Canada, also has much lower unemployment, lower income inequality, lower inflation, better public services, a higher standard of living, and yet nevertheless has a globally competitive corporate sector with substantial state ownership and control (especially in the areas of oil and gas production, which is 80% owned by the Norwegian state) (Campbell, 2013). The policies of deregulation that caused the financial crisis of 2008, led even Alan Greenspan (b. 1926) the neoliberal economist and former Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, to acknowledge that the model of free market "rationality" was flawed (CBC News, 2013). Since the financial crisis was a product of Greenspan's tenure at the Federal Reserve, and a result of the neoliberal policy of tax cuts and market deregulation that he advocated, his acknowledgment of the failure of free market rationality is significant.

As we noted earlier in this module, while the policies of government within the capitalist state have been changing, they are not occurring in a vacuum; rather, they are unfolding in the context of the developments of global capitalism. From its origins, capitalism has been global in scope. Marx and Engels described globalization in 1848:

> The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p. 224)

The process of globalization intensified after World War II, and especially in the late 20th century with the introduction of new technologies that enabled vast volumes of capital and goods to circulate globally. The globalization of investment and production means that capital is increasingly able to shift production around the world to where labour costs are cheapest and profit greatest. In fact, as Ulrich Beck (1944-2015) put it, the effect of globalization has been to "conjure away distance" on a variety of different levels (2000, p. 20). He has argued that political actors no longer:

> live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states and their respective national societies. Globalization means that borders become markedly less relevant to everyday behaviour in the various dimensions of economics, information, ecology, technology, cross-cultural conflict and civil society. (2000, p. 20)

The terrain on which corporate, political, environmental, and other types of decisions are made is no longer confined to the boundaries of the state, which diminishes the ability of national governments to independently control economic and foreign policy. Thus, globalization represents a weakening of the autonomy and power of states. Neoliberalism is not only an internal domestic response to the economic crises and fall in the rates of profit, which began in the late 1960s, but also is a response to the ever more competitive global market for capital. Neoliberal policy is presented as a way to attract increasingly fickle global capital by making entire countries more "competitive." The result, as David Harvey (b. 1935) forcefully argues, has been to massively shift the balance of power to the economic elites of the global capitalist class (2005, pp. 16–19). As a result wealth has also been redistributed upwards.

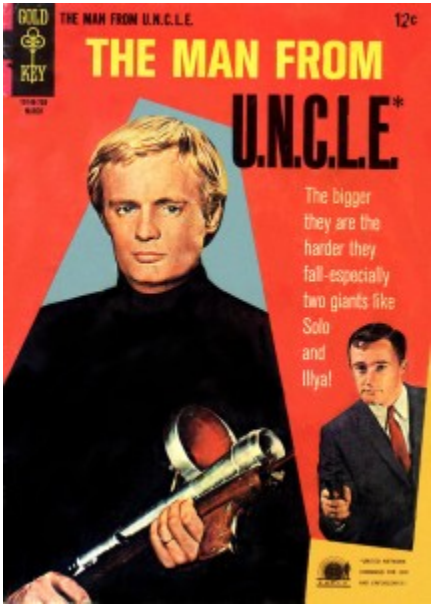


Figure 6.9 *The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (United Network Command for Law and Enforcement) was a 1960s TV show based on the idea of a secret world organization dedicated to policing the entire globe (1964 ...Solo and Illya! by James Vaughan under a CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0 License.)*

The changing configuration of global capitalism and politics has been described by some as the reemergence of **empire** (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Rather than a sovereign state system of unique and independent nation-states, in many ways the global order is better described today as a single unit within which state sovereignty has been transferred to a higher entity (Negri, 2004, p. 59). Numerous trade agreements have harmonized economies and removed borders that restrict the flow of capital and goods, and in recent decades frequent global "police actions" and trade embargoes have been enacted by various "coalitions of the willing" to enforce peace or intervene in domestic policy (in, for example, Iraq, Yugoslavia,

Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, and Syria, etc.). Similarly, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change or the Ottawa Treaty on landmines are examples of global initiatives that blur the boundaries of nation states. Empire in this sense refers to a new supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose "territory" is the entire globe. Antonio Negri (b. 1933) makes the point that this is not the same as saying that the world is dominated and controlled by the United States; rather, power is exercised through a "network" of dominant nation-states, supranational institutions (e.g., the UN, IMF, WTO, G8, NATO, etc.) and major capitalist corporations (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Negri, 2004). Empire, rather than being a form of imperialism like that which dominated in the era of colonialism, is a new political form that has emerged in response to the dynamics of global capitalism.

6.3.2 Neoliberalism as Style of Government

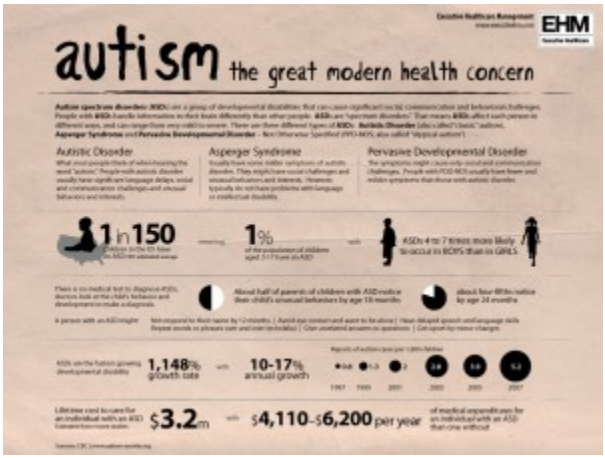


Figure 6.10 *The study of government as the "conduct of conduct" is key to understanding the different ways in which people with disabilities are treated (Autism by GDS Infographics under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

Neoliberalism is fascinating sociologically because, aside from being a type of economic policy, it signals a new way of governing individuals. This has broad implications outside of the narrow parameters of neoliberal policies like tax cuts, deregulation, and reducing the state's role in the economy. Neoliberalism also refers to a more general strategy of governing individual conduct in a number of different areas including health, employment, education, security, and crime control. In an interesting way, it governs individuals through their exercise of freedom and free choice. Whereas the welfare state has been frequently criticized by neoliberals for fostering a culture of welfare dependency and a "one size fits all" concept of government services, the new types of neoliberal strategies emphasize various ways to create active and independent entrepreneurial citizens (Rose, 1999). Thus, the idea of markets is important because markets are mechanisms that regulate and discipline people through the free choices that they make. If they make good choices they profit; if they make bad choices they pay.

One thing the "neo" (or "new") in neo-liberalism signifies is the extension of the idea of the market into areas of life where no markets existed before. For example, the provision of care for the disabled used to be provided through state institutionalization. Today, it is common to find a model of care like "individualized funding" (See, for example, Community Living BC, 2013). The state provides families of the disabled with direct payments that they use to pay for care providers who they choose after doing their own research on appropriate therapies or treatments. A market for caregivers and therapists is created, based on an assumption that this is a more efficient model for matching the skills of care contractors with the needs of the disabled. Rather than care being provided as needed, individuals or families are encouraged or *obliged* to become active consumers of therapeutic services and to make calculative decisions from an array of market choices. The families need to demonstrate their competent use of the money through formal mechanisms like budgets, audits, targets, minimal

standards, and contracts but otherwise are free to choose the services they want.

In practice these policies are often means to further reduce the overall amount of state expenditure for the disabled and their families, but as a method for governing the lives of individuals, they represent a fundamental shift from the notion of individuals as citizens with rights to individuals as agents who must independently exercise free choice, enterprise, and self-responsibility. Even though these types of policies, when properly funded, have many positive features for those with the wherewithal to take advantage of the expansion of choice (Sandborn, 2012), they represent a significant shift in the strategies of government. Thus, neoliberalism is both a macro-level economic policy, but it is also a strategy designed to change the type of relationship we have with ourselves and the concept of ourselves as citizens.

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

Table 6.1. Perceptions of time for the population aged 15 and over, by age group, Canada, 2010

[Skip Table]

Perceptions of time	Age group							
	15 and over	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 and over
Do you plan to slow down in the coming year?	19%	13%	16%	21%	22%	23%	16%	20%
Do you consider yourself a workaholic?	25%	22%	29%	31%	28%	23%	18%	14%
When you need more time, do you tend to cut back on your sleep?	46%	63%	60%	59%	45%	31%	20%	15%
At the end of the day, do you often feel that you have not accomplished what you had set out to do?	41%	34%	46%	48%	46%	40%	29%	35%
Do you worry that you don't spend enough time with your family or friends?	36%	34%	47%	53%	41%	27%	14%	10%
Do you feel that you're constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than you can handle?	34%	35%	41%	47%	40%	27%	15%	10%
Do you feel trapped in a daily routine?	34%	33%	41%	46%	40%	28%	15%	15%
Do you feel that you just don't have time for fun any more?	29%	20%	36%	43%	38%	23%	11%	11%
Do you often feel under stress when you don't have enough time?	54%	65%	66%	69%	59%	41%	22%	16%

[Skip Table]

Perceptions of time	Age group							
	15 and over	**15 to 24**	**25 to 34**	**35 to 44**	**45 to 54**	**55 to 64**	**65 to 74**	**75 and over**
Would you like to spend more time alone?	22%	19%	30%	35%	24%	15%	9%	7%

Note: The percentages represent the proportion of persons who answered "yes" to the questions on perceptions of time.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

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

Figure 6.11 *Barbara Kruger's subversive billboard art piece "I shop therefore I am" is here revised as an actual advertising slogan in a Selfridges department store in Birmingham, England. Is this the ultimate in cynical advertising or simply a fact of life in the age of consumerism? (I shop, therefore I am by Mark Hillary under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

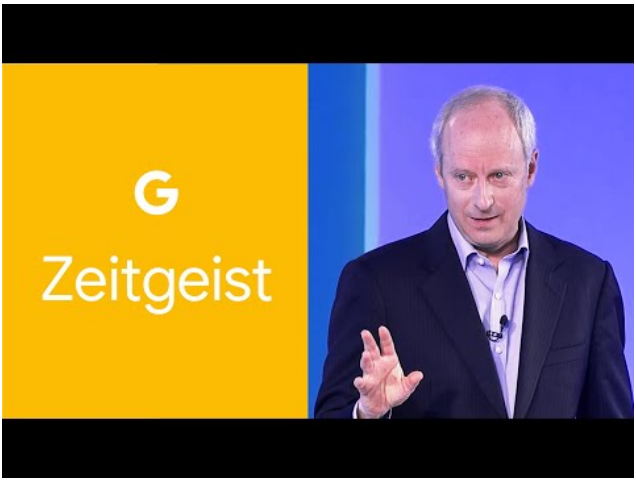
The **commodity** is simply an object, service, or a "good" that has been produced for sale on the market. **Commodification** is the process through which objects, services, or goods are increasingly turned into commodities, so they become defined more in terms of their marketability and profitability than by their intrinsic characteristics. Prior to the invention of the commodity market,

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

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

Figure 6.12 *The Mac vs. PC ad campaign plays on the idea that the computer you purchase defines your style of life, or vice versa. In this way commodities and their branding strategies insinuate themselves into our self-definitions (DSC00093 by Jose Antonio Gelado under a CC-BY-NC 2.0 License)*

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



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6.4 Technological Innovation, Media and Society

While most people probably picture computers and cell phones when the subject of technology comes up, technology is not merely a product of the modern era. For example, fire and stone tools were important forms of technology developed during the Stone Age. Just as the availability of digital technology shapes how we live today, the creation of stone tools changed how premodern humans lived and how well they ate. From the first calculator, invented in 2400 BCE in Babylon in the form of an abacus, to the predecessor of the modern computer, created in 1882 by Charles Babbage, all of our

technological innovations are advancements on previous iterations. And indeed, all aspects of our lives today are influenced by technology. In agriculture, the introduction of machines that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest greatly reduced the need for manual labour, which in turn meant there were fewer rural jobs, which led to the urbanization of society, as well as lowered birthrates because there was less need for large families to work the farms. In the criminal justice system, the ability to ascertain innocence through DNA testing has saved the lives of people on death row. The examples are endless: technology plays a role in absolutely every aspect of our lives.

How many good friends do you have? How many people do you meet for coffee or a movie? How many would you call with news about an illness or invite to your wedding? Now, how many "friends" do you have on Facebook? Technology has changed how we interact with each other. It has turned "friend" into a verb and has made it possible to share mundane news ("My dog just threw up under the bed! Ugh!") with hundreds or even thousands of people who might know you only slightly, if at all. Through the magic of Facebook, you might know about an old elementary school friend's new job before her mother does. By thinking of everyone as fair game in networking for personal gain, we can now market ourselves professionally to the world with LinkedIn.

At the same time that technology is expanding the boundaries of our social circles, various media are also changing how we perceive and interact with each other. We do not only use Facebook to keep in touch with friends; we also use it to "like" certain TV shows, products, or celebrities. Even television is no longer a one-way medium but an interactive one. We are encouraged to tweet, text, or call in to vote for contestants in everything from singing competitions to matchmaking endeavours — bridging the gap between our entertainment and our own lives.

How does technology change our lives for the better? Or does it? When you tweet a social cause or cut and paste a status update about cancer awareness on Facebook, are you promoting social

change? Does the immediate and constant flow of information mean we are more aware and engaged than any society before us? Or are TV reality shows and talent competitions today's version of ancient Rome's "bread and circuses" — distractions and entertainment to keep the lower classes indifferent to the inequities of our society? Do media and technology liberate us from gender stereotypes and provide us with a more cosmopolitan understanding of each other, or have they become another tool in promoting **misogyny**? Is ethnic and gay and lesbian intolerance being promoted through a ceaseless barrage of minority stereotyping in movies, video games, and websites?

These are some of the questions that interest sociologists. How might we examine these issues from a sociological perspective? A structural functionalist would probably focus on what social purposes technology and media serve. For example, the web is both a form of technology and a form of media, and it links individuals and nations in a communication network that facilitates both small family discussions and global trade networks. A functionalist would also be interested in the manifest functions of media and technology, as well as their role in social dysfunction. Someone applying the critical perspective would probably focus on the systematic inequality created by differential access to media and technology. For example, how can Canadians be sure the news they hear is an objective account of reality, unsullied by moneyed political interests? Someone applying the interactionist perspective to technology and the media might seek to understand the difference between the real lives we lead and the reality depicted on "reality" television shows, such as the U.S., based but Canadian MTV production *Jersey Shore*, with up to 800,000 Canadian viewers (Vlessing, 2011).

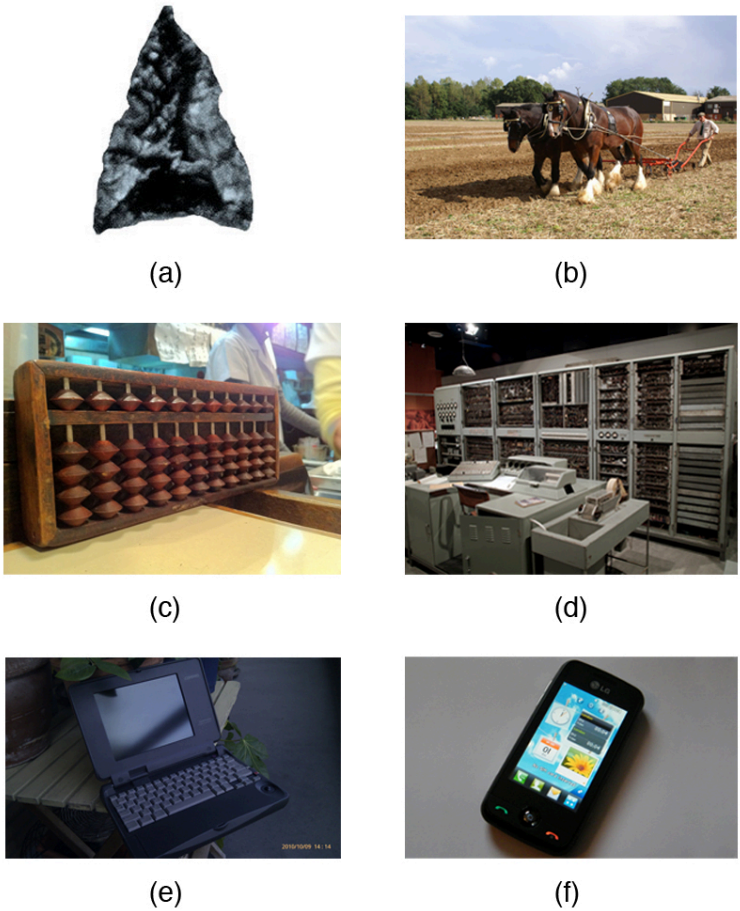

Figure 6.13 *Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life, from hunting tools and agricultural advances, to manual and electronic ways of computing, to today's tablets and smartphones. (Photo (a) Arrowhead is in the Public Domain; Photo (b) Plough to Propeller 1 October 06-65 by Martin Pettitt CC-BY 2.0 License; Photo (c) abacus by Whitefield d. CC-BY 2.0 License; Photo (d) computer by Andrew Parnell CC-BY 2.0 License; Photo (e) IMAG0193 by Jemimus CC-BY 2.0 License; Photo (f) by digitpedia under a CC-BY 2.0 License)*

It is easy to look at the latest sleek tiny Apple product and think that technology is only recently a part of our world. But from the steam

engine to the most cutting-edge robotic surgery tools, **technology** describes the application of science to address the problems of daily life. We might look back at the enormous and clunky computers of the 1970s that had about as much storage as an iPod Shuffle and roll our eyes in disbelief. But chances are 30 years from now our skinny laptops and MP3 players will look just as archaic.

6.4.1 Technological Inequality

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

There are two forms of technological stratification. The first is differential class-based access to technology in the form of the **digital divide**. This digital divide has led to the second form, a **knowledge gap**, which is, as it sounds, an ongoing and increasing gap in information for those who have less access to technology. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines the digital divide as "the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technology (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities." (OECD, 2001, p.5) For example, students in well-funded schools receive more exposure to technology than students in poorly funded schools. Those students with more exposure gain more proficiency, making them far more marketable in an increasingly technology-based job market, leaving our society divided into those with technological knowledge and those without. Even as we improve access, we have failed to address an increasingly evident gap in **e-readiness,** the ability to sort through, interpret, and process knowledge (Sciadas, 2003).

Since the beginning of the millennium, social science researchers have tried to bring attention to the digital divide, the uneven access to technology along race, class, and geographic lines. The term became part of the common lexicon in 1996, when then U.S. Vice-President Al Gore used it in a speech. In part, the issue of the digital divide had to do with communities that received infrastructure upgrades that enabled high-speed internet access, upgrades that largely went to affluent urban and suburban areas, leaving out large swaths of the country.

At the end of the 20th century, technology access was also a big part of the school experience for those whose communities could afford it. Early in the millennium, poorer communities had little or no digital technology access, while well-off families had personal computers at home and wired classrooms in their schools. In Canada we see a clear relationship between youth computer access and use and socioeconomic status in the home. As one study points out, about a third of the youth whose parents have no formal or only elementary school education have no computer in their home compared to 13% of those whose parent has completed high school (Looker and Thiessen, 2003). In the 2000s, however, the prices for low-end computers dropped considerably, and it appeared the digital divide was ending. And while it is true that internet usage, even among those with low annual incomes, continues to grow, it would be overly simplistic to say that the digital divide has been completely resolved.

In fact, new data from the Pew Research Center (2011) suggest the emergence of a new divide. As technological devices get smaller and more mobile, larger percentages of minority groups are using their phones to connect to the internet. In fact, about 50% of people in these minority groups connect to the web via such devices, whereas only one-third of whites do (Washington, 2011). And while it might seem that the internet is the internet, regardless of how you get there, there is a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a wired computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might

not mean access to computers or the internet, but rather access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington, 2011).

Liff and Shepard (2004) found that although the gender digital divide has decreased in the sense of access to technology, it remained in the sense that women, who are accessing technology shaped primarily by male users, feel less confident in their internet skills and have less internet access at both work and home. Finally, Guillen and Suarez (2005) found that the global digital divide resulted from both the economic and sociopolitical characteristics of countries.

6.4.2 Planned Obsolescence: Technology That's Built to Crash

Figure 6.14 *People have trouble keeping up with technological innovation. But people may not be to blame, as manufacturers intentionally develop products with short life spans. (Washing Machine by Troy Kelly CC-BY 2.0 License)*

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your DVD player and MP3 device, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers would not stand for it — but frequently enough that you might find that when the built-in battery on your iPod dies, it costs far more to fix it than to replace it with a newer model. Or you find that the phone company emails you to tell you that you're eligible for a free new phone because yours is a whopping two years old. Appliance repair people say that while they might be fixing some machines that are 20 years old, they generally are not fixing the ones that are seven years old; newer models are built to be thrown out. This is called **planned obsolescence**, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be obsolete or unusable from the time it is created (*The Economist*, 2009).

To some extent, this is a natural extension of new and emerging technologies. After all, who is going to cling to an enormous and slow desktop computer from 2000 when a few hundred dollars can buy one that is significantly faster and better? But the practice is not always so benign. The classic example of planned obsolescence is the nylon stocking. Women's stockings — once an everyday staple of women's lives — get "runs" or "ladders" after a few wearings. This requires the stockings to be discarded and new ones purchased. Not surprisingly, the garment industry did not invest heavily in finding a rip-proof fabric; it was in their best interest that their product be regularly replaced.

Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that they, like the women who purchase endless pairs of stockings, are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many changes that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. Even the ancillary technologies based on operating systems are only compatible upward. In 2014, the Windows XP operating system, off the market for over five years, stopped being supported

by Microsoft when in reality it has not been supported by newer printers, scanners, and software add-ons for many years.

Ultimately, whether you are getting rid of your old product because you are being offered a shiny new free one (like the latest smartphone model), or because it costs more to fix than to replace (like an iPod), or because not doing so leaves you out of the loop (like the Windows system), the result is the same. It might just make you nostalgic for your old Sony Walkman and VCR.

But obsolescence gets even more complex. Currently, there is a debate about the true cost of energy consumption for products. This cost would include what is called the embodied energy costs of a product. **Embodied energy** is the calculation of all the energy costs required for the resource extraction, manufacturing, transportation, marketing, and disposal of a product. One contested claim is that the energy cost of a single cell phone is about 25% of the cost of a new car. We love our personal technology but it comes with a cost. Think about the incredible social organization undertaken from the idea of manufacturing a cell phone through to its disposal after about two years of use (Kedrosky, 2011).

Figure 6.15 *The United Nations estimates that Canadians generated 25 kg of electronic waste per person in 2012 (StEP, 2012). About 70% of e-waste is either illegally disposed of or rudimentarily processed in poorer Asian and African countries. Workers in e-waste salvage operations are constantly exposed to toxic substances like lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic, and flame retardants that are byproducts of dismantling components. (e-Waste by Curtis Palmer CC-BY 2.0 License)*

6.4.3 Media and Technology in Society

Figure 6.16 *The modern printing press (as well as its dated counterparts) embodies the intertwined nature of technology and media. (IMG_3139 by Anuj Biyani CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary society in most developed and developing nations. **Media** is a term that refers to all print, digital, and electronic means of communication. From the time the printing press was created (and even before), technology has influenced how and where information is shared. Today, it is impossible to discuss media and the ways that societies communicate without addressing the fast-moving pace of technology. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to share news of your baby's birth or a job promotion, you phoned or wrote letters. You might tell a handful of people, but probably you would not call up several hundred, including your old high school chemistry teacher, to let them know. Now, by tweeting or posting your big news, the circle of communication is wider

than ever. Therefore, when we talk about how societies engage with technology we must take media into account, and vice versa.

Technology creates media. The comic book you bought your daughter at the drugstore is a form of media, as is the movie you rented for family night, the internet site you used to order dinner online, the billboard you passed on the way to get that dinner, and the newspaper you read while you were waiting to pick up your order. Without technology, media would not exist; but remember, technology is more than just the media we are exposed to.

Categorizing Technology

There is no one way of dividing technology into categories. Whereas once it might have been simple to classify innovations such as machine-based or drug-based or the like, the interconnected strands of technological development mean that advancement in one area might be replicated in dozens of others. For simplicity's sake, we will look at how the U.S. Patent Office, which receives patent applications for nearly all major innovations worldwide, addresses patents. This regulatory body will patent three types of innovation. **Utility patents** are the first type. These are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine, or for a significant improvement to existing technologies. The second type of patent is a **design patent**. Commonly conferred in architecture and industrial design, this means someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product. **Plant patents**, the final type, recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced. While genetically modified food is the hot-button issue within this category, farmers have long been creating new hybrids and patenting them. A more modern example might be food giant Monsanto, which patents corn with built-in pesticide (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, 2011).

Such evolving patents have created new forms of social organization and disorganization. Efforts by Monsanto to protect its patents have led to serious concerns about who owns the food production system, and who can afford to participate globally in this new agrarian world. This issue was brought to a head in a landmark Canadian court case between Monsanto and Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser. Schmeiser found Monsanto's genetically modified "Roundup Ready" canola growing on his farm. He saved the seed and grew his own crop, but Monsanto tried to charge him licensing fees because of their patent. Dubbed a true tale of David versus Goliath, both sides are claiming victory (Mercola, 2011; Monsanto, N.d.). What is important to note is that through the courts, Monsanto established its right to the ownership of its genetically modified seeds even after multiple plantings. Each generation of seeds harvested still belonged to Monsanto. For millions of farmers globally, such a new market model for seeds represents huge costs and dependence on a new and evolving corporate seed supply system.

Anderson and Tushman (1990) suggest an **evolutionary model of technological change**, in which a breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations. Once those are assessed, a prototype emerges, and then a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough. For example, floppy disks were improved and upgraded, then replaced by zip disks, which were in turn improved to the limits of the technology and were then replaced by flash drives. This is essentially a generational model for categorizing technology, in which first-generation technology is a relatively unsophisticated jumping-off point leading to an improved second generation, and so on.

Types of Media and Technology

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to television to film. New media emerge constantly, such as we see in the online world.

Print Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the 19th century became the 20th, American publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the Canadian media empires of Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) and Roy Thomson or the U.S. empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of counter-cultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers, 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the

mid-20th century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must (to appeal to them and keep them subscribing) maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so that the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it wants to avoid. But the real challenge to print newspapers is that revenue sources are declining much faster than circulation is dropping. With an anticipated decline in revenue of over 20% by 2017, the industry is in trouble (Ladurantaye, 2013). Unable to compete with digital media, large and small newspapers are closing their doors across the country. Something to think about is the concept of embodied energy mentioned earlier. The print newspapers are responsible for much of these costs internally. Digital media has downloaded much of these costs onto the consumer through personal technology purchases.

Television and Radio

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. Prime Minister Mackenzie King broadcast his radio message out to Canada in 1927. He later used radio to promote economic cooperation in response to the growing socialist agitation against the abuses of capitalism both outside and within Canada (McGivern, 1990).

Radio was the first "live" mass medium. People heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as it was happening. Hockey Night in Canada was first broadcast live in 1932. Even though people were

in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. Unlike newspapers, radio is a survivor. As Canada's globally renowned radio marketing guru Terry O'Reilly asserts, radio survives "because it is such a 'personal' medium. Radio is a voice in your ear. It is a highly personal activity." He also points out that "radio is local. It broadcasts news and programming that is mostly local in nature. And through all the technological changes happening around radio, and in radio, be it AM moving to FM moving to satellite radio and internet radio, basic terrestrial radio survives into another day" (O'Reilly, 2014). This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with other entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers still gather to discuss the previous night's instalment of a serial television or radio show.

The influence of Canadian television has always reflected a struggle with the influence of U.S. television dominance, the language divide, and strong federal government intervention into the industry for political purposes. There were thousands of televisions in Canada receiving U.S. broadcasting a decade before the first two Canadian stations began broadcasting in 1952 (Wikipedia, N.d.). Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources — PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) in the United States, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), which straddled the boundaries of public and private, garnered a worldwide reputation for quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on North American society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98% of homes had at least one television set. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, with these forms of visual media providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

Film

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when colour and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: As people gathered in theatres to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. The film industry in Canada has struggled to maintain its identity while at the same time embracing the North American industry by actively competing for U.S. film production in Canada. Today, a significant number of the recognized trades occupations requiring apprenticeship and training are in the film industry. While many North Americans consider Hollywood the epicentre of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society.

New Media

Figure 6.17 *Twitter has fascinated the world in 140 characters or less. What media innovation will next take the world by storm?* (*Twitter* West McGowan CC-BY-NC 2.0 License)

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual worlds. The list grows almost daily. New media tends to level the playing field in terms of who is constructing it (i.e., creating, publishing, distributing, and accessing information) (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006), as well as offering alternative forums to groups unable to gain access to traditional political platforms, such as groups associated with the Arab Spring protests (van de Donk et al., 2004). However, there is no guarantee of the accuracy of the information offered. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means that we must be more careful than ever to ensure our news is coming from accurate sources.

New media is already redefining information sharing in ways

unimaginable even a decade ago. New media giants like Google and Facebook have recently acquired key manufacturers in the aerial drones market creating an exponential ability to reach further in data collecting and dissemination. While the corporate line is benign enough, the implications are much more profound in this largely unregulated arena of aerial monitoring. With claims of furthering remote internet access, "industrial monitoring, scientific research, mapping, communications, and disaster assistance," the reach is profound (Claburn, 2014). But when aligned with military and national surveillance interests these new technologies become largely exempt from regulations and civilian oversight.

Technology, Media and Product Advertising

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Increasingly, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources. For example, you may see billboards for Molson's on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a beer commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are frequently shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to ignore television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch television programs but skip the ads, conventional advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. As mentioned earlier, advertising revenue in newspapers and on television have fallen significantly showing that companies need new ways of getting their message to consumers.

With Google alone earning over US$55 billion a year in revenue,

the big players in new media are responding in innovative ways (Google Investor Relations, 2014). This interest from media makes sense when you consider that subscribers pay over $40 each for pay-per-click keywords such as "insurance," "loans," and "mortgages" (Wordstream, N.d.). Today, Google alone earns over 50% of the mobile device revenue generated worldwide (Google Investor Relations, 2014).

What is needed for successful new media marketing is research. In Canada, market research is valued at almost a billion dollars a year, in an industry employing over 1,800 professional research practitioners with a strong professional association. From market segmentation research to online focus groups, meta-data analysis to crowdsourcing, market research has embraced new media to create winning and profitable revenue streams for web-based corporations. (MRIA-ARIM, N.d.) As an aside, researchers trained in the social sciences, including sociology are well represented with successful careers in this industry (the author is a Certified Marketing Research Professional with the MRIA).

Global Implications of Digital Technology and New Media

Figure 6.18 *These Twitter updates — a revolution in real time — show the role social media can play on the political stage. (twitter protests emergency Cambodia4kidsorg CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. Thomas Friedman (2005), in a landmark study, identified several ways in which technology "flattened" the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centres located in China or India. Using examples like a Midwestern American woman who runs a business from her home via the call centres of Bangalore, India, Friedman warns that this new world order will exist whether core-nation businesses are ready or not, and that in order to keep its key economic role in the

world, North America will need to pay attention to how it prepares workers of the 21st century for this dynamic.

Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman's theory. Many economists pointed out that, in reality, innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, continuing to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China's hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing are worlds away from the rural squalour of the country's poorest denizens.

It is worth noting that Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, **media globalization** is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while **technological globalization** refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

Lyons (2005) suggests that multinational corporations are the primary vehicle of media globalization. These corporations control global mass-media content and distribution (Compaine, 2005). It is true, when looking at who controls which media outlets, that there are fewer independent news sources as larger and larger conglomerates develop.

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. But the numbers are misleading. Mass media control and ownership is highly concentrated in Canada. Bell, Telus, and Rogers control over 80% of the wireless and internet service provider market; 70% of the daily and community newspapers are owned by seven corporations; and 10 companies control over 80% of the private sector radio and television market (CMCRP, N.d.; Newspapers Canada, 2013). As was pointed out in a Parliamentary report in 2012, an example of increased vertical control is a company that "might own a broadcast distributor (Rogers Cable), conventional television stations, pay and specialty television channels, and even the content for its broadcasters (Rogers owns

the Toronto Blue Jays, whose games are shown on conventional and pay and specialty television channels)" (Theckedath and Thomas, 2012).

While some social scientists predicted that the increase in media forms would break down geographical barriers and create a global village (McLuhan, 1964), current research suggests that the public sphere accessing the global village will tend to be rich, Caucasian, and English-speaking (Jan, 2009). As shown by the spring 2011 uprisings throughout the Arab world, technology really does offer a window into the news of the world. For example, here in the West we saw internet updates of Egyptian events in real time, with people tweeting, posting, and blogging on the ground in Tahrir Square.

Still, there is no question that the exchange of technology from core nations to peripheral and semi-peripheral ones leads to a number of complex issues. For instance, someone using a critical sociology approach might focus on how much political ideology and cultural colonialism occurs with technological growth. In theory at least, technological innovations are ideology-free; a fibre optic cable is the same in a Muslim country as a secular one, in a communist country or a capitalist one. But those who bring technology to less developed nations — whether they are nongovernment organizations, businesses, or governments — usually have an agenda. A functionalist, in contrast, might focus on how technology creates new ways to share information about successful crop-growing programs, or on the economic benefits of opening a new market for cell phone use. Interpretive sociologists might emphasize the way in which the global exchange of views creates the possibility of mutual understanding and consensus. In each case, there are cultural and societal assumptions and norms being delivered along with those high-speed connections.

Cultural and ideological biases are not the only risks of media globalization. In addition to the risk of cultural imperialism and the loss of local culture, other problems come with the benefits of a more interconnected globe. One risk is the potential censoring by national governments that let in only the information and media

they feel serves their message, as can be seen in China. In addition, core nations such as Canada have seen the use of international media such as the internet circumvent local laws against socially deviant and dangerous behaviours such as gambling, child pornography, and the sex trade. Offshore or international websites allow citizens to seek out whatever illegal or illicit information they want, from 24-hour online gambling sites that do not require proof of age, to sites that sell child pornography. These examples illustrate the societal risks of unfettered information flow.

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6.5 Groups, Networks and Organizations

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Most of us feel comfortable using the word "group" without giving it much thought. But what does it mean to be part of a group? The concept of a group is central to much of how we think about society and human interaction. As Georg Simmel (1858–1915) put it, "[s]ociety exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction" (1908/1950). Society exists in groups. For Simmel, society did not exist otherwise. What fascinated him was the way in which people mutually attune to one another to create relatively enduring forms. In a group, individuals behave differently than they would if they were alone. They conform, they resist, they forge alliances, they cooperate, they betray, they organize, they defer gratification, they show respect, they expect obedience, they share,

they manipulate, etc. At this meso-level of interaction, being in a group changes their behaviour and their abilities. This is one of the founding insights of sociology: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The group has properties over and above the properties of its individual members. It has a reality *sui generis*, of its own kind. But how exactly does the whole come to be greater?

Defining a Group

How can we hone the meaning of the term **group** more precisely for sociological purposes? The term is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a "group project" in school when you partner with another student), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby. In short, the term refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group. Of course, every time people gather, they do not necessarily form a group. An audience assembled to watch a street performer is a one-time random gathering. Conservative-minded people who come together to vote in an election are not a group because the members do not necessarily interact with one another with some frequency. People who exist in the same place at the same time, but who do not interact or share a sense of identity — such as a bunch of people standing in line at Starbucks — are considered an **aggregate**, or a crowd. People who share similar characteristics but are not otherwise tied to one another in any way are considered a **category**.

An example of a category would be Millennials, the term given to all children born from approximately 1980 to 2000. Why are Millennials a category and not a group? Because while some of them may share a sense of identity, they do not, as a whole, interact frequently with each other.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. During disasters, people in a neighbourhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other might become friendly and depend on each other at the local shelter. After the disaster ends and the people go back to simply living near each other, the feeling of cohesiveness may last since they have all shared an experience. They might remain a group, practising emergency readiness, coordinating supplies for the next emergency, or taking turns caring for neighbours who need extra help. Similarly, there may be many groups within a single category. Consider teachers, for example. Within this category, groups may exist like teachers' unions, teachers who coach, or staff members who are involved with the school board.

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.

6.5.1 Dyads, Triads, and Social Networks

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.

6.5.2 Formal Organizations

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to health care to government, these organizations are referred to as **formal organizations**. A formal organization is a large secondary

group deliberately organized to achieve its goals efficiently. Typically, formal organizations are highly bureaucratized. The term **bureaucracy** refers to what Max Weber termed "an ideal type" of formal organization (1922/1946). In its sociological usage, "ideal" does not mean "best"; it refers to a general model that describes a collection of characteristics, or a type that could describe most examples of the item under discussion. For example, if your professor were to tell the class to picture a car in their minds, most students will picture a car that shares a set of characteristics: four wheels, a windshield, and so on. Everyone's car will be somewhat different, however. Some might picture a two-door sports car while others might picture an SUV. It is possible for a car to have three wheels instead of four. However, the general idea of the car that everyone shares is the ideal type. Bureaucracies are similar. While each bureaucracy has its own idiosyncratic features, the way each is deliberately organized to achieve its goals efficiently shares a certain consistency. We will discuss bureaucracies as an ideal type of organization.

Types of Formal Organizations

Figure 6.19 *Cub and Guide troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Photo (a) Brownie and Cub compare badges Paul Hourigan CC-BY 2.0 License; Photo (b) courtesy of CxOxS/flickr)*

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. **Normative organizations**, also called **voluntary organizations**, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary and typically people join because they find membership rewarding in an intangible way. Compliance to the group is maintained through moral control. The Audubon Society or a ski club are examples of normative organizations. **Coercive organizations** are groups that one must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison, the military, or a rehabilitation centre. Compliance is maintained through force and coercion. Goffman (1961) states that most coercive organizations are **total institutions**. A total institution is one in which inmates live a controlled life apart from the rest of society, and in which total resocialization takes place. The third type are **utilitarian organizations**, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High

school or a workplace would fall into this category — one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money. Compliance is maintained through remuneration and rewards.

Table 6.2. Etzioni's Three Types of Formal Organizations (Source: Etzioni, 1975)

	Normative or Voluntary	**Coercive**	**Utilitarian**
Benefit of Membership	Non-material benefit	Corrective or disciplinary benefit	Material benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Obligatory basis	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	Coerced affinity	Pragmatic affinity

Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies can be described as an **ideal type** of formal organization. This does not mean that they are ideal in an ethical sense but that the logic of their components can be laid out according to an idealized model. Not all formal organizations or bureaucracies will necessarily conform to the ideal type. Pioneer sociologist Max Weber (1922/1946) popularly characterized bureaucracy through an ideal type description as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, explicit rules, and impersonality. Bureaucracies were the basic form of rational efficient organization, yet people often complain about bureaucracies, declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let us take a look at terms that define bureaucracy as an ideal type of formal organization to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the aspect of bureaucracy that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. For example, if you are an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your

shift manager answers to the store manager, who must answer to the regional manager, and so on in a chain of command up to the CEO, who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. There is a clear chain of authority that enables each person to know who he or she is answerable to or responsible for, which is necessary for the organization to make and comply with decisions.

A **clear division of labour** refers to the fact that within a bureaucracy, each individual has a specialized task to perform. For example, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. In this case, it is a clear and commonsensical division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labour?

The existence of **explicit rules** refers to the way in which rules are outlined, written down, and standardized. There is a continuous organization of official functions bound by rules. For example, at your college or university, student guidelines are contained within the student handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other issues, organizations are scrambling to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging topics.

Bureaucracies are also characterized by **impersonality**, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. Each office or position exists independently of its incumbent, and clients and workers receive equal treatment. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to eliminate the potential for nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of "irrational" favouritism, simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality is an attempt by large formal organizations to protect their members. However, the result is often that personal experience is disregarded. For example, you may be late for work because your car broke down, but the manager at Pizza Hut doesn't care why you are late, only that you are late.

Finally, bureaucracies are, in theory at least, **meritocracies**, meaning that hiring and promotion are based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into graduate school, you need to have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate from law school and pass the provincial bar exam. Of course, there is a popular image of bureaucracies that they reward conformity and sycophancy rather than skill or merit. How well do you think established meritocracies identify talent? Wealthy families hire tutors, interview coaches, test-prep services, and consultants to help their children get into the best schools. This starts as early as kindergarten in New York City, where competition for the most highly regarded schools is especially fierce. Are these schools, many of which have copious scholarship funds that are intended to make the school more democratic, really offering all applicants a fair shake?

Max Weber (1922/1946) summarizes:

> Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs — these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration ... Bureaucratization offers above all the optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations . . . The 'objective' discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to calculable rules and 'without regard for persons.'

There are several positive aspects of bureaucracies. They are intended to improve efficiency, ensure equal opportunities, and increase efficiency. There are times when rigid hierarchies are needed. However, there is also a clear component of *irrationality* within the rational organization of bureaucracies. Firstly, bureaucracies create conditions of bureaucratic alienation in which workers cannot find meaning in the repetitive, standardized nature

of the tasks they are obliged to perform. As Max Weber put it, the "individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed… He is only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march" (1922/1946). Secondly, bureaucracies can lead to bureaucratic inefficiency and ritualism (red tape). They can focus on rules and regulations to the point of undermining the organization's goals and purpose. Thirdly, bureaucracies have a tendency toward inertia. You may have heard the expression "trying to turn a tanker around mid-ocean," which refers to the difficulties of changing direction with something large and set in its ways. Inertia means bureaucracies focus on perpetuating themselves rather than effectively accomplishing or re-evaluating the tasks they were designed to achieve. Finally, as Robert Michels (1911/1949) suggested, bureaucracies are characterized by the **iron law of oligarchy** in which the organization is ruled by a few elites. The organization serves to promote the self-interest of oligarchs and insulate them from the needs of the public or clients.

Remember that many of our bureaucracies grew large at the same time that our school model was developed — during the Industrial Revolution. Young workers were trained and organizations were built for mass production, assembly-line work, and factory jobs. In these scenarios, a clear chain of command was critical. Now, in the information age, this kind of rigid training and adherence to protocol can actually decrease both productivity and efficiency. Today's workplace requires a faster pace, more problem solving, and a flexible approach to work. Smaller organizations are often more innovative and competitive because they have flatter hierarchies and more democratic decision making, which invites more communication, greater networking, and increased individual participation of members. Too much adherence to explicit rules and a division of labour can leave an organization behind. Unfortunately, once established, bureaucracies can take on a life of their own. As Max Weber said, "Once it is established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy" (1922/1946).

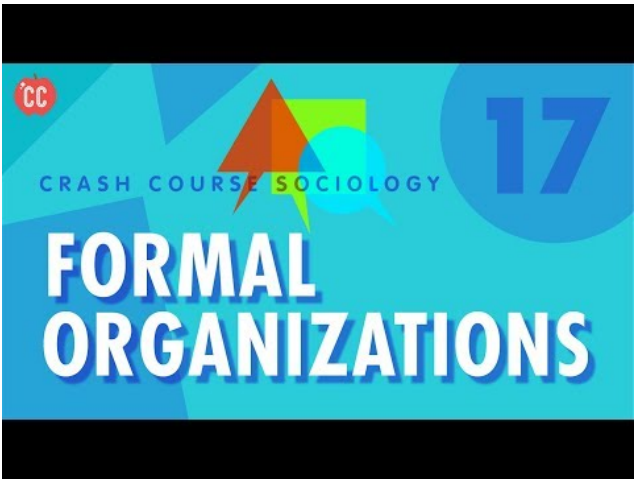
Figure 6.20 *This McDonald's storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society.* (*McDonald's by s_w_ellis CC-BY 2.0 License*)

6.5.3 The McDonaldization of Society

The **McDonaldization** of society (Ritzer, 1994) refers to the increasing presence of the fast-food business model in common social institutions. This business model includes efficiency (the division of labour), predictability, calculability, and control (monitoring). For example, in your average chain grocery store, people at the cash register check out customers while stockers keep the shelves full of goods, and deli workers slice meats and cheese to order (efficiency). Whenever you enter a store within that grocery chain, you receive the same type of goods, see the same store organization, and find the same brands at the same prices (predictability). You will find that goods are sold by the kilogram, so that you can weigh your fruit and vegetable purchases rather than simply guessing at the price for that bag of onions, while the employees use a time card to calculate their hours and receive overtime pay (calculability). Finally, you will notice that all store employees are wearing a uniform (and usually a name tag) so that they can be easily identified. There are security cameras to monitor

the store, and some parts of the store, such as the stockroom, are generally considered off-limits to customers (control).

While McDonaldization has resulted in improved profits and an increased availability of various goods and services to more people worldwide, it has also reduced the variety of goods available in the marketplace while rendering available products uniform, generic, and bland. Think of the difference between a mass-produced shoe and one made by a local cobbler, between a chicken from a family-owned farm versus a corporate grower, or a cup of coffee from the local roaster instead of one from a coffee-shop chain. Ritzer also notes that the rational systems, as efficient as they are, are irrational in that they become more important than the people working within them, or the clients being served by them. "Most specifically, irrationality means that rational systems are unreasonable systems. By that I mean that they deny the basic humanity, the human reason, of the people who work within or are served by them." (Ritzer, 1994).



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text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=941

6.6 Labour Markets and Work Organization in Canada

Figure 6.21 *Many people attend job fairs looking for their first job or for a better one. (Workforce 2011 Job Fair @ Blaisdell Center by Daniel Ramirez CC-BY 2.0 License)*

Common wisdom states that if you study hard, develop good work habits, and graduate from high school or, even better, university, then you'll have the opportunity to land a good job. That has long been seen as the key to a successful life. And although the reality has always been more complex than suggested by the myth, the

worldwide recession that began in 2008 has made it harder than ever to play by the rules and win the game. The data are grim: for example, in the United States, from December 2007 through March 2010, 8.2 million workers lost their jobs, and the unemployment rate grew to almost 10% nationally, with some states showing much higher rates (Autor, 2010). Times are very challenging for those in the workforce. For those looking to finish their schooling, often with enormous student-debt burdens, it is not just challenging — it is terrifying. So where did all the jobs go? Will any of them be coming back, and if not, what new ones will there be? How do you find and keep a good job now? These are the kinds of questions people are currently asking about the job market in Canada.

6.6.1 Polarization in the Workforce

The mix of jobs available in Canada began changing many years before the recession struck. Geography, race, gender, and other factors have always played a role in the reality of success. More recently, the increased **outsourcing** (or contracting a job or set of jobs to an outside source) of manufacturing jobs to developing nations has greatly diminished the number of high-paying, often unionized, blue-collar positions available. A similar problem has arisen in the white-collar sector, with many low-level clerical and support positions also being outsourced, as evidenced by the international technical-support call centres in Mumbai, India. The number of supervisory and managerial positions has been reduced as companies streamline their command structures and industries continue to consolidate through mergers. Even highly educated skilled workers such as computer programmers have seen their jobs vanish overseas.

The **automation** (replacing workers with technology) of the workplace is another cause of the changes in the job market. Computers can be programmed to do many routine tasks faster

and less expensively than people who used to do such tasks. Jobs like bookkeeping, clerical work, and repetitive tasks on production assembly lines all lend themselves to automation. Think about the newer automated toll passes we can install in our cars. Toll collectors are just one of the many endangered jobs that will soon cease to exist. Despite all this, the job market is actually growing in some areas, but in a very polarized fashion. **Polarization** means that a gap has developed in the job market, with most employment opportunities at the lowest and highest levels and few jobs for those with mid-level skills and education. At one end, there has been strong demand for low-skilled, low-paying jobs in industries like food service and retail. On the other end, some research shows that in certain fields there has been a steadily increasing demand for highly skilled and educated professionals, technologists, and managers. These high-skilled positions also tend to be highly paid (Autor, 2010).

The fact that some positions are highly paid while others are not is an example of the **dual labour market structure**, a division of the economy into sectors with different levels of pay. The primary labour market consists of high-paying jobs in the public sector, manufacturing, telecommunications, biotechnology, and other similar sectors that require high levels of capital investment (or other restrictions) that limit the number of businesses able to enter the sector. The costs of labour are considered marginal in comparison to the total capital investment required. Jobs in the sector usually offer good benefits, security, prospects for advancement, and comparatively higher levels of unionization. The secondary labour market consists of jobs in more competitive sectors of the economy like service industries, restaurants, and commercial enterprises, where the cost of entry for businesses is relatively low. Jobs in the secondary labour market are usually poorly paid, offer few if any benefits, and have little job security, poor prospects for advancement, and minimal unionization. Wages paid to employees make up a significant portion of the cost of products or services offered to consumers, and because of the high

level of competition, businesses are obliged to keep the cost of labour to a minimum to remain competitive.

Hard work does not guarantee success in the dual labour market economy, because **social capital** — the accumulation of a network of social relationships and knowledge that will provide a platform from which to achieve financial success — in the form of connections or higher education are often required to access the high-paying jobs. Increasingly, we are realizing intelligence and hard work are not enough. If you lack knowledge of how to leverage the right names, connections, and players, you are unlikely to experience upward mobility. Particularly in the knowledge economy, which generates a new dual labour market between jobs that require high levels of education (scientists, programmers, designers, etc.) and support jobs (secretarial, data entry, technicians, etc.), social capital in the form of formal education is a condition for accessing quality jobs. The division between those who are able to access, create, utilize, and disseminate knowledge and those who cannot is often referred to as the **knowledge divide**. With so many jobs being outsourced or eliminated by automation, what kinds of jobs is there a demand for in Canada? While manufacturing jobs are in decline and fishing and agriculture are static, several job markets are expanding. These include resource extraction, computer and information services, professional business services, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. Figure 18.11, from Employment and Social Development Canada, illustrates areas of projected growth.

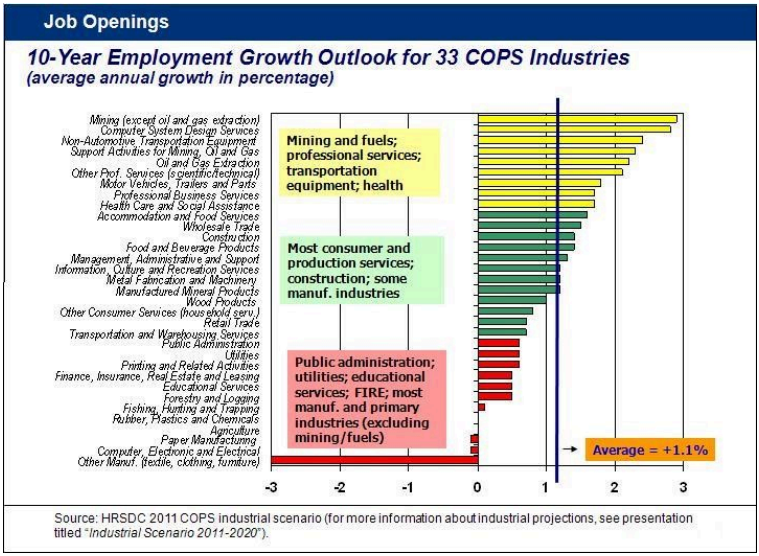


Figure 6.22 *This chart shows the projected growth of several occupational groups. (Graph courtesy of the Employment and Social Development Canada (Labour Market Research and Forecasting Policy Research Directorate 2011a). The Canadian Government allows this graph to be used in whole or part for non-commercial purposes in any format.*

Professional and related jobs, which include any number of positions, typically require significant education and training and tend to be lucrative career choices. Service jobs, according to Employment and Social Development Canada, can include everything from consumer service jobs such as scooping ice cream, to producer service jobs that contract out administrative or technical support, to government service jobs including teachers and bureaucrats (Labour Market Research and Forecasting Policy Research Directorate, 2011b). There is a wide variety of training needed, and therefore an equally large wage potential discrepancy. One of the largest areas of growth by industry, rather than by occupational group (as seen above), is in the health field (Labour Market Research and Forecasting Policy Research Directorate, 2011a). This growth is across occupations, from associate-level

nurse's aides to management-level assisted-living staff. As baby boomers age, they are living longer than any generation before, and the growth of this population segment requires an increase in capacity throughout our country's elder care system, from home health care nursing to geriatric nutrition. Notably, jobs in manufacturing are in decline. This is an area where those with less education traditionally could be assured of finding steady, if low-wage, work. With these jobs disappearing, more and more workers will find themselves untrained for the types of employment that are available. Another projected trend in employment relates to the level of education and training required to gain and keep a job.

As Figure 18.12 shows, growth rates are higher for those with more education. It is estimated that between 2011 and 2020, there will be 6.5 million new job openings due to economic growth or retirement, two-thirds of which will be in occupations that require post-secondary education ("PSE" in the chart) or in management positions (Labour Market Research and Forecasting Policy Research Directorate, 2011a). 70% of new jobs created through economic growth are projected to be in management or occupations that require post-secondary education. Those with a university degree may expect job growth of 21.3%, and those with a college degree or apprenticeship 34.3%. At the other end of the spectrum, jobs that require a high school diploma or equivalent are projected to grow at only 24.9%, while jobs that require less than a high school diploma will grow at 8.6%. Quite simply, without a degree, it will be more difficult to find a job. It is worth noting that these projections are based on overall growth across all occupation categories, so obviously there will be variations within different occupational areas. Seven out of the ten occupations with the highest proportion of job openings are in management and the health sector. However, once again, those who are the least educated will be the ones least able to fulfill the Canadian dream.

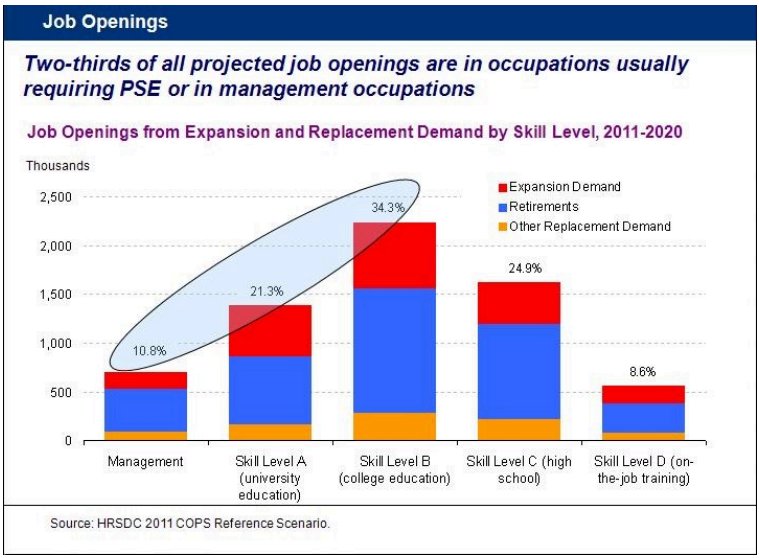


Figure 6.23 *More education generally means more jobs. (Graph courtesy of the Social Development Canada (Labour Market Research and Forecasting Policy Research Directorate, 2011a)) The Canadian Government allows this graph to be used in whole or part for non-commercial purposes in any format.*

6.6.2 Women in the Workforce

In the past, rising education levels in Canada were able to keep pace with the rise in the number of education-dependent jobs. Since the late 1970s, men have been enrolling in university at a lower rate than women, and graduating at a rate of almost 10% less (Wang and Parker, 2011). In 2008, 62% of undergraduate degrees and 54% of graduate degrees were granted to women (Drolet, 2011). The lack of male candidates reaching the education levels needed for skilled positions has opened opportunities for women and immigrants. Women have been entering the workforce in ever-increasing numbers for several decades. Their increasingly higher levels of education attainment than men has resulted in many women being better positioned to obtain high-paying, high-skill jobs. Between

1991 and 2011, the percentage of employed women between the ages of 25 and 34 with a university degree increased from 19% to 40%, whereas among employed men aged 25 to 34 the percentage increased from 17% to 27%.

It is interesting to note however that at least 20% of all women with a university degree were still employed in the same three occupations as they were in 1991: registered nurses, elementary school and kindergarten teachers, and secondary school teachers. The top three occupations for university-educated men (11% of this group) were computer programmers and interactive media developers, financial auditors and accountants, and secondary school teachers (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté, 2014). While women are getting more and better jobs and their wages are rising more quickly than men's wages are, Statistics Canada data show that they are still earning only 76% of what men are for the same positions. However when the wages of young women aged 25 to 29 are compared to young men in the same age cohort, the women now earn 90% of young men's hourly wage (Statistics Canada, 2011).

6.6.3 Immigration and the Workforce

Simply put, people will move from where there are few or no jobs to places where there are jobs, unless something prevents them from doing so. The process of moving to a country is called immigration. Canada has long been a destination for workers of all skill levels. While the rate decreased somewhat during the economic slowdown of 2008, immigrants, both legal and illegal, continue to be a major part of the Canadian workforce. In 2006, before the recession arrived, immigrants made up 19.9% of the workforce, up from 19 percent in 1996 (Kustec, 2012). The economic downturn affected them disproportionately. In 2008, employment rates were at the peak for both native-born Canadians (84.1%) and immigrants (77.4%). In 2009, these figures dropped to 82.2% and 74.9% respectively,

meaning that the gap in employment rates increased to 7.3 percentage points from 6.7. The gap was greater between native-born and very recent immigrants (18.6 percentage points in 2009, compared with a gap of 17.5 points in 2008) (Yssaad, 2012). Interestingly, in the United States, this trend was reversed. The unemployment rate decreased for immigrant workers and increased for native workers (Kochhar, 2010). This no doubt did not help to reduce tensions in that country about levels of immigration, particularly illegal immigration.

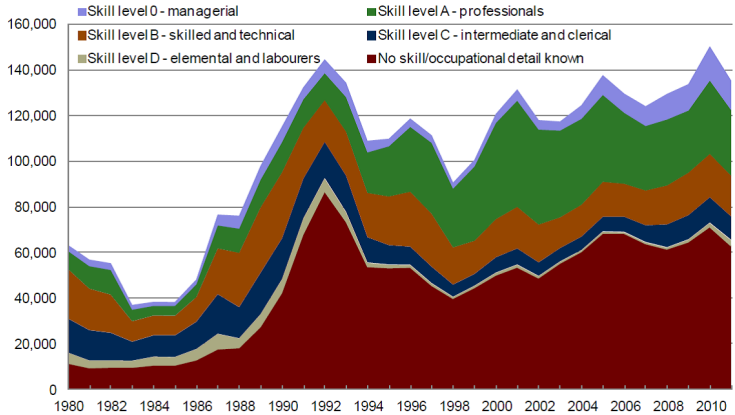


Figure 6.24 *Landings of permanent residents intending to work by skill level, 1980-2011 (Graph courtesy of Citizenship & Immigration Canada (Kustec, 2012)). This graph is a reproduction of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada and that has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada. This graph may be used in part or whole for non-commercial purposes without further permissions.*

Recent political debate about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been fuelled by conversations about low-skilled service industry jobs being taken by low-earning foreign workers (Mas, 2014). It should be emphasized that a substantial portion of working-age *immigrants* (i.e., not temporary workers) landing in Canada are highly educated and highly skilled (Figure 18.13). They play a significant role in filling skilled positions that

open up through both job creation and retirement. About half of the landed immigrants identify an occupational skill, 80 to 90% of which fall within the higher skill level classifications. Of the other 50% of landed immigrants who intend to work but do not indicate a specific occupational skill, most have recently completed school and are new to the labour market, or have landed under the family class or as refugees — classes which are not coded by occupation (Kustec, 2012).

6.6.4 Poverty in Canada

When people lose their jobs during a recession or in a changing job market, it takes longer to find a new one, if they can find one at all. If they do, it is often at a much lower wage or not full time. This can force people into poverty. In Canada, we tend to have what is called relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country. This must be contrasted with the absolute poverty that can be found in underdeveloped countries, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities such as food (Byrns, 2011). We cannot even rely on unemployment statistics to provide a clear picture of total unemployment in Canada. First, unemployment statistics do not take into account **underemployment**, a state in which people accept lower-paying, lower-status jobs than their education and experience qualifies them to perform. Second, unemployment statistics only count those:

1. who are actively looking for work
2. who have not earned income from a job in the past four weeks
3. who are ready, willing, and able to work

The unemployment statistics provided by Statistics Canada are rarely accurate, because many of the unemployed become

discouraged and stop looking for work. Not only that, but these statistics undercount the youngest and oldest workers, the chronically unemployed (e.g., homeless), and seasonal and migrant workers.

A certain amount of unemployment is a direct result of the relative inflexibility of the labour market, considered **structural unemployment**, which describes when there is a societal level of disjuncture between people seeking jobs and the available jobs. This mismatch can be geographic (they are hiring in Alberta, but the highest rates of unemployment are in Newfoundland and Labrador), technological (skilled workers are replaced by machines, as in the auto industry), or can result from any sudden change in the types of jobs people are seeking versus the types of companies that are hiring. Because of the high standard of living in Canada, many people are working at full-time jobs but are still poor by the standards of relative poverty. They are the working poor. Canada has a higher percentage of working poor than many other developed countries (Brady, Fullerton, and Cross, 2010). In terms of employment, Statistics Canada defines the working poor as those who worked for pay for at least 910 hours during the year, and yet remain below the poverty line according to the Market Basket Measure (i.e., they lack the disposable income to purchase a specified "basket" of basic goods and services). Many of the facts about the working poor are as expected: those who work only part time are more likely to be classified as working poor than those with full-time employment; higher levels of education lead to less likelihood of being among the working poor; and those with children under 18 are four times more likely than those without children to fall into this category. In 2011, 6.4% of Canadians of all ages lived in households classified as working poor (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2011).

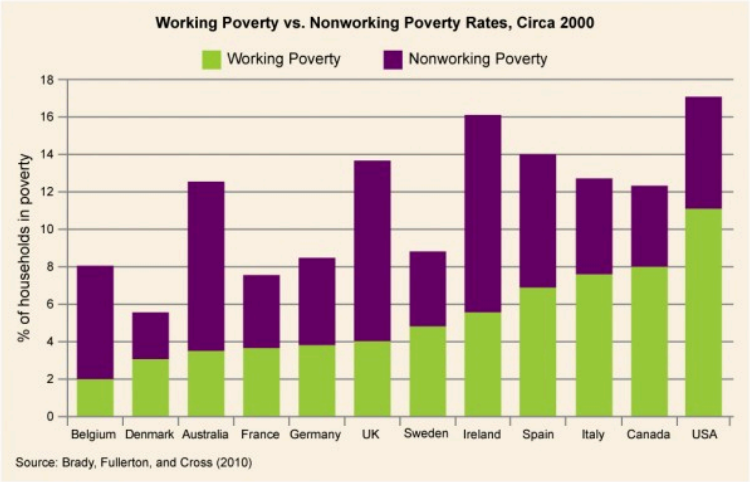


Figure 6.25 *A higher percentage of the people living in poverty in Canada and the United States have jobs compared to other developed nations.*

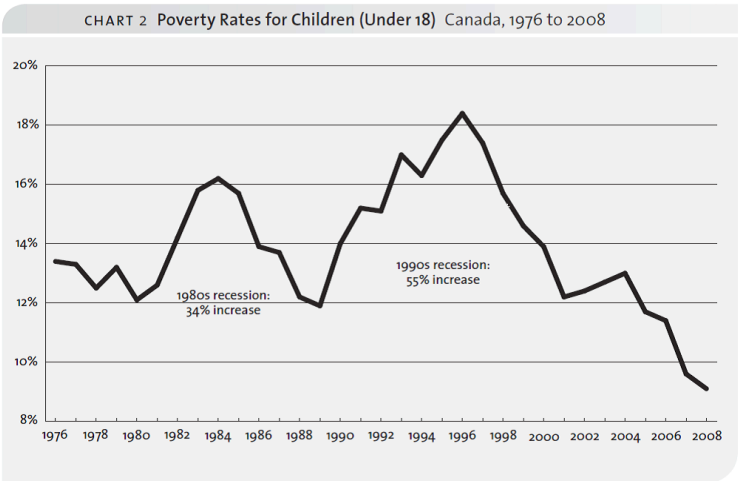


Figure 6.26 *Poverty rates for children: 1976 to 2008. (Graph courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Yalnizyan, 2010)) used with a* [CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 Unported license.]

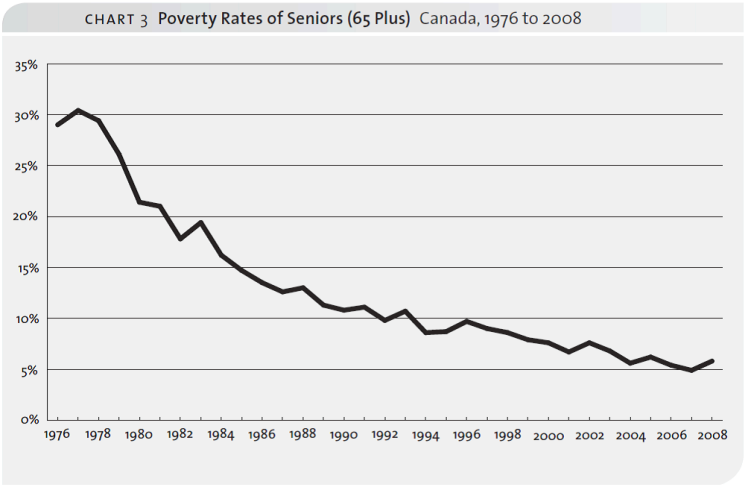
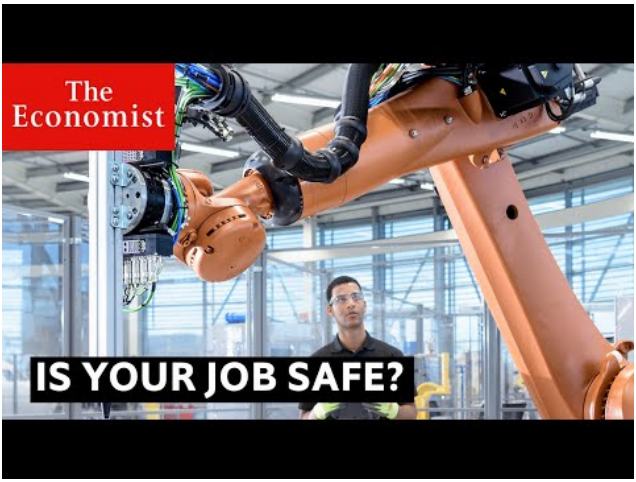


Figure 6.27 *Poverty rates for seniors: 1976 to 2008. (Graph courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Yalnizyan, 2010)) used with a*

Most developed countries such as Canada protect their citizens from absolute poverty by providing different levels of social services such as employment insurance, welfare, health care, and so on. They may also provide job training and retraining so that people can re-enter the job market. In the past, the elderly were particularly vulnerable to falling into poverty after they stopped working; however, the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans, the Old Age Security program, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement are credited with successfully reducing old age poverty. A major concern in Canada is the number of young people growing up in poverty, although these numbers have been declining as well. About 606,000 children younger than 18 lived in low-income families in 2008. The proportion of children in low-income families was 9% in 2008, half the 1996 peak of 18% (Statistics Canada, 2011). Growing up poor can cut off access to the education and services people need to move out of poverty and into stable employment. As we saw, more

education was often a key to stability, and those raised in poverty are the ones least able to find well-paying work, perpetuating a cycle.

With the shift to neoliberal economic policies, there has been greater debate about how much support local, provincial, and federal governments should give to help the unemployed and underemployed. Often the issue is presented as one in which the interests of "taxpayers" are opposed to the "welfare state." It is interesting to note that in social democratic countries like Norway, Finland, and Sweden, there is much greater acceptance of higher tax rates when these are used to provide universal health care, education, child care, and other forms of social support than there is in Canada. Nevertheless, the decisions made on these issues have a profound effect on working in Canada.



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6.7 Theoretical Perspectives on the Economy

Now that we've developed an understanding of the history and basic components of economies, let us turn to theory. How might social scientists study these topics? What questions do they ask? What theories do they develop to add to the body of sociological knowledge?

Functionalist Perspective

Someone taking a functional perspective will most likely view work and the economy as a well-oiled machine, designed for maximum efficiency. The Davis-Moore thesis, for example, suggests that some social stratification is a social necessity. The need for certain highly skilled positions combined with the relative difficulty of the occupation and the length of time it takes to qualify will result in a higher reward for that job, providing a financial motivation to engage in more education and a more difficult profession (Davis and Moore, 1945). This theory can be used to explain the prestige and salaries that go to those with doctorates or medical degrees. Like any theory, this is subject to criticism. For example, the thesis fails to take into account the many people who spend years on their education only to pursue work at a lower-paying position in a nonprofit organization, or who teach high school after pursuing a PhD. It also fails to acknowledge the effect of life changes and social networks on individual opportunities. The underlying notion that jobs and rewards are allocated on the basis of merit (i.e., a meritocracy) is belied by data that show that both class and gender play significant roles in structuring inequality. These issues will be explore more fully in Module 7.

The functionalist perspective would assume that the continued

"health" of the economy is vital to the functioning of the society, as it ensures the systematic distribution of goods and services. For example, we need food to travel from farms (high-functioning and efficient agricultural systems) via roads (safe and effective trucking and rail routes) to urban centres (high-density areas where workers can gather). However, sometimes a dysfunction — a function with the potential to disrupt social institutions or organization (Merton, 1968) — in the economy occurs, usually because some institutions fail to adapt quickly enough to changing social conditions. This lesson has been driven home recently with the financial crisis of 2008 and the bursting of the housing bubble. Due to irresponsible (i.e., dysfunctional) lending practices and an underregulated financial market, we are currently living with the after-effects of this major dysfunction.

From the functionalist view, this crisis might be regarded as an element in the cyclical nature of the internal self-regulating system of the free market economy. In functionalism, systems are said to *adapt* to external contingencies. Markets produce goods as they are supposed to, but eventually the market is saturated and the supply of goods exceeds the demands. Typically the market goes through phases of surplus, or excess, inflation, where the money in your pocket today buys less than it did yesterday, and **recession**, which occurs when there are two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline. The functionalist would say to let market forces fluctuate in a cycle through these stages. In reality, to control the risk of an economic **depression** (a sustained recession across several economic sectors), the Canadian government will often adjust interest rates to encourage more spending. In short, letting the natural cycle fluctuate is not a gamble most governments are willing to take.

Critical Sociology

For a conflict perspective theorist, the economy is not a source of stability for society. Instead, the economy reflects and reproduces economic inequality, particularly in a capitalist marketplace. A dominant critical perspective on the economy is the classical Marxist approach, which views the underlying dynamic of capitalism as defined by class struggle. The bourgeoisie (ruling class) accumulate wealth and power by exploiting the proletariat (workers), and regulating those who cannot work (the aged, the infirm) into the great mass of unemployed (Marx and Engels, 1848). From the symbolic (though probably made up) statement of Marie Antoinette, who purportedly said "Let them eat cake" when told that the peasants were starving, to the Occupy Wall Street movement, the sense of inequity is almost unchanged. Both the people fighting in the French Revolution and those blogging from Zuccotti Park in New York believe the same thing: wealth is concentrated in the hands of those who do not deserve it. As of 2012, 20% of Canadians owned 70% of Canadian wealth. The wealthiest 86 Canadians had amassed the same amount of wealth as the poorest 11.4 million combined (Macdonald, 2014). While the inequality might not be as extreme as in pre-revolutionary France, it is enough to make many believe that Canada is not the meritocracy it seems to be.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Those working in the symbolic interaction perspective take a microanalytical view of society, focusing on the way reality is socially constructed through day-to-day interaction and how society is composed of people communicating based on a shared understanding of symbols. One important symbolic interactionist

concept related to work and the economy is **career inheritance**. This concept means simply that children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents, a correlation that has been demonstrated in research studies (Antony, 1998). For example, the children of police officers learn the norms and values that will help them succeed in law enforcement, and since they have a model career path to follow, they may find law enforcement even more attractive. Related to career inheritance is career socialization, learning the norms and values of a particular job. A symbolic interactionist might also study what contributes to job satisfaction. Melving Kohn and his fellow researchers (1990) determined that workers were most likely to be happy when they believed they controlled some part of their work, when they felt they were part of the decision-making processes associated with their work, when they have freedom from surveillance, and when they felt integral to the outcome of their work. Sunyal, Sunyal, and Yasin (2011) found that a greater sense of vulnerability to stress, the more stress experienced by a worker, and a greater amount of perceived risk consistently predicted a lower worker job satisfaction

6.8 Summary

In this Module you have been introduced to the primary institutions through which economic activity is managed within different societal contexts. In particular, you have been encouraged to compare and contrast capitalist and socialist forms of managing economic activity within the context of modern society and to explore how these economic systems have transformed with the rise to dominance of neoliberal ideologies since the 1970's. Additional topics addressed in this module have included the extension of market values beyond the confines of the traditional economic relationships, the role of technological innovation and new media in these processes and the implications these

developments for labour markets and the organization of work in society. In Modules 7 and 8, these topics will be expanded upon with a closer examination of structures and processes of social inequality at national and global levels of contemporary society.

Key Takeaways

aggregate: A collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity.

alienation: The condition in which an individual is isolated from his or her society, work, or the sense of self and common humanity.

automation: Workers being replaced by technology.

bartering: When people exchange one form of goods or services for another.

bureaucracy: A formal organization characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, explicit rules, and impersonality.

capitalism: An economic system based on private ownership of property or capital, competitive markets, wage labour, and the impetus to produce profit and accumulate private wealth.

career inheritance: When children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents.

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.

convergence theory: A sociological theory to explain how and why societies move toward similarity over time as their economies develop.

depression: A sustained recession across several economic sectors.

digital divide: The uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines.

dual labour market: The division of the economy into high-wage and low-wage sectors.

economy: The social institution through which a society's resources (goods and services) are managed.

embodied energy: The sum of energy required for a finished product including the resource extraction, transportation, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, and disposal.

e-readiness: The ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge.

evolutionary model of technological change: A breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges,

followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough.

formal organizations: Large, impersonal organizations.

goods: Physical objects we find, grow, or make to meet our needs and those of others.

iron law of oligarchy: The theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration.

knowledge divide: The division between those who are able to access, create, utilize, and disseminate knowledge and those who cannot.

knowledge gap: The gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology.

market socialism: A subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demand.

McDonaldization: The increasing presence of the fast-food business model in common social institutions.

media: All print, digital, and electronic means of communication.

media globalization: The worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas.

mercantilism: An economic policy based on national policies of accumulating silver and gold by controlling markets with colonies and other countries through taxes and customs charges.

meritocracy: A bureaucracy where membership and advancement are based on merit as shown through proven and documented skills.

modernization theory: A theory of economic

development that proposes that there are natural stages of economic development that all societies go through from undeveloped to advanced.

money: An object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged as payment.

mutualism: A form of socialism under which individuals and cooperative groups exchange products with one another on the basis of mutually satisfactory contracts.

new media: All interactive forms of information exchange.

normative or voluntary organizations: Organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide intangible rewards.

outsourcing: When jobs are contracted to an outside source, often in another country.

polarization: When the differences between low-end and high-end jobs becomes greater and the number of people in the middle levels decreases.

recession: When there are two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline.

services: Activities that benefit people, such as health care, education, and entertainment.

social capital: The accumulation of a network of social relationships and knowledge that will provide a platform from which to achieve financial success.

socialism: An economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as "state run") of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth equally among the members of a society.

structural unemployment: When there is a societal level of disjuncture between people seeking jobs and the jobs that are available.

subsistence farming: When farmers grow only enough to feed themselves and their families.

technological diffusion: The spread of technology across borders.

technological globalization: The cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

technology: The application of science to solve problems in daily life.

technophiles: Those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future.

triad: A three-member group.

underemployment: A state in which a person accepts a lower-paying, lower-status job than his or her education and experience qualifies him or her to perform.

usufruct: The distribution of resources according to need.

utilitarian organization: An organization that people join to fill a specific material need.

6.9 References

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7. Module 7: Social Stratification and Social Inequality

SUSAN ROBERTSON

Learning Objectives

- Describe how the concept of social inequality is related to: social differentiation, social stratification, and social distributions of wealth, income, power, and status.
- Define the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of condition and discuss *meritocracy* as ideology and reality.
- Distinguish between caste and class systems of social stratification.
- Distinguish between class and status.
- Identify the structural basis for the different classes that exist in capitalist societies.
- Describe the current trend of increasing inequalities of wealth and income in Canada and discuss how these trends are related to the rise of

neoliberal ideology.

- Distinguish between Marx's and Weber's definitions of social class and explain why they are significant.
- Describe the social conditions of the owning class, the middle class, and the traditional working class in Canada.
- Compare, contrast and apply functionalist, critical sociological and interpretive perspectives on social inequality.

7.0. Introduction to Social Inequality in Canada

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? (Ted Rogers Statue Toronto by Oaktree b is available under the 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 the Indigenous gang members in the Saskatchewan Correctional Centre (CBC, 2010). In 2010 the CBC program *The Current* aired a report about several young Indigenous 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 Indigenous and 20% of those were gang members. This is consistent with national statistics on Indigenous incarceration

which showed that in 2010–2011, the Indigenous incarceration rate was 10 times higher than for the non-indigenous population. While Indigenous people account for about 5 % 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. Indigenous overrepresentation in prisons has continued to grow substantially (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013). The outcomes of Indigenous incarceration are also bleak. The federal Office of the Correctional Investigator summarized the situation as follows. Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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-indigenous people in Canada.

Moreover the statistical profile of Indigenous youth in Saskatchewan is grim, with Indigenous people making up the highest number of high school dropouts, domestic abuse victims, drug dependencies, and child poverty backgrounds. In some respects the Indigenous gang members interviewed were like Ted Rogers in that they were willing to seize opportunities, take risks, bend rules, and apply themselves to their vocations. They too aspired to getting the money that would give them the freedom to make their own lives. However, as one of the inmates put it, "the only job I ever had was selling drugs" (CBC, 2010). The consequence of that was to fall into a lifestyle that led to joining a gang, being kicked out of school, developing issues with addiction, and eventually getting arrested and incarcerated. Unlike Ted Rogers, however, the inmate added, "I didn't grow up with the best life" (CBC, 2010).

How do we make sense of the divergent stories? Canada is supposed to be a country in which individuals can work hard to get ahead. It is an "open" society. There are no formal or explicit class, gender, racial, ethnic, geographical, or other boundaries that prevent people from rising to the top. People are free to make choices. But does this adequately explain the difference in life chances that divide the fortunes of the Indigenous youth from those

of the Rogers family? What determines a person's social standing? And how does social standing direct or limit a person's choices?

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) defined ones **habitus** as the deeply seated schemas, habits, feelings, dispositions, and forms of know-how, **Cultural Capital.** 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 Indigenous 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 inequalities based on 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. As described in Module 5, sociologists use the concepts of power and privilege to refer to the means and strategies used to direct or conduct the behaviour of others, and of oneself. Moreover, the operation of power and privilege in society is not limited to the formal institutional contexts of politics and economy; rather the influence of power and privilege is a pervasive feature of the cultural contexts within which the formal structures and

institutions of society are embedded. While habitus refers to the perceptions individuals and social groups hold about society and their position in society, cultural capital is a concept that refers to the knowledge, or 'know-how' that different individuals and social groups possess as a result of their social location and interactions with others in society. The elements of Bourdieu's theory of Cultural Capital are elaborated further in the following YouTube video.

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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. In Sociology 112, the embodied forms of cultural capital and their relationship to social identity are elaborated in greater detail. In Sociology 111 we focus more explicitly on the structural conditions of social inequality and social stratification–the objectified and institutionalized forms of cultural capital–which organize and order the relationships among different social classes in society. In reality, however, the subjective and objective dimensions of social class coexist and are inter-related.

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 Aelx Proimos is available under a CC BY-NC 2.0 License.)*

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.

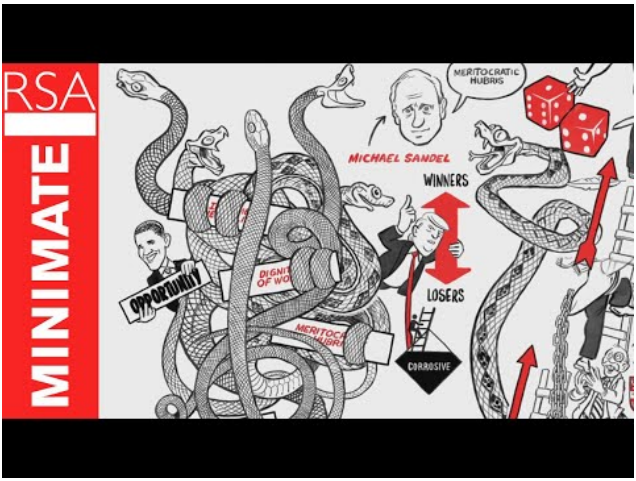
The term **social stratification** refers to an institutionalized

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, gender, 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 is available under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

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. Moreover, as Michael Sandel argues in "The Tyranny of Merit", meritocracy serves as a powerful ideology to justify the successes of the advantaged, blame those who experience disadvantage, and erode a sense of the moral value in working to secure the common good of all in society.



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To a certain extent, Ted Rogers' story illustrates the belief in equality of opportunity and meritocracy. 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 Indigenous gang members, although it is also a story of personal choices, casts that belief into doubt. It is clear that the type of choices available to the Indigenous gang members are of a different range and quality than those available to the Rogers family. The available choices are a product of habitus, which in turn is related to

the cultural capital that different individuals and social groups have access to.

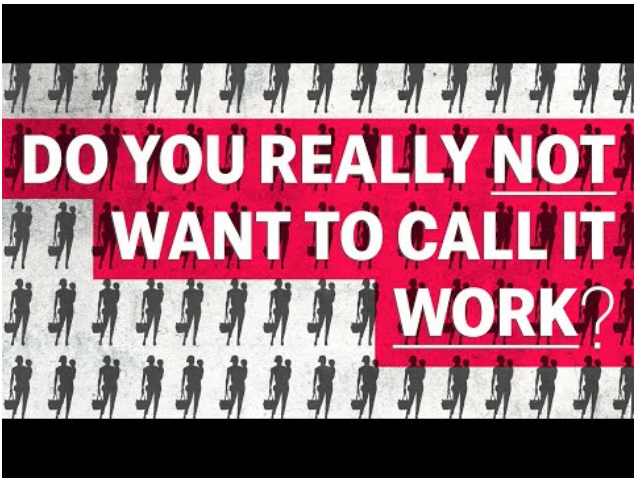
Sociologists recognize that social stratification is a society-wide system that makes inequalities apparent. While there are always inequalities between individuals, sociologists are interested in larger social patterns. Social inequality is not about individual inequalities, but about systematic inequalities 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 is available under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

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 Indigenous 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. An even more stark example is the tendency to ignore the economic and social value of non market work performed within the context of households–a social responsibility that has traditionally been allocated to women. Cultural attitudes and beliefs like these support and perpetuate social inequalities.



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7.2 Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. Closed systems accommodate little change in social position. They do not allow people to shift levels and do not permit social relations between levels. Open systems, which are based on achievement, allow movement and interaction between layers and classes. Different systems reflect, emphasize, and foster certain cultural values, and shape individual beliefs. This difference in stratification systems can be examined by the comparison between class systems and caste systems.

7.2.1 The Caste System

Caste systems are closed stratification systems in which people can do little or nothing to change their social standing. A **caste system** is one in which people are born into their social standing and remain in it their whole lives. It is based on fixed or rigid **status** distinctions, rather than economic classes *per se*. As we noted above, status is defined by the level of honour or prestige one receives by virtue of membership in a group. Sociologists make a distinction between **ascribed status —** a status one receives by virtue of being born into a category or group (e.g., hereditary position, gender, race, etc.) —and **achieved status —** a status one receives through individual effort or merits (e.g., occupation, educational level, moral character, etc.). Caste systems are based on a hierarchy of ascribed statuses, based on being born into fixed caste groups.

In a caste system, therefore, people are assigned roles regardless of their talents, interests, or potential. Marriage is **endogamous**, meaning that marriage between castes is forbidden. An **exogamous marriage** is a union of people from different social categories. There are virtually no opportunities to improve one's social position. Instead the relationship between castes is bound by institutionalized rules, and highly ritualistic procedures come into play when people from different castes come into contact.

The feudal systems of Europe and Japan can in some ways be seen as caste systems in that the statuses of positions in the social stratifications systems were fixed, and there was little or no opportunity for movement through marriage or economic opportunities. In Europe, the estate system divided the population into clergy (first estate), nobility (second estate), and commoners (third estate), which included artisans, merchants, and peasants. In early European feudalism, it was still possible for a peasant or a warrior to achieve a high position in the clergy or nobility, but later the divisions became more rigid. In Japan, between 1603 and 1867, the *mibunsei* system divided society into

five rigid strata in which social standing was inherited. At the top was the emperor, then court nobles (*kuge*), military commander-in-chief (*shogun*), and the land-owning lords (*daimyo*). Beneath them were four classes or castes: the military nobility (*samurai*), peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. The merchants were considered the lowest class because they did not produce anything with their own hands. There was also an outcast or untouchable caste known as the *burakumin*, who were considered impure or defiled because of their association with death: executioners, undertakers, slaughterhouse workers, tanners, and butchers (Kerbo, 2006).

However, the caste system is probably best typified by the system of stratification that existed in India from 4,000 years ago until the 20th century. In the Hindu caste tradition, people were also expected to work in the occupation of their caste and to enter into marriage according to their caste. Originally there were four castes: *Brahmans* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (military), *Vaisyas* (merchants), and *Sudras* (artisans, farmers). In addition there were the *Dalits* or *Harijans* ("untouchables"). Hindu scripture said, "In order to preserve the universe, Brahma (the Supreme) caused the Brahmin to proceed from his mouth, the Kshatriya to proceed from his arm, the Vaishya to proceed from his thigh, and the Shudra to proceed from his foot" (Kashmeri, 1990). Accepting this social standing was considered a moral duty. Cultural values and economic restrictions reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. A person who lived in a caste society was socialized to accept his or her social standing.

Although the caste system in India has been officially dismantled, its residual presence in Indian society is deeply embedded. In rural areas, aspects of the tradition are more likely to remain, while urban centres show less evidence of this past. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global centre of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation.

7.2.2 The Class System

A **class system** is based on both social factors and individual achievement. It is at least a partially open system. A **class** consists of a set of people who have the same relationship to the **means of production** or productive property, that is, to the things used to produce the goods and services needed for survival: tools, technologies, resources, land, workplaces, etc. In Karl Marx's analysis, class systems form around the institution of private property, dividing those who own or control productive property from those who do not and must survive on the basis of their labour.

Social class has both a strictly *material* quality relating to these definitions of individuals' positions within a given economic system, and a *social* quality relating to the formation of common class interests, political divisions in society, sites of conflict and compromise, life styles and consumption patterns, and what Max Weber called different "life chances" (1969). We will return to the differences between Marx's and Weber's definitions of class later in this module. Whether defined by material or social characteristics however, the main social outcome of the class structure is inequality in society.

Marx argued that class systems originated in early Neolithic horticultural societies when horticultural technologies increased yields to economic surpluses. The first class divisions developed between those who owned and controlled the agricultural land and surplus production and those who were dispossessed of ownership and control (i.e., the agricultural labourers). Prior to the Neolithic period 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, there were no classes. Societies were egalitarian and were characterized by equality of condition. For tens of thousands of years, hunter-gatherer societies shared productive property and resources collectively and did not produce economic surpluses. They could not form class societies.

In capitalism, the principle class division is between the capitalist class who live from the proceeds of owning or controlling

productive property (capital assets like factories and machinery, or capital itself in the form of investments, stocks, and bonds) and the working class who live from selling their labour to the capitalists for a wage. Marx referred to these classes as the **bourgeoisie** and the **proletariat**, respectively. In addition, he described the classes of the **petite bourgeoisie** (the little bourgeosie) and the **lumpenproletariat** (the sub-proletariat). The petite bourgeoisie are those like shopkeepers, farmers, and contractors who own some property and perhaps employ a few workers but still rely on their own labour to survive. The lumpenproletariat are the chronically unemployed or irregularly employed who are in and out of the workforce. They are what Marx referred to as the "reserve army of labour," a pool of potential labourers who are surplus to the needs of production at any particular time.

In a class system, social inequality is structural, meaning that it is "built in" to the organization of the economy. The relationship to the means of production (i.e., ownership/non-ownership) defines a persistent, objective pattern of social relationships that exists, in a sense, prior to or outside of individuals' personal or voluntary choices and motives. In Marx's analysis, this was also the basis of class conflict, because objectively (i.e., beyond individuals' personal perceptions or beliefs) the class positions are contradictory. The existence of the bourgeoisie is defined by the economic drive to accumulate capital and increase profit. The key means to achieve this in a competitive marketplace is by reducing the cost of production by lowering the cost of labour (by reducing wages, moving production to lower wage areas, or replacing workers with labour-saving technologies). This contradicts the interests of the proletariat who seek to establish a sustainable standard of living by maintaining the level of their wages and the level of employment in society.

While individual capitalists and individual workers might not see it this way, objectively the class interests clash and define a persistent pattern of management-labour conflict and political cleavage structures in modern, capitalist societies.

However, unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People are at least formally free to gain a different level of education or employment than their parents. They can move up and down within the stratification system. They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes, allowing people to move from one class to another. In other words, individuals can move up and down the class hierarchy, even while the class categories and the class hierarchy itself remain relatively stable.

This means that in a class system, one's occupation is not fixed at birth. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice plays a role. For example, Ted Rogers Jr. chose a career in media similar to that of his father but managed to move from a position of relative wealth and privilege in the petite bourgeoisie to being the fifth wealthiest bourgeois in the country. On the other hand, his father Ted Sr. chose a career in radio based on individual interests that differed from his own father's. Ted Sr.'s father, Albert Rogers, held a position as a director of Imperial Oil. Ted Sr. therefore moved from the class of the bourgeoisie to the class of the petite bourgeoisie.

7.2.3 Social Mobility and Social Inequality

Social mobility refers to the ability to change positions within a social stratification system. When people improve or diminish their economic status in a way that affects social class, they experience social mobility. This is a key concept in determining whether inequalities of condition limit people's life chances or whether we can meaningfully speak of the existence of equality of opportunity in a society. A high degree of social mobility, upwards or downwards, would suggest that the stratification system of a society is in fact open (i.e., that there is equality of opportunity).

Upward mobility refers to an increase — or upward shift — in social class. In Canada, people applaud the rags-to-riches

achievements of celebrities like Guy Laliberté who went from street busking in Quebec to being the CEO of Cirque du Soleil, with a net worth of $2.5 billion. Actor and comedian Jim Carey lived with his family in camper van at one point growing up in Scarborough, Ontario. Ron Joyce was a beat policemen in Hamilton before he co-founded Tim Hortons. CEO of Magna International Frank Stronach immigrated to Canada from Austria in 1955 with only $50 to his name. There are many stories of people from modest beginnings rising to fame and fortune. But the truth is that relative to the overall population, the number of people who launch from poverty to wealth is very small. Still, upward mobility is not only about becoming rich and famous. In Canada, people who earn a university degree, get a job promotion, or marry someone with a good income may move up socially.

Downward mobility indicates a lowering of one's social class. Some people move downward because of business setbacks, unemployment, or illness. Dropping out of school, losing a job, or becoming divorced may result in a loss of income or status and, therefore, downward social mobility.

Intergenerational mobility explains a difference in social class between different generations of a family. For example, an upper-class executive may have parents who belonged to the middle class. In turn, those parents may have been raised in the lower class. Patterns of intergenerational mobility can reflect long-term societal changes.

Intragenerational mobility describes a difference in social class between different members of the same generation. For example, the wealth and prestige experienced by one person may be quite different from that of his or her siblings.

Structural mobility happens when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder. Structural mobility is attributable to changes in society as a whole, not individual changes. In the first half of the 20th century industrialization expanded the Canadian economy, which raised the standard of living and led to upward structural mobility. In today's

work economy, the recession and the outsourcing of jobs overseas have contributed to high unemployment rates. Many people have experienced economic setbacks, creating a wave of downward structural mobility.

Many Canadians believe that people move up in class because of individual efforts and move down by their own doing. In the ideal of equality of opportunity, one's access to rewards would exactly equal one's personal efforts and merits toward achieving those rewards. One's class position or other social characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) would not skew the relationship between merit and rewards. Others believe that equality of opportunity is a myth designed to keep people motivated to work hard, while getting them to accept social inequality as the legitimate outcome of personal achievement. The ideology of equality of opportunity is just a mirage that masks real and permanent structural inequality in society. The rich stay rich, and the poor stay poor. Data that measures social mobility suggest that the truth is a bit of both.

Typically social mobility is measured by comparing either the occupational status or the earnings between parents and children. If children's earnings or status remain the same as their parents then there is no social mobility (i.e., horizontal mobility). If children's earnings or status moves up or down with respect to their parents, then there is social mobility (i.e., vertical mobility). Corak and colleagues compared "intergenerational earnings elasticity" between fathers and sons in Canada and the United States (2010). (Some data are available on daughters as well, but it is less common and therefore difficult to use to make cross-national comparisons.) Intergenerational earnings elasticity gives a percentage figure that indicates the degree to which fathers' income predicts sons' income (i.e., the degree of intergenerational "stickiness" or lack of social mobility). The data show that there is a much lower degree of social mobility in the United States than in Canada. While earnings elasticity (from 2006 data) in the United States was 0.47, meaning that almost one half of the fathers' earning advantage was passed on to their sons, in Canada the figure was 0.19, meaning that less than

one-fifth of the father's earnings advantage was passed on. This suggests that Canada has a relatively high rate of social mobility and equality of opportunity compared to the United States, where almost 50 percent of sons remain at the same income level as their fathers. In an international comparison, the United Kingdom had even lower social mobility than the United States with an earnings elasticity of 0.50, while Finland, Norway, and Denmark had greater social mobility than Canada with earnings elasticities of 0.18, 0.17, and 0.15 respectively.

One of the key factors that distinguishes Canada's degree of social mobility from that of the United States is that the United States has a much greater degree of social inequality to begin with. The higher degree of social inequality is linked to lower degrees of social mobility. The main factor that contributes to the difference in the intergenerational earnings elasticity figures is that there is a great degree of intergenerational social *immobility* at the lower and higher ranges of the income scale in the United States. For example, over 25 percent of sons born to fathers in the top 10 percent of income earners remain in the top 10 percent, compared to about 18 percent in Canada. On the other hand, in the United States, 22 percent of sons born to fathers in the bottom 10 percent of income earners remain in the bottom 10 percent, while another 18 percent only move up to the bottom 10 to 20 percent of income earners. The figures for Canada are 16 percent and 14 percent respectively (Corak et al., 2010).

However, these data also show that Canada by no means has "perfect" social mobility or equality of opportunity. Class background significantly affects one's chances to get ahead. For example, the chance that a son born to a father in the 30 to 40 percent or 40 to 50 percent ranges of income earners (i.e., in 2004 families averaging $42,000 or $55,000 a year respectively) would move up into the top 50 percent of income earners (i.e., families averaging $65,000 a year or more) was about 50 percent (Yalnizyan, 2007). In contrast, a son from the bottom 20 percent of income earners had only a 38 percent chance of moving into the top 50

percent of income earners. For the bottom 20 percent of families, 62 percent of sons remained within the bottom 50 percent of income earners (Corak et al., 2010).

Most sociologists define social class as a grouping based on similar social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. As we note later in the module, there is dispute within the discipline about the relative importance of different criteria for characterizing economic position. Whether the Marxist emphasis on property ownership is more important than the Weberian emphasis on gradations of occupational status is a matter for debate. Each definition captures some aspects of the experience of inequality in modern society but misses others. Either way, the concept of class does imply a shared standard of living based on social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. These factors also affect how much power and prestige a person has. In most cases, having more money means having more power or more opportunities.

7.2.4 Standard of Living

In the last century, Canada has seen a steady rise in **standard of living**, the level of wealth available to acquire the material necessities and comforts to maintain one's lifestyle. The standard of living is based on factors such as income, employment, class, poverty rates, and affordability of housing. Because standard of living is closely related to quality of life, it can represent factors such as the ability to afford a home, own a car, and take vacations. Access to a standard of living that enables people to participate on an equal basis in community life is not equally distributed, however. The irony of rising standards of living is that one does not have to live in **absolute poverty —** "a severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information" (United Nations, 1995) — to be

marginalized and socially excluded. **Relative poverty** refers to the minimum amount of income or resources needed to be able to participate in the "ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities" of a society (Townsend, 1979).

In Canada, a small portion of the population has the means to achieve the highest standard of living. Statistics Canada data from 2005 showed that 10 percent of the population held 58 percent of our nation's wealth (Osberg, 2008). In 2007, the richest 1 percent took 13.8 percent of the total income earned by Canadians (Yalnizyan, 2010). In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1 percent earned 10 times more than the median income earner of the other 99 percent (Statistics Canada, 2013). Wealthy people receive the most schooling, have better health, and consume the most goods and services. Wealthy people also wield decision-making power. One aspect of their decision-making power comes from their positions as owners or top executives of corporations and banks. They are able to grant themselves salary raises and bonuses. By 2010, only two years into the economic crisis of 2008, the executive pay of CEOs at Canada's top 100 corporations jumped by 13 percent (McFarland, 2011), while negotiated wage increases in 2010 amounted to only 1.8 percent (HRSDC, 2010).

Many people think of Canada as a middle-class society. They think a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are pretty well off, existing in the middle of the social strata. But as the data above indicate, the distribution of wealth is not even. Millions of women and men struggle to pay rent, buy food, and find work that pays a living wage. Moreover, the share of the total income claimed by those in the middle-income ranges has been shrinking since the early 1980s, while the share taken by the wealthiest has been growing (Osberg, 2008).

Statistics Canada produces two relative **measures of poverty**: the low income measure (LIM) and the low income cut-off (LICO) measure. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has developed an absolute measure: the market basket measure (MBM).

Low income measure: The LIM is defined as half the median

family income. A person whose income is below that level is said to be in low income. The LIM is adjusted for family size.

Low income cut-off: The LICO is the income level below which a family would devote at least 20 percentage points more of their income to food, clothing, and shelter than an average family would. People are said to be in the low-income group if their income falls below this threshold. The threshold varies by family size and community size, as well as if income is calculated before or after taxes. For example, a single individual in Toronto would be said to be living in low income if his or her 2009 after-tax income was below $18,421.

Market basket measure: The MBM is a measure of the disposable income a family would need to be able to purchase a basket of goods that includes food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other basic needs. The dollar value of the MBM varies by family size and composition, as well as community size and location. MBM data are available since 2000 only.

The three measures produce different results. In 2009, according to each measure, the following numbers of Canadians were living in low income:

- LICO—3.2 million (9.6 per cent of the population)
- MBM—3.5 million (10.6 per cent)
- LIM—4.4 million (13.3 per cent)

Table 9.1 shows how the three measures also produce different results over time. Using the LICO measure results in a decreasing share of people in low income from 1996 to 2007, followed by a slight upturn in 2008 and 2009. The LIM measure results in a share of people in low income that has increased since 1990. The MBM, which has data starting only in 2000, shows results similar to the LICO but with a sharper upturn in 2008 and 2009.

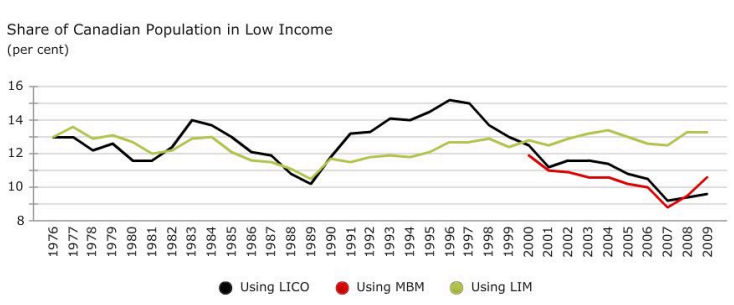

Figure 7.5. *"Measuring Levels of Poverty" excerpted from The Conference Board of Canada [*"Canadian Income Inequality: Is Canada becoming more unequal?"*](). (Used under the [*Conference Board of Canada's Terms of Use*]()*)*

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7.3 Trends in Social Inequality

The news from sociological research into inequality is that the gap in income and wealth between the rich and the poor has been increasing in Canada (Osberg, 2008). In 1982, the median income earner in the top 1% of incomes earned seven times more than the median income earner in the other 99%. In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1% earned ten times more. Moreover, while the median income for the top 1% increased from $191,600 to $283,000 in constant dollars (i.e., adjusted for inflation), the median income for the bottom 99% only increased from $28,000 to $28,400. In the early 1980s, the top 1% of income earners accounted for 7% of the total income generated in Canada, whereas in 2010 they accounted for 10.6%, down slightly from 12.1% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2013). In effect, the incomes for middle-income earners remained flat over the last 30 years, while the incomes for the top 1% increased significantly both in absolute terms and as a proportion of all incomes. (Note: Median income is not the same as average income. It refers to the amount that the person who is exactly in the middle of an income range earned: 50% of the people in this income range earned more than the median, and 50% earned less).

Table 7.1. Share of Aggregate Incomes Received by Each Quintile of Families and Unattached Individuals. (Table courtesy of Osberg, 2008/CCPA)

[Skip Table]

Income Group	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2005
Bottom 20% (poorest)	4.4%	4.2%	3.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
Second 20%	11.2%	11.9%	10.6%	11%	10%	9.6%	9.7%	9.6%
Middle 20%	18.3%	18.3%	17.6%	17.7%	16.4%	16%	15.6%	15.6%
Fourth 20%	23.3%	24.5%	24.9%	25.1%	24.7%	24.6%	23.7%	23.9%
Top 20% (richest)	42.8%	41.1%	43.3%	41.6%	44.4%	45.6%	46.9%	46.9%

Sources Statistics Canada (1998) Income Distribution by Size in Canada Catalogue No. 13-207, CANSIM Table 202-0701, V1546465, J.R. Podoluk (1968) *Incomes of Canadians*, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

This discrepancy does not simply mean that the very rich are increasing their share of the wealth at the expense of the very poor — the middle classes are also losing their share of the wealth. One way to analyze this trend is to examine the changing distribution of income in Canada over time. In Table 9.2 (above), changes in inequality are measured by looking at how the total annual income is distributed between each fifth (or "quintile") of Canadian families from the lowest earning to highest earning for different years (Osberg, 2008). If perfect *equality of income* existed, each quintile would have earned exactly 20% of the total income. Instead, Table 7.2 shows that between 1951 and 1981 the top 20% of family units received around 42% of total income, but after 1981 this figure steadily increased to 47%. On the other hand, the share of income of the middle 60% of families declined by 4.7%, going from 53.8% to 49.1%. The lowest 20% also lost 0.5% of their already tiny share, going from 4.6% to 4.1%. Although the majority of people in Canada

have not seen any growth in real income in three decades (Osberg, 2008), the average income of the top 1% grew by about 180% (Yalnizyan, 2010). Over this period, the share of the total income received by the top 1% has doubled, the top 0.1% has tripled, and the top 0.01% has quintupled (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Why is this news? For several decades, Lars Osberg notes that the joke was that the study of income inequality was like watching grass grow because nothing ever happened (2008). Between 1946 and 1981, changes in income inequality were small despite the fact the Canadian economy went through a massive transformation: It transformed from an agricultural base to an industrial base; the population urbanized and doubled in size; the overall production of wealth measured by gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 4.5%; and per capita output increased by 227% (Osberg, 2008). As Osberg puts it, the key question was why did economic inequality not change during this period of massive transformation? From 1981 until the present, during another period of rapid and extensive economic change in which the overall production of wealth continued to expand, economic inequality has increased dramatically. What happened?

The main explanatory factor is that between 1946 and 1981 real wages increased in pace with the growth of the economy, but since 1981 only the top 20% of families have seen any meaningful increase in real income while the very wealthy have seen huge increases. The taxable income of the top 1% of families increased by 80% between 1982 and 2004 (Obsberg, 2008). Neoliberal policies of reduced state expenditures and tax cuts have been major factors in defining the difference between these two eras. The neoliberal theory that the benefits of tax cuts to the rich would "trickle down" to the middle class and the poor has proven false. The biggest losers with regard to neoliberal policy, of course, are the very poor. As Osberg notes, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that the homeless — those forced to beg in the streets and those dependent on food banks — began to appear in Canada in significant numbers (2008).

Some have argued that to the degree that *equality of opportunity*

exists, *inequality of condition* or inequality of "outcome" is perhaps not fair, but it is justifiable. Others have argued that because capitalism is built on the basis of structural inequality, equality of condition is impossible. The idea that equality of opportunity — a **meritocracy** — actually exists and that it leads to a meaningful access to social mobility — the movement of people from one social position to another — is debatable, as we will see below. Also, it is important to note that if total equality of condition — a world where everyone's social position and financial rewards would be exactly the same — is unlikely, varying degrees of social inequality are possible. In fact degrees of social inequality vary significantly between jurisdictions.

The **Gini Index** is a measure of income inequality in which zero is absolute equality and one is absolute inequality. Table 7.3 shows that Canada's degree of inequality increased by 5% between 1980 and 2005 from a Gini Index of 0.38 to 0.43 (Osberg, 2008). From a comparative perspective, Canada's Gini Index is much higher than many European countries but is lower than the extremes of inequality in the United States and Mexico (who are Canada's NAFTA partners). See Table 7.4 (below). This comparison indicates that a much greater equality of condition can exist even under the same pressures of globalization if different social and economic policy models are chosen. Even though the countries with the lowest levels of inequality — Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria — have progressive tax systems and strong welfare states, they are able to maintain high levels of employment and economic growth while remaining "competitive" in the global economy (Osberg, 2010). If addressing poverty and inequality rather than promoting greater transfers of wealth to the rich is a reasonable goal, a variety of viable policy alternatives are available from which Canadians can choose. However, what needs to happen in order for Canadian governments (whatever their political affiliation) to support and promote policy alternatives that are more conducive to reducing social inequality?

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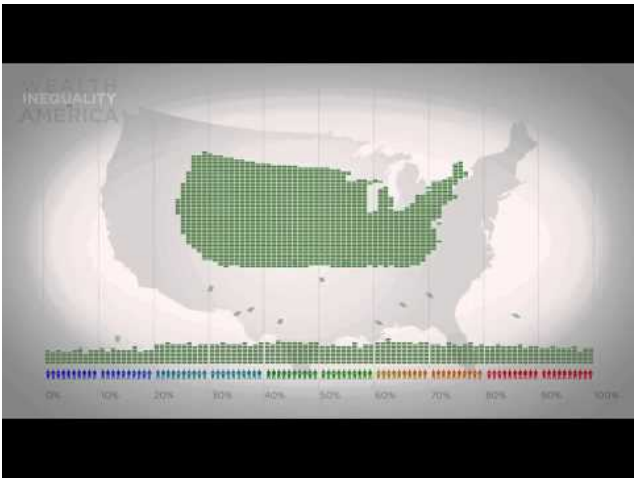

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7.4 Sociology and Social Class Analysis

Figure 7.6: *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 is in the public domain and is courtesy of the Royal B.C. Museum)*

Figure 7.7: *The owning class—Ja beside their Italian-style garden Victoria, B.C. (now part of Royal was heir to his family's coal fort operations on Vancouver Island spokesman for capitalist interes spent two years as B.C. Premier public domain and is courtesy o Archives.)*

For sociologists, categorizing and analyzing social 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.

Often, Marx and Weber are perceived to be at odds in their approaches to class and social inequality, but it is perhaps better to see them as articulating different styles of analysis. Weber's analysis presents a more complex model of the social hierarchy of capitalist society than Marx. Weber's model goes beyond *structural* class position to include the variables of **status** (degree of social prestige or honour) and **power** (degree of political influence). Thus, Weber provides a multi-dimensional model of social hierarchy. It is important to note that although individuals might be from the same objective class, their position in the social hierarchy might differ according to their status and political influence. For example, women and men might be equal in terms of their class position, but because of the inequality in the status of the genders within each class, women as a group remain lower in the social hierarchy.

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. Weber's analysis, however, is *descriptive* rather than *analytical*. It can provide a useful description of differences between the levels or "strata" in a social hierarchy or stratification system, but does not provide an analysis of the formation of hierarchy itself.

On the other hand, Marx's analysis of class is essentially one-

dimensional. It has one variable: the relationship to the means of production. If one is a professional hockey player or a clerk in a supermarket, one works for a wage and is therefore a member of the working class. In this regard, his analysis challenges common sense as the difference between the different "fragments" of the working class — those who survive by selling their labour for a wage or salary — seem paramount, at least from the point of view of the subjective experience of class. It would seem that hockey players, doctors, lawyers, professors, and business executives have very little in common with grocery clerks, factory or agricultural workers, tradespersons, or low level administrative staff despite the fact that they all depend on being paid by someone. However, the key point of Marx's analysis is not to ignore the existence of status distinctions within classes, but to examine class structure *dialectically* to provide a more comprehensive and historical picture of class dynamics.

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.

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.

These dialectical qualities are also central to Marx's account of the hierarchical structure of classes in capitalist society. The main point of the dialectical analysis of class is that the working class and the owning class have to be understood in relationship to one another. They emerged together out of the old class structure of feudalism, and each exists only because the other exists. The wages that define the wage labourer are paid by the capitalist; the profit and capital accumulated by the capitalist are products of the workers' labour.

In Marx's dialectical model, change occurs because the "unity" of this system is characterized by the struggle of opposites (i.e., the classes are "structurally in conflict" because of the contradiction in their class interests). The composition of classes changes over time; the statuses of different occupations vary; the proportions between workers' income and capitalists' profit change; and the types of production and the means of production change (through the introduction of labour saving technologies, globalization, new commodities, etc.). In addition, change proceeds from the quantitative to the qualitative in the sense that changes in purely quantitative variables like salary, working conditions, unemployment levels, rates of profitability, etc. lead to changes in qualitative variables like the subjective experience of class, the divisions of "left" and "right" in political struggles, and the formation of class consciousness.

Thus, the strength of Marx's analysis is its ability to go beyond a description of where different groups fit within the class structure at a given moment in time to an analysis of why those groups and

their relative positions change with respect to one another. The dialectical approach reveals the underlying logic of class structure as a dynamic system and the potential commonality of interests and subjective experiences that define class-consciousness. As a result, in an era in which the precariousness of many high status jobs has become clearer, the divisions of economic interests between the different segments of the working class becomes less so.

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. Below, we will explore the major divisions of Canadian social class and their key subcategories.

7.5 Class Structure in Canada

7.5.1 The Owning Class

***Figure 7.8**. Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places designed for luxury and comfort. (Goldwater Estate by Ben Freedman is available under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

The owning class is considered Canada's top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In Canada, the richest 86 people (or families) account for 0.002 percent of the population, but in 2012 they had accumulated the equivalent wealth of the lowest 34 percent of the country's population (McDonald, 2014). The

combined net worth of these 86 families added up to $178 billion in 2012, which equalled the net worth of the lowest 11.4 million Canadians. In terms of income, in 2007 the average income of the richest 0.01 percent of Canadians was $3.833 million (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to power. Canada's owning class wields a lot of power. As corporate leaders, their decisions affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they shape the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. They also fund think tanks like the C. D. Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute that promote the values and interests of business elites. As campaign contributors, they influence politicians and fund campaigns, usually to protect their own economic interests.

Canadian society has historically distinguished between "old money" (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and "new money" (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standing. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy do not work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune.

New money members of the owning class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They have not gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviours attributed to the middle and lower classes. For example, Toronto politicians Rob (deceased, 2016) and Doug Ford were estimated to hold family assets worth $50 million, yet they presented themselves as just

"average guys" aligned with their blue-collar constituents against "rich elitist people" (McArther, 2013; Warner, 2014). Rob Ford's infamous crack cocaine smoking, public binge drinking, and use of foul language would not make him at home within the circles of old money in Canada.

7.5.2 The Middle Class

***Figure 7.9**. These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class. (Photo by United Way Canada-Centraide Canada is available under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

Many people call themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why some sociologists divide the middle class into upper and lower subcategories. These divisions are

based on gradations of status defined by levels of education, types of work, cultural capital, and the lifestyles afforded by income.

Upper-middle-class people tend to hold bachelor's and postgraduate degrees in subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine that lead to occupations in the professions. **Professions** are occupations that claim high levels of specialized technical and intellectual expertise and are governed and regulated by autonomous professional organizations (like the Canadian Medical Association or legal bar associations). Lower-middle-class members hold bachelor's degrees or associate's degrees from two-year community or technical colleges that lead to various types of white collar, service, administrative, or paraprofessional occupations.

Comfort is a key concept to the middle class. Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers that earn comfortable incomes. They provide their families with large homes and nice cars. They may go skiing or boating on vacation. Their children receive quality educations (Gilbert, 2010).

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower-level management or administrative support positions. Compared to traditional working-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paycheques. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally do not have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than in the upper tiers of the class system. When budgets are tight, lower-middle-class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

7.5.3 The Traditional Working Class

***Figure 7.10**. This man is a custodian at a restaurant. His job, which is crucial to the business, is considered lower class. (Restaurant chains outsource cleaning by Frederick Md Publicity is available under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

The traditional working class is sometimes also referred to as being part of the lower class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the middle class, traditional working-class people have less of an educational background and usually earn smaller incomes. While there are many working-class trades that require skill and pay middle-class wages, the majority often work jobs that require little prior skill or experience, doing routine tasks under close supervision.

Traditional working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, are usually equated with blue-collar types of jobs: "wage-workers who are engaged in the production of commodities,

the extraction of natural resources, the production of food, the operation of the transportation network required for production and distribution, the construction industry, and the maintenance of energy and communication networks" (Veltmeyer, 1986, p. 83). The work is considered blue collar because it is hands-on and often physically demanding. The term "blue collar" comes from the traditional blue coveralls worn by manual labourers.

Beneath those in the working class are the working poor. Like some sections of the working class, they have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as migrant farm workers, house cleaners, and day labourers. Some are high school dropouts. Some are illiterate, unable to read job ads. Many do not vote because they do not believe that any politician will help change their situation (Beeghley, 2008).

How can people work full time and still be poor? Even working full time, more than a million of the working poor earn incomes too meagre to support a family. In 2012, 1.8 million working people (including 540,000 working full time year round) earned less than Statistic Canada's low income cut-off level, which defines poverty in Canada (Johnstone & Cooper, 2013). Minimum wage varies from province to province, from $9.95/h in Alberta to $11/h in Nunavut and Ontario (Retail Council of Canada, 2014). However, it is estimated that a **living wage** — based on a 35-hour work week — is $19.14/h in Vancouver, $16.60/h in Toronto, and $14.95/h in Hamilton (differences due to the difference in cost of living in these locations). A living wage is the amount needed to meet a family's basic needs and enable them to participate in community life (Johnstone & Cooper, 2013). Even for a single person, minimum wage is low. A married couple with children will have a hard time covering expenses.

The underclass or lumpenproletariat is Canada's lowest tier. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are

homeless. For many, welfare systems provide a much-needed support through food assistance, medical care, housing, and the like. However, why, as indicated in the wealth inequality videos for Canada and the United States have social welfare programs for the poor declined since the 1980's and social inequality increased? Moreover, why is inequality increasing at a time when productivity is increasing?

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7.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports. There

is stratification even among teams. For example, the Minnesota Timberwolves hand out the lowest annual payroll, while the Los Angeles Lakers reportedly pay the highest. Kobe Bryant, a Lakers shooting guard who retired in 2016, was one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $25 million a year (Basketballreference.com, 2011). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified and members are ranked.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, while critical sociologists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives — functionalism, critical sociology, and interpretive sociology.

7.6.1 Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a needed purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis (1908-1997) and Wilbert Moore (1914-1987) published the **Davis-Moore thesis**, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. Qualified people who fill those positions must be rewarded more than others.

According to Davis and Moore, a firefighter's job is more important than, for instance, a grocery store cashier's job. The cashier position does not require the same skill and training level as firefighting. Without the incentive of higher pay and better benefits, why would someone be willing to rush into burning buildings? If

pay levels were the same, the firefighter might as well work as a grocery store cashier. Davis and Moore believed that rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer.

Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They also stated that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. The employees don't need a college degree. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill.

In 1953, Melvin Tumin (1919-1994) countered the Davis-Moore thesis in *Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis*. Tumin questioned what determined a job's degree of importance. The Davis-Moore thesis does not explain, he argued, why a media personality with little education, skill, or talent becomes famous and rich on a reality show or a campaign trail. The thesis also does not explain inequalities in the education system, or inequalities due to race or gender. Tumin believed social stratification prevented qualified people from attempting to fill roles (1953). For example, an underprivileged youth has less chance of becoming a scientist, no matter how smart he or she is, because of the relative lack of opportunity available.

The Davis-Moore thesis, though open for debate, was an early attempt to explain why stratification exists. The thesis states that social stratification is necessary to promote excellence, productivity, and efficiency, thus giving people something to strive for. Davis and Moore believed that the system serves society as a whole because it allows everyone to benefit to a certain extent.

7.6.2 Critical Sociology

Figure 7.11. *"Towards the Dawn," a 1930s promotional poster for the Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (Image is in the Public Domain and is courtesy of the Rosetown and District Archives)*

Critical sociologists are deeply critical of social inequality, asserting that it benefits only some people not all of society. For instance, to a critical sociologist it seems problematic that after a long period of increasing equality of incomes from World War II to the 1970s, the wealthiest 1 percent of income earners have been increasing their share of the total income of Canadians from 7.7 percent in 1977 to 13.8 percent in 2007 (Yalnizyan, 2010). In 1982, the median income earner in the top 1 percent of incomes earned seven times more than the median income earner in the other 99 percent. In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1 percent earned ten times more. Moreover, while the median income for the top 1 percent increased from $191,600 to $283,000 in constant dollars (i.e., adjusted for inflation), the median income for the bottom 99 percent only increased from $28,000 to $28,400 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Canada's richest 1 percent took almost a third (32 percent) of all growth in incomes in 2007 (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Critical sociologists view this "great U-turn" in income equality over the 20th and 21st centuries as a product of both the ability of corporate elites to grant themselves huge salary and bonus increases and the shift toward neoliberal public policy and tax cuts. Rather than creating conditions in which wealth trickles down, tax cuts and neoliberal policies tremendously benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. This is an example of the way that stratification perpetuates inequality. Contrary to the analysis of functionalists, huge corporate bonuses continued to be awarded even when dysfunctional corporate and financial mismanagement of the economy led to the global financial crisis of 2008. Nor is it the case that corporate elites work harder to merit more rewards. Over the period of increasing inequality in income, the only group not working more weeks and hours in the paid workforce is the richest 10 percent of families (Yalnizyan, 2007).

Critical sociologists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members. Many critical sociologists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the 19th-century era of industrialization, Marx analyzed the way the owning class or capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletarians earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx saw workers experience deep exploitation, alienation, and misery resulting from class power (Marx, 1848). He also predicted that the growing collective impoverishment of the working class would lead them, through the leadership of unions, to recognize their common class interests. A common class "consciousness" uniting different types of labour would lead to the revolutionary conditions whereby the working class could throw off their "fetters" and overthrow the capitalists. With the abolition of private property (i.e., productive property) and collective ownership of the means of production, Marx imagined that class conflict could be ended forever. A "communist" society that abolished the private ownership of the means of production would be a true democracy. Marx did not live see the state socialist

systems in the Soviet Union and elsewhere that called themselves communist but ended up replacing capitalist-based inequality with bureaucratic-based inequality.

Today, while working conditions have improved, critical sociologists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. Capitalists own the means of production, and a neoliberal political system is in place to make business owners rich and keep workers poor. Moreover, the privileged position of the middle classes has been steadily eroded by growing inequalities of wealth and income. Some sociologists argue that the middle class is becoming **proletarianized**, meaning that in terms of income, property, control over working conditions, and overall life chances, the middle class is becoming more and more indistinguishable from the wage-earning working class (Abercrombie & Urry, 1983). Nevertheless, according to critical sociologists, increasing social inequality is neither inevitable nor necessary.

7.6.3 Interpretive Sociology

Within interpretive sociology, symbolic interactionism is a theory that uses everyday interactions of individuals to explain society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis strives to explain how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, or racial background, and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance

reflects their perceived social standing. Housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style. Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) concept of **cultural capital** suggests that cultural "assets" such as education and taste are accumulated and passed down between generations in the same manner as financial capital or wealth (1984). This marks individuals from an early age by such things as knowing how to wear a suit or having an educated manner of speaking. In fact the children of parents with a postsecondary degree are 60 percent likely to attend university themselves, while the children of parents with less than a high school education have only a 32 percent chance of attending university (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007).

Cultural capital is capital also in the sense of an investment, as it is expensive and difficult to attain while providing access to better occupations. Bourdieu argued that the privilege accorded to those who hold cultural capital is a means of reproducing the power of the ruling classes. People with the "wrong" cultural attributes have difficulty attaining the same privileged status. Cultural capital becomes a key measure of distinction between social strata.

***Figure 7.12**. 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 Vince_Lamb is available under a CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0 License.)*

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.

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Our discussion of social inequality and social stratification is developed further in Module 8 with an examination of global stratification and patterns of global inequality.

Key Terms and Concepts

absolute poverty: A severe deprivation of basic human

needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

achieved status: A status received through individual effort or merits (eg. occupation, educational level, moral character, etc.).

ascribed status: A status received by virtue of being born into a category or group (eg. hereditary position, gender, race, etc.).

bourgeoisie: In capitalism, the owning class who live from the proceeds of owning or controlling productive property (capital assets like factories and machinery, or capital itself in the form of investments, stocks, and bonds).

caste system: A system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives.

class: A group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation.

class system: Social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments.

class traits: The typical behaviours, customs, and norms that define each class, also called class markers.

conspicuous consumption: Buying and using products to make a statement about social standing.

cultural capital: Cultural assets in the form of knowledge, education, and taste that can be transferred intergenerationally.

Davis-Moore thesis: A thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity.

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

empire: A new supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose territory is the entire globe.

endogamous marriages: Unions of people within the same social category.

equality of condition: A situation in which everyone in a society has a similar level of wealth, status, and power.

equality of opportunity: A situation in which everyone in a society has an equal chance to pursue economic or social rewards.

exogamous marriages: Unions of people from different social categories.

Gini Index: A measure of income inequality in which zero is absolute equality and one is absolute inequality.

global stratification: A comparison of the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole.

income: The money a person earns from work or investments.

intergenerational mobility: A difference in social class between different generations of a family.

intragenerational mobility: A difference in social class between different members of the same generation.

living wage: The income needed to meet a family's basic needs and enable them to participate in community life.

lumpenproletariat: In capitalism, the underclass of chronically unemployed or irregularly employed who are in and out of the workforce.

means of production: Productive property, including the things used to produce the goods and services needed for

survival: tools, technologies, resources, land, workplaces, etc.

meritocracy: An ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing.

neoliberalism: A set of policies in which the state reduces its role in providing public services, regulating industry, redistributing wealth, and protecting the commons while advocating the use of free market mechanisms to regulate society.

petite bourgeoisie: In capitalism, the class of small owners like shopkeepers, farmers, and contractors who own some property and perhaps employ a few workers but rely on their own labour to survive.

power: How many people a person must take orders from versus how many people a person can give orders to.

primogeniture: A law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son.

proletariat: Those who seek to establish a sustainable standard of living by maintaining the level of their wages and the level of employment in society.

proletarianization (the act of being proletarianized): The process in which the work conditions of the middle class increasingly resemble those of the traditional, blue-collar working class.

relative poverty: Living without the minimum amount of income or resources needed to be able to participate in the ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities of a society.

social differentiation: The division of people into categories based on socially significant characteristics, identities, and roles.

social inequality: The unequal distribution of valued resources, rewards, and positions in a society.

social mobility: The ability to change positions within a social stratification system.

social stratification: A socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige.

socio-economic status (SES): A group's social position in a hierarchy based on income, education, and occupation.

standard of living: The level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle.

status: The degree of honour or prestige one has in the eyes of others.

status consistency: The consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like income, education, and occupation.

structural mobility: When societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder.

upward mobility: An increase — or upward shift — in social class.

wealth: The value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance

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8. Module 8: Global Stratification and Global Inequality

Figure 8.1. *The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were an ambitious start to the 21st century. (Millennium Development Goals Postcards by U.S. Mission Geneva under a CC BY-ND 2.0 License.)*

Learning Objectives

- Describe global stratification.
- Distinguish between globalization and localization.
- Describe how different classification systems have developed.
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach.
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies.
- Understand the differences between relative, absolute, and subjective poverty.
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world's most impoverished areas.
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty.
- Describe and evaluate modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

8.0 Introduction to Global Stratification and Global Inequality

In 2000, the world entered a new millennium. In the spirit of a

grand-scale New Year's resolution, it was a time for lofty aspirations and dreams of changing the world. It was also the time of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a series of ambitious goals set by UN member nations. The MDGs, as they became known, sought to provide a practical and specific plan for eradicating extreme poverty around the world. Nearly 200 countries signed on, and they worked to create a series of 21 targets with 60 indicators, with an ambitious goal of reaching them by 2015. The goals spanned eight categories:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development (United Nations, 2010)

There's no question that these were well-thought-out objectives to work toward. Many years later, what has happened? As of the 2010 Outcome Document, much progress has been made toward some MDGs, while others are still lagging far behind. Goals related to poverty, education, child mortality, and access to clean water have seen much progress. But these successes show a disparity: some nations have seen great strides made, while others have seen virtually no progress. Improvements have been erratic, with hunger and malnutrition increasing from 2007 through 2009, undoing earlier achievements. Employment has also been slow to progress, as has a reduction in HIV infection rates, which have continued to outpace the number of people getting treatment. The mortality and health care rates for mothers and infants also show little advancement. Even in the areas that made gains, the successes are tenuous. And with the global recession having slowed both

institutional and personal funding, the attainment of the goals is very much in question (United Nations, 2010). In 2015, the MDG's were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). In the following videos, the SDGs and the progress made toward achieving particular goals are described.

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As we consider the global effort to meet the ambitious goals of various United Nations planning documents, we can think about how the world's people have ended up in such disparate circumstances. How did wealth become concentrated in some nations? What motivates companies to globalize? Is it fair for powerful countries to make rules that make it difficult for less-powerful nations to compete on the global scene? How can we address the needs of the world's population?

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The Economics of Happiness (ASL) from The Economics of Happiness on Vimeo.

8.1 Global Stratification and Classification

Just as North America's wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens while the middle class slowly disappears, **global inequality** involves the concentration of resources in certain nations, significantly affecting the opportunities of individuals in poorer and less powerful countries. But before we delve into the complexities of global inequality, let us consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of it.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses 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 we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that when core nation companies locate in peripheral nations, they expand the local economy and benefit the workers. Many models of modernization and development are functionalist, suggesting that societies with modern cultural values and beliefs are able to achieve economic development while traditional cultural values and beliefs hinder development. Cultures are either functional or dysfunctional for the economic development of societies.

Critical sociology focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. A critical sociologist would likely address the systematic inequality created when core nations exploit the resources of peripheral nations. For example, how many Canadian companies move operations offshore to take advantage of overseas workers who lack the constitutional protection and guaranteed minimum

wages that exist in Canada? Doing so allows them to maximize profits, but at what cost?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality might focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (absolute poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

8.1.1 Global Stratification

While stratification in Canada refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals and social groups or social categories, **global stratification** refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the Earth's population (Myrdal, 1970). As the table below illustrates, people's life expectancy depends heavily on where they happen to be born.

Table 8.1. Statistics such as infant mortality rates and life expectancy vary greatly by country of origin. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011)

Country	**Infant Mortality Rate**	**Life Expectancy**
Canada	4.9 deaths per 1,000 live births	81 years
Mexico	17.2 deaths per 1,000 live births	76 years
Democratic Republic of Congo	78.4 deaths per 1,000 live births	55 years

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. For example, we can compare China's average worker's wage to Canada's average wage. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination — whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like — can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the most extreme cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that earned it the world's condemnation. When looking at inequity between nations, think also about the disregard of the crisis in Darfur by most Western nations. Since few citizens of Western nations identified with the impoverished, non-white victims of the genocide, there has been little push to provide aid.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation. Nations that practise this female circumcision procedure defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West should not interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of types of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations (however

those are culturally defined). From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere — from the United States to Somalia to Tibet — restricting the freedom of individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International, 2012).

8.1.2 Global Classification

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias implying that less developed nations want to be like those who have attained postindustrial global power. Terms such as "developing" (nonindustrialized) and "developed" (industrialized) imply that nonindustrialized countries are somehow inferior, and must improve to participate successfully in the global economy, a label indicating that all aspects of the economy cross national borders. We must take care in how we delineate different countries. Over time, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

Cold War Terminology

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1945–1980) when the world was divided between capitalist and communist economic systems (and their respective geopolitical aspirations). Familiar and still used by many, it involves classifying countries into first world, second world, and third world nations based on respective economic development and standards of living. When this nomenclature was developed, capitalistic democracies such as the United States, Canada, and Japan were considered part of the **first world**. The poorest, most undeveloped countries were

referred to as the **third world** and included most of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The **second world** was the socialist world or Soviet bloc: industrially developed but organized according to a state socialist or communist model of political economy. Later, sociologist Manual Castells (1998) added the term **fourth world** to refer to stigmatized minority groups that were denied a political voice all over the globe (indigenous minority populations, prisoners, and the homeless, for example).

Also during the Cold War, global inequality was described in terms of economic development. Along with developing and developed nations, the terms "less-developed nation" and "underdeveloped nation" were used. **Modernization theory** suggested that societies moved through natural stages of development as they progressed toward becoming developed societies (i.e., stable, democratic, market oriented, and capitalist). The economist Walt Rustow (1960) provided a very influential schema of development when he described the linear sequence of developmental stages: *traditional society* (agrarian based with low productivity); *pre-take off society* (state formation and shift to industrial production, expansion of markets, and generation of surplus); *take-off* (rapid self-sustained economic growth and reinvestment of capital in the economy); *maturity* (a modern industrialized economy, highly capitalized and technologically advanced); *the age of high mass-consumption* (shift from basic goods to "durable" goods (TVs, cars, refrigerators, etc.), and luxury goods, general prosperity, egalitarianism). Like most versions of modernization theory, Rustow's schema describes a linear process of development culminating in the formation of democratic, capitalist societies. It was clearly in line with Cold War ideology, but it also echoed widely held beliefs about the idea of social progress as an evolutionary process.

However, as "natural" as these stages of development were taken to be, they required creation, securing, protection, and support. This was the era when the idea of geopolitical *noblesse oblige* (first-world responsibility) took root, suggesting that the so-called developed nations should provide foreign aid to the less-developed

and underdeveloped nations in order to raise their standard of living.

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Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach uses an economic and political basis to understand global inequality. Development and underdevelopment were not stages in a natural process of gradual modernization, but the product of power relations and colonialism. He conceived the global economy as a complex historical system supporting an economic hierarchy that placed some nations in positions of power with numerous resources and other nations in

a state of economic subordination. Those that were in a state of subordination faced significant obstacles to mobilization.

Core nations are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized. For example, Wallerstein contends that the United States is an economic powerhouse that can support or deny support to important economic legislation with far-reaching implications, thus exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. The free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are examples of how a core nation can leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

Peripheral nations have very little industrialization; what they do have often represents the outdated castoffs of core nations, the factories and means of production owned by core nations, or the resources exploited by core nations. They typically have unstable government and inadequate social programs, and they are economically dependent on core nations for jobs and aid. There are abundant examples of countries in this category. Check the label of your jeans or sweatshirt and see where it was made. Chances are it was a peripheral nation such as Guatemala, Bangladesh, Malaysia, or Colombia. You can be sure the workers in these factories, which are owned or leased by global core nation companies, are not enjoying the same privileges and rights as Canadian workers.

Semi-peripheral nations are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as a major source for raw material. They are an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap agricultural labour to the United States and Canada, and supplying goods to the North American market at a rate dictated by U.S. and Canadian consumers without the constitutional protections offered to U.S. or Canadian workers.

World Bank Economic Classification by Income

While there is often criticism of the World Bank, both for its policies and its method of calculating data, it is still a common source for global economic data. When using the World Bank categorization to classify economies, the measure of GNI, or gross national income, provides a picture of the overall economic health of a nation. **Gross national income** equals all goods and services plus net income earned outside the country by nationals and corporations headquartered in the country doing business out of the country, measured in U.S. dollars. In other words, the GNI of a country includes not only the value of goods and services inside the country, but also the value of income earned outside the country if it is earned by foreign nationals or foreign businesses. That means that multinational corporations that might earn billions in offices and factories around the globe are considered part of a core nation's GNI if they have headquarters in the core nations. Along with tracking the economy, the World Bank tracks demographics and environmental health to provide a complete picture of whether a nation is high income, middle income, or low income.

High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a GNI of at least $12,276 per capita. It separates out the OECD (Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development) countries, a group of 34 nations whose governments work together to promote economic growth and sustainability. According to the Work Bank (2011), in 2010, the average GNI of a high-income nation belonging to the OECD was $40,136 per capita; on average, 77% of the population in these nations was urban. Some of these countries include Canada, the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom (World Bank,

2011). In 2010, the average GNI of a high-income nation that did *not* belong to the OECD was $23,839 per capita and 83% was urban. Examples of these countries include Saudi Arabia and Qatar (World Bank, 2011).

There are two major issues facing high-income countries: capital flight and deindustrialization. **Capital flight** refers to the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, as when General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler close Canadian factories in Ontario and open factories in Mexico. **Deindustrialization**, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the costs for building infrastructure, training workers, shipping goods, and, of course, paying employee wages. This means that as emerging economies create their own industrial zones, global companies see the opportunity for existing infrastructure and much lower costs. Those opportunities lead to businesses closing the factories that provide jobs to the middle-class within core nations and moving their industrial production to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations.

Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in Canada

***Figure 8.2**. This old General Motors plant in Oshawa, Ontario, is a victim of auto industry outsourcing. (Eve of Destruction by Rick Harris under a CC BY-SA 2.0 License)*

As mentioned above, capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the manufacturing industries in Ontario. Ontario has been the traditional centre of manufacturing in Canada since the 19th century. At the turn of the 21st century, 18% of Ontario's labour market was made up of manufacturing jobs in industries like automobile manufacturing, food processing, and steel production. At the end of 2013, only 11% of the labour force worked in manufacturing. Between 2000 and 2013, 290,000 manufacturing jobs were lost (Tiessen, 2014). Often the culprit is portrayed as the high value of the Canadian dollar compared to the American dollar. Because of the high value of Canada's oil exports, international investors have driven up the value of the Canadian dollar in a process referred to as Dutch disease, the relationship between an increase in the development of natural resources and a decline in manufacturing. Canadian-manufactured products are too expensive as a result. However, this is just another way of describing the general process of capital flight to locations that have cheaper manufacturing costs and cheaper labour. Since the introduction of the North American free trade

agreements (the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1988 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994), the ending of the tariff system that protected branch plant manufacturing in Canada has enabled U.S. companies to shift production to low-wage regions south of the border and in Mexico.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell phone or internet provider, you have spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, "good morning," as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is needed. These are the workers of the 21st century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in Canada. For Canadian and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In Canada, unemployment is high. Many university-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the culture of consumerism that Canadians embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost $1,000 a few years ago is now $350. That cost saving has to come from somewhere. When Canadians seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are

building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted that television in the first place.

Figure 8.3. *Is this international call centre the wave of the future? (Call Center 2006 by Vitor Castillo under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank defines lower middle income countries as having a GNI that ranges from $1,006 to $3,975 per capita and upper middle income countries as having a GNI ranging from $3,976 to $12,275 per capita. In 2010, the average GNI of an upper middle income nation was $5,886 per capita with a population that was 57% urban. Brazil, Thailand, China, and Namibia are examples of middle-income nations (World Bank, 2011).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, **debt**

accumulation is the buildup of external debt, when countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel, 2007). By way of example, even in the European Union, which is composed of more core nations than semi-peripheral nations, the semi-peripheral nations of Italy, Portugal, and Greece face increasing debt burdens. The economic downturns in these countries are threatening the economy of the entire European Union. However, who is responsible for the debt accumulation of middle and low income nations and how does it originate? In the YouTube documentary video, "Confessions of an Economic Hitman" John Perkins discloses his role, and the role of high income nations, the international institutions of the World Band and the International Monetary Fund (both founded at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944) and transnational corporations in facilitating and sustaining the debt accumulation of nations within the global south.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=945

Low-Income Nations

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations having a GNI of $1,005 per capita or less in 2010. In 2010, the average GNI of a low-income nation was $528 and the average population was 796,261,360, with 28% located in urban areas. For example, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Somalia are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa, where most of the world's population lives (World Bank, 2011). There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty. In some ways, the term **global feminization**

of poverty says it all: around the world, women are bearing a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty. This means more women live in poor conditions, receive inadequate health care, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased nearly 20% more for women than for men (Mogadham, 2005). Why is this happening? While there are myriad variables affecting women's poverty, research specializing in this issue identifies three causes:

1. The expansion of female-headed households
2. The persistence and consequences of intra-household inequalities and biases against women
3. The implementation of neoliberal economic policies around the world (Mogadham, 2005)

In short, this means that within an impoverished household, women are more likely to go hungry more than men; in agricultural aid programs, women are less likely to receive help than men; and often, women are left taking care of families with no male counterpart.

8.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

***Figure 8.4**. How poor is poor for these beggar children in Vietnam? (Beggar Children Outside the Temple by Augapfel under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

What does it mean to be poor? Does it mean being a single mother with two kids in Toronto, waiting for her next paycheque before she can buy groceries? Does it mean living with almost no furniture in your apartment because your income does not allow for extras like beds or chairs? Or does it mean the distended bellies of the chronically malnourished throughout the peripheral nations of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? Poverty has a thousand faces and a thousand gradations; there is no single definition that pulls together every part of the spectrum. You might feel you are poor if you can't afford cable television or your own car. Every time you see a fellow student with a new laptop and smartphone you might feel that you, with your ten-year-old desktop computer, are barely keeping up. However, someone else might look at the clothes you wear and the calories you consume and consider you rich.

8.2.1 Types of Poverty

Social scientists define global poverty in different ways, taking into account the complexities and the issues of relativism described above. **Relative poverty** is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society's average standard of living. They are unable to participate in society in a meaningful way. People often disparage "keeping up with the Joneses" — the idea that you must keep up with the neighbours' standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel "poor" if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any "extras" beyond just making ends meet. Contrary to relative poverty, people who live in **absolute poverty** lack even the basic necessities, which typically include adequate food, clean water, safe housing, and access to health care. Absolute poverty is defined by the World Bank (2011) as when someone lives on less than a dollar a day. A shocking number of people — 88 million — live in absolute poverty, and close to 3 billion people live on less than $2.50 a day (Shah, 2011). If you were forced to live on $2.50 a day, how would you do it? What would you deem worthy of spending money on, and what could you do without? How would you manage the necessities — and how would you make up the gap between what you need to live and what you can afford?

***Figure 8.5**. Slums in India illustrate absolute poverty all too well. (Ahmedabad – Gujarat, India by Emmanuel Dyan under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

Subjective poverty describes poverty that is composed of many dimensions; it is subjectively present when your actual income does not meet your expectations and perceptions. With the concept of subjective poverty, the poor themselves have a greater say in recognizing when it is present. In short, subjective poverty has more to do with how a person or a family defines themselves. This means that a family subsisting on a few dollars a day in Nepal might think of themselves as doing well, within their perception of normal. However, a Westerner travelling to Nepal might visit the same family and see extreme need.

8.2.2 The Underground Economy Around the World

What do the driver of an unlicensed speedy cab in St. Catharines,

a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the **underground economy**, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the 2008 worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50% of non-agricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80% in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen, 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance — a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees (around C$4.50) for a day's worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta, 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world's poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members do not pay taxes, do not take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labour Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the 2008 recession. And while those in core nations know that unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, it is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip

side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in Canada, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of of labour may make up 10 to 13.5% of the overall Canadian economy (Schneider and Enste, 2000), a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta, 2009).

8.2.3 Who Are the Impoverished?

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? Most of us would guess correctly that the richest countries typically have the fewest people. Compare Canada, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns a large slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly exacerbated by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that while men and women may have the same rate of economic poverty, women are suffering more in terms of overall well-being (Buvinić, 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend

extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

Africa

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Exacerbating the problem, 2011 saw a drought in northeast Africa that brought starvation to many in the region.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabited with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu's seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State, 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa

has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way toward the future (World Poverty, 2012a).

Asia

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. In fact, many believe that China's success in recent times has much to do with its draconian population control rules. According to the U.S. State Department, China's market-oriented reforms have contributed to its significant reduction of poverty and the speed at which it has experienced an increase in income levels (U.S. Department of State, 2011b). However, every part of Asia has felt the global recession, from the poorest countries whose aid packages were hit, to the more industrialized ones whose own industries slowed down. These factors make the poverty on the ground unlikely to improve any time soon (World Poverty, 2012b).

Latin America

Poverty rates in some Latin American countries like Mexico have improved recently, in part due to investment in education. But other countries like Paraguay and Peru continue to struggle. Although there is a large amount of foreign investment in this part of the world, it tends to be higher-risk speculative investment (rather than the more stable long-term investment Europe often makes in Africa

and Asia). The volatility of these investments means that the region has been unable to leverage them, especially when mixed with high interest rates for aid loans. Further, internal political struggles, illegal drug trafficking, and corrupt governments have added to the pressure (World Poverty, 2012c).

Argentina is one nation that suffered from increasing debt load in the early 2000s, as the country tried to fight hyperinflation by fixing the peso to the U.S. dollar. The move hurt the nation's ability to be competitive in the world market and ultimately created chronic deficits that could only be financed by massive borrowing from other countries and markets. By 2001, so much money was leaving the country that there was a financial panic, leading to riots and ultimately, the resignation of the president (U.S. Department of State, 2011a).

8.2.4 The True Cost of a T-Shirt

***Figure 8.6**. This protester seeks to bring attention to the issue of sweatshops. (Photo courtesy of Ohio AFL-CIO Labor 2008/Flickr)*

Most of us do not pay too much attention to where our favourite products are made. And certainly when you are shopping for a cheap T-shirt, you probably do not turn over the label, check who produced the item, and then research whether or not the company has fair labour practices. In fact it can be very difficult to discover where exactly the items we use everyday have come from. Nevertheless, the purchase of a T-shirt involves us in a series of social relationships that ties us to the lives and working conditions of people around the world.

On April 24, 2013, the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed killing 1,129 garment workers. The building, like 90% of Dhaka's 4,000 garment factories, was structurally unsound.

Garment workers in Bangladesh work under unsafe conditions for as little as $38 a month so that North American consumers can purchase T-shirts in the fashionable colours of the season for as little as $5. The workers at Rana Plaza were in fact making clothes for the Joe Fresh label — the signature popular Loblaw brand — when the building collapsed. Having been put on the defensive for their overseas sweatshop practices, companies like Loblaw have pledged to improve working conditions in their suppliers' factories, but compliance has proven difficult to ensure because of the increasingly complex web of globalized production (MacKinnon and Strauss, 2013).

At one time, the garment industry was important in Canada, centred on Spadina Avenue in Toronto and Chabanel Street in Montreal. But over the last two decades of globalization, Canadian consumers have become increasingly tied through popular retail chains to a complex network of outsourced garment production that stretches from China, through Southeast Asia, to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The early 1990s saw the economic opening of China when suddenly millions of workers were available to produce and manufacture consumer items for Westerners at a fraction of the cost of Western production. Manufacturing that used to take place in Canada moved overseas. Over the ensuing years, the Chinese began to outsource production to regions with even cheaper labour: Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. The outsourcing was outsourced. The result is that when a store like Loblaw places an order, it usually works through agents who in turn source and negotiate the price of materials and production from competing locales around the globe.

Most of the T-shirts that we wear in Canada today begin their life in the cotton fields of arid west China, which owe their scale and efficiency to the collectivization projects of centralized state socialism. However, as the cost of Chinese labour has incrementally increased since the 1990s, the Chinese have moved into the role of connecting Western retailers and designers with production centres elsewhere. In a global division of labour, if agents organize

the sourcing, production chain and logistics, Western retailers can focus their skill and effort on retail marketing. It was in this context that Bangladesh went from having a few dozen garment factories to several thousand. The garment industry now accounts for 80% of Bangladesh's export earnings. Unfortunately, although there are legal safety regulations and inspections in Bangladesh, the rapid expansion of the industry has exceeded the ability of underfunded state agencies to enforce them.

The globalization of production makes it difficult to follow the links between the purchasing of a T-shirt in a Canadian store and the chain of agents, garment workers, shippers, and agricultural workers whose labour has gone into producing it and getting it to the store. Our lives are tied to this chain each time we wear a T-shirt, yet the history of its production and the lives it has touched are more or less invisible to us. It becomes even more difficult to do something about the working conditions of those global workers when even the retail stores are uncertain about where the shirts come form. There is no international agency that can enforce compliance with safety or working standards. Why do you think worker safety standards and factory building inspections have to be imposed by government regulations rather than being simply an integral part of the production process? Why does it seem normal that the issue of worker safety in garment factories is set up in this way? Why does this make it difficult to resolve or address the issue?

The fair trade movement has pushed back against the hyper-exploitation of global workers and forced stores like Loblaw to try to address the unsafe conditions in garment factories like Rana Plaza. Organizations like the Better Factories Cambodia program inspect garment production regularly in Cambodia, enabling stores like Mountain Equipment Co-op to purchase reports on the factory chains it relies on. After the Rana Plaza disaster, Loblaw signed an Accord of Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh to try to ensure safety compliance of their suppliers. However the bigger problem seems to originate with our desire to be able to purchase a T-shirt for $5 in the first place.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=945

8.2.5 Consequences of Poverty

***Figure 8.7**. For this child at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, poverty and malnutrition are a way of life.* (*A malnourished child in an MSF treatment tent in Dolo Ado, Ethiopia* by DFID – UK Department for International Development CC BY 2.0 License.)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor experience inadequate health care, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. Those born into these conditions are incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the consequences of poverty are many. They have divided the consequences into three areas. The first, termed "the sedimentation of global inequality," relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The

second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the strongest effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche's third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly with violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002).

Slavery

While most of us are accustomed to thinking of slavery in terms of pre–Civil War America, modern-day slavery goes hand in hand with global inequality. In short, slavery refers to any time people are sold, treated as property, or forced to work for little or no pay. Just as in pre–Civil War America, these humans are at the mercy of their employers. **Chattel slavery**, the form of slavery practised in the pre–Civil War American South, is when one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is a form of chattel slavery. **Debt bondage**, or bonded labour, involves the poor pledging themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is involved, people can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead.

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (where people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labour, and certain forms of servile

marriage, in which women are little more than chattel slaves (Anti-Slavery International, 2012).

8.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, there are a variety of theories that scholars develop to study the topic. The two most widely applied perspectives on global stratification are modernization theory and dependency theory.

8.3.1 Modernization Theory

According to modernization theory, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through:

1. An adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. Industrialization and other forms of economic growth (Armer and Katsillis, 2010)

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as "developed" as possible (i.e., like the model of capitalist democracies provided by Canada or the United States). There is no room within this theory for the possibility that industrialization and technology are not the best goals.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality

rates, longer lifespans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

8.3.2 Dependency Theory

Dependency theory was created in part as a response to the Western-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), creating a cycle of dependence (Hendricks, 2010). In the period of colonialism, core or metropolis nations created the conditions for the underdevelopment of peripheral or hinterland nations through a **metropolis-hinterland relationship**. The resources of the hinterlands were shipped to the metropolises where they were converted into manufactured goods and shipped back for consumption in the hinterlands. The hinterlands were used as the source of cheap resources and were unable to develop competitive manufacturing sectors of their own.

Dependency theory states that as long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they

are creating highly segmented labour markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

At first glance, it seems this theory ignores the formerly low-income nations that are now considered middle-income nations and are on their way to becoming high-income nations and major players in the global economy, such as China. But some dependency theorists would state that it is in the best interests of core nations to ensure the long-term usefulness of their peripheral and semi-peripheral partners. Following that theory, sociologists have found that entities are more likely to outsource a significant portion of a company's work if they are the dominant player in the equation; in other words, companies want to see their partner countries healthy enough to provide work, but not so healthy as to establish a threat (Caniels, Roeleveld, and Roeleveld, 2009).

8.3.3 Globalization Theory

Globalization theory approaches global inequality by focusing less on the relationship between dependent and core nations, and more on the international flows of capital investment and disinvestment in an increasingly integrated world market. Since the 1970s, capital accumulation has taken place less and less in the context of national economies. Rather, as we saw in the example of the garment industry, capital circulates on a global scale, leading to a *global* reordering of inequalities both between nations and within nations. The production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services are administratively and technologically integrated on a worldwide basis. Effectively, we no longer live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states.

The core components of the "globalization project" (McMichael, 2012) — the project to transform the world into a single seamless market — are the imposition of open "free" markets across national borders, the deregulation of trade and investment, and the

privatization of public goods and services. Development has been redefined from the model of nationally managed economic growth to "participation in the world market" according to the World Bank's *World Development Report 1980* (cited in McMichael, 2012, pp. 112-113). The global economy as a whole, not modernized national economies, emerges as the site of development. Within this model, the world and its resources are reorganized and managed on the basis of the free trade of goods and services and the free circulation of capital by democratically unaccountable political and economic elite organizations like the G7, the WTO (World Trade Organization), GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), the World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the various international measures used to liberalize the global economy (the 1995 Agreement on Agriculture, Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)).

According to globalization theory, the outcome of the globalization project has been the redistribution of wealth and poverty on a global scale. Outsourcing shifts production to low-wage enclaves, displacement leads to higher unemployment rates in the traditionally wealthy global north, people migrate from rural to urban areas and "slum cities" and illegally from poor countries to rich countries, while large numbers of workers simply become redundant to global production and turn to informal, casual labour. The **anti-globalization movement** has emerged as a counter-movement to define an alternative, non-corporate global project based on environmental sustainability, food sovereignty, labour rights, and democratic accountability.

8.3.4 Factory Girls

We've examined functionalist and conflict theorist perspectives on

global inequality, as well as modernization and dependency theories. How might a symbolic interactionist approach this topic?

The book *Factory Girls: From Village to City in Changing China*, by Leslie T. Chang, provides this opportunity. Chang follows two young women (Min and Chunming) who are employed at a handbag plant. They help manufacture coveted purses and bags for the global market. As part of the growing population of young people who are leaving behind the homesteads and farms of rural China, these female factory workers are ready to enter the urban fray and pursue an income much higher than they could have earned back home.

Although Chang's study is based in a town many have never heard of (Dongguan), this city produces one-third of all shoes on the planet (Nike and Reebok are major manufacturers here) and 30% of the world's computer disk drives, in addition to a wide range of apparel (Chang, 2008).

But Chang's focus is less centred on this global phenomenon on a large scale and more concerned with how it affects these two women. As a symbolic interactionist would do, Chang examines the daily lives and interactions of Min and Chunming — their workplace friendships, family relations, gadgets, and goods — in this evolving global space where young women can leave tradition behind and fashion their own futures. What she discovers is that the women are definitely subject to conditions of hyper-exploitation, but are also disembedded from the rural, Confucian, traditional culture in a manner that provides them with unprecedented personal freedoms. They go from the traditional family affiliations and narrow options of the past to life in a "perpetual present." Friendships are fleeting and fragile, forms of life are improvised and sketchy, and everything they do is marked by the goals of upward mobility, resolute individualism, and an obsession with prosperity. Life for the women factory workers in Dongguan is an adventure, compared to their fate in rural village life, but one characterized by gruelling work, insecurity, isolation, and loneliness. Chang writes, "Dongguan was a place without memory."

Key Terms and Concepts

absolute poverty: The state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities.

anti-globalization movement: A global counter-movement based on principles of environmental sustainability, food sovereignty, labour rights, and democratic accountability that challenges the corporate model of globalization.

capital flight: The movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources.

chattel slavery: A form of slavery in which one person owns another.

core nations: Dominant capitalist countries.

debt accumulation: The buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals.

debt bondage: When people pledge themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom.

deindustrialization: The loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower.

dependency theory: Theory stating that global inequity is

due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations.

first world: A term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies.

fourth world: A term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage.

global feminization: A pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty.

global inequality: The concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority.

global stratification: The unequal distribution of resources between countries.

gross national income (GNI): The income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country.

metropolis-hinterland relationship: The relationship between nations when resources of the hinterlands are shipped to the metropolises where they are converted into manufactured goods and shipped back to the hinterlands for consumption.

modernization theory: A theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes toward work.

peripheral nations: Nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization.

relative poverty: The state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country.

second world: A term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living.

semi-peripheral nations: In-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and providing an expanding middle-class marketplace.

subjective poverty: A state of poverty subjectively present when one's actual income does not meet one's expectations.

third world: A term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, nonindustrialized countries.

underground economy: An unregulated economy of labour and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections.

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9. Module 9: Families and Family Life

Figure 9.1. *With so many unmarried couples living together and having children, is marriage becoming obsolete? (Head to Head by Nina Matthews under a CC BY 2.0 License)*

Learning Objectives

- Define the institution of marriage and "the family" and describe how the two are related.
- Differentiate among micro, meso, and macro approaches to the family.
- Outline how the relationship between marriage and family has changed over time.
- Discuss the effect of the family life cycle on the quality of family experience.
- Describe the different forms of the family including the nuclear family, single-parent families, cohabitation, same-sex couples, childfree and childless couples and single individuals.
- Describe and discuss the social and interpersonal impact of divorce.
- Describe the problems of family abuse and discuss whether corporal punishment is a form of abuse.
- Compare and contrast functionalist, critical, and symbolic interactionist perspectives on the modern family.

9.0 Introduction to Marriage and Family

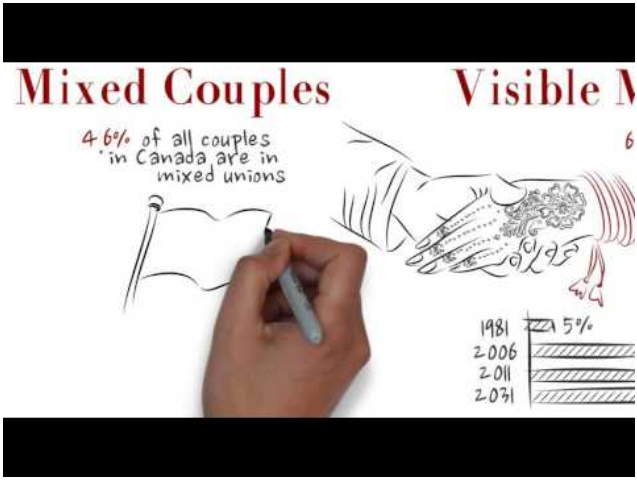
Christina and James met in college and have been dating for more than five years. For the past two years, they have been living together in a condo they purchased jointly. While Christina and James were confident in their decision to enter into a commitment (such as a 20-year mortgage), they are unsure if they want to enter into *marriage*. The couple had many discussions about marriage and decided that it just did not seem necessary. Was it not only a piece of paper? Did not half of all marriages end in divorce?

Neither Christina nor James had seen much success with marriage while growing up. Christina was raised by a single mother. Her parents never married, and her father has had little contact with the family since she was a toddler. Christina and her mother lived with her maternal grandmother, who often served as a surrogate parent. James grew up in a two-parent household until age seven, when his parents divorced. He lived with his mother for a few years, and then later with his mother and her boyfriend until he left for college. James remained close with his father who remarried and had a baby with his new wife.

Recently, Christina and James have been thinking about having children and the subject of marriage has resurfaced. Christina likes the idea of her children growing up in a traditional family, while James is concerned about possible marital problems down the road and negative consequences for the children should that occur. When they shared these concerns with their parents, James's mom was adamant that the couple should get married. Despite having been divorced and having a live-in boyfriend of 15 years, she believes that children are better off when their parents are married. Christina's mom believes that the couple should do whatever they want but adds that it would "be nice" if they wed. Christina and James's friends told them, married or not married, they would still be a family.

Christina and James's scenario may be complicated, but it is

representative of the lives of many young couples today, particularly those in urban areas (Useem, 2007). Statistics Canada (2012) reports that the number of unmarried, common-law couples grew by 35% between 2001 and 2011, to make up a total of 16.7% of all families in Canada. Some may never choose to wed (Jayson, 2008). With fewer couples marrying, the traditional Canadian family structure is becoming less common. Nevertheless, although the percentage of traditional married couples has declined as a proportion of all families, at 67% of all families, it is still by far the predominant family structure. In the following infographic additional changes in the structure of modern Canadian families are highlighted, portraying the institution of the family in Canada as a changing and dynamic institution.



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9.1 Marriage and Family: Central and Evolving Social Institutions

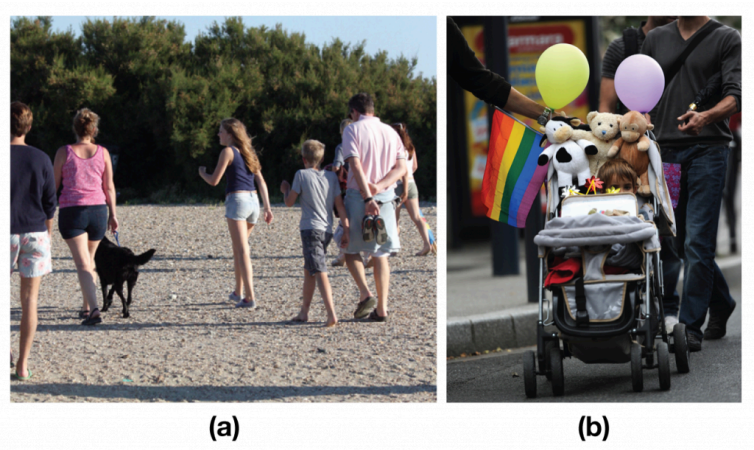

***Figure 9.2**. The modern concept of family is far more encompassing than in past decades. What do you think constitutes a family? (Wonderful West Wittering (a) by Gareth Williams under a CC BY 2.0 License; Gay pride 240 (b) by Guillaume Paumier under a CC BY 3.0 License.)*

9.1.1 What is Marriage?

Marriage and family are key structures and foundational institutions in most societies. While the two institutions have historically been closely linked in Canadian culture, their connection is becoming more complex. The relationship between marriage and family is often taken for granted in the popular imagination but with the increasing diversity of family forms in the 21st century their relationship needs to be reexamined.

What is marriage? Different people define it in different ways. Not even sociologists are able to agree on a single meaning. For our purposes, we will define **marriage** as a legally recognized social

contract between two people, traditionally based on a sexual relationship, and implying a permanence of the union. In creating an inclusive definition, we should also consider variations, such as whether a formal legal union is required (think of common-law marriage and its equivalents), or whether more than two people can be involved (consider polygamy). Other variations on the definition of marriage might include whether spouses are of opposite sexes or the same sex, and how one of the traditional expectations of marriage (to produce children) is understood today.

Sociologists are interested in the relationship between the institution of marriage and the institution of family because, historically, marriages are what create a family, and families are the most basic social unit upon which society is built. Both marriage and family create status roles that are sanctioned by society. While marriage is a central institution in society, its primary purpose, form and content have varied across cultures, and over time.

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Throughout most of history, erotic love or romantic love was not considered a suitable basis for marriage. Marriages were typically arranged by families through negotiations designed to increase wealth, property, or prestige, establish ties, or gain political advantages. In modern individualistic societies on the other hand, romantic love is seen as the essential basis for marriage. In response to the question, "If a man (woman) had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him (her)?" only 4% of Americans and Brazilians, 5% of Australians, 6% of Hong Kong residents, and 7% of British residents said they would — compared to 49% of Indians and 50% of Pakistanis (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, and Verma, 1995). Despite the emphasis on romantic love, it is also recognized to be an unstable basis for long-term relationships as the feelings associated with it are transitory.

What exactly is romantic love? Neuroscience describes it as one of the central brain systems that have evolved to ensure mating, reproduction, and the perpetuation of the species (Fisher, 1992). Alongside the instinctual drive for sexual satisfaction, (which is relatively indiscriminate in its choice of object), and companionate love, (the long term attachment to another which enables mates to remain together at least long enough to raise a child through infancy), romantic love is the intense attraction to a particular person that focuses "mating energy" on a single person at a single time. It manifests as a seemingly involuntary, passionate longing for another person in which individuals experience obsessiveness, craving, loss of appetite, possessiveness, anxiety, and compulsive, intrusive thoughts. In studies comparing functional MRI brain scans of maternal attachment to children and romantic attachment to a loved one, both types of attachment activate oxytocin and

vasopressin receptors in regions in the brain's reward system while suppressing regions associated with negative emotions and critical judgement of others (Bartels and Zeki, 2004; Acevedo, Aron, Fisher and Brown, 2012). In this respect, romantic love shares many physiological features in common with addiction and addictive behaviours.

In a sociological context, the physiological manifestations of romantic love are associated with a number of social factors. Love itself might be described as the general force of attraction that draws people together; a principle agency that enables society to exist. As Freud defined it, love in the form of *eros*, was the force that strove to "form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development" (Freud cited in Marcuse, 1955). In this sense, as Erich Fromm put it, "[l]ove is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one "object" of love" (Fromm, 1956). Fromm argues therefore that love can take many forms: brotherly love, the sense of care for another human; motherly love, the unconditional love of a mother for a child; erotic love, the desire for complete fusion with another person; self-love, the ability to affirm and accept oneself; and love of God, a sense of universal belonging or union with a higher or sacred order.

Only when the object of love is individualized in another, does it come to form the basis of erotic or intimate relationships. In this sense, **romantic love** can be defined as the desire for emotional union with another person (Fisher, 1992). In Robert Sternberg's (1986) **triangular theory of love**, romantic love consists of three components: *passion* or erotic attraction (limerance); *intimacy* or feelings of bonding, sharing, closeness, and connectedness; and *commitment* or deliberate choice to enter into and remain in a relationship. The three components vary independently in long term relationships: passion starts off at high levels but drops off as the partner no longer has the same arousal value, intimacy

decreases gradually as the relationship becomes more predictable, while commitment increases gradually at first, then more rapidly as the relationship intensifies, and eventually levels off. This suggests that for couples who remain together, romantic love eventually develops into **companionate love** characterized by deep friendship, comfortable companionship, and shared interests, but not necessarily intense attraction or sexual desire.

Although romantic love is often characterized as an involuntary force that sweeps people away, mate selection nevertheless involves an implicit or explicit cost/benefit analysis that affects who falls in love with whom. In particular, people tend to select mates of a similar social status from within their own social group. The selection process is influenced by three sociological variables (Kalmijn, 1998). Firstly, potential mates assess each others' *socioeconomic resources*, like income potential or family wealth, and *cultural resources*, like education, taste, worldview, and values, to maximize the value or rewards the relationship will bring to them. Secondly, third parties like family, church, or community members tend intervene to prevent people from choosing partners from outside their community or social group because this threatens group cohesion and homogeneity. Thirdly, demographic variables that effect "local marriage markets" — typically places like schools, workplaces, bars, clubs, and neighborhoods where potential mates can meet — will also affect mate choice. Due to probability, people from large or concentrated social groups have more chance to choose a partner from within their group than do people from smaller or more dispersed groups. Other demographic or social factors like war or economic conditions also affect the ratio of males to females or the distribution of ages in a community, which in turn affects the likelihood of finding a mate inside of one's social group. Mate selection is therefore not as random as the story of Cupid's arrow suggests.

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9.1.2 What is family?

A husband, a wife, and two children — maybe even a pet — served as the model for the traditional Canadian family for most of the 20th century. But what about families that deviate from this model, such as a single-parent household or a homosexual couple without children? Should they be considered families as well?

The question of what constitutes a family is a prime area of debate in family sociology. It is also a hotly contested topic in the domains of politics and religion. Social conservatives tend to define the family in terms of a "traditional" nuclear family structure with each family member filling a certain role (like father, mother, or child). Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to define family more in terms

of the manner in which members relate to one another rather than in terms of a rigid and static configuration of status roles. Here, we will define **family** as a socially recognized group joined by blood relations, marriage, or adoption, that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society. Sociologists also identify different types of families based on how one enters into them. A **family of orientation** refers to the family into which a person is born. A **family of procreation** describes one that is formed through marriage. These distinctions have cultural significance related to issues of lineage (the difference between patrilineal and matrilineal descent for example).

Based on Simmel's distinction between the *form* and *content* of social interaction, we can analyze the family as a *social form* that comes into existence around five different *contents* or interests: sexual activity, economic cooperation, reproduction, socialization of children, and emotional support. As we might expect from Simmel's analysis, the types of family form in which all or some of these contents are expressed are diverse: nuclear families, polygamous families, extended families, same-sex parent families, single-parent families, blended families, and zero-child families, etc. However, the forms that families take are not random; rather, these forms are determined by cultural traditions, social structures, economic pressures, and historical transformations. They also are subject to intense moral and political debate about the definition of the family, the "decline of the family," or the policy options to best support the well-being of children. In these debates, sociology demonstrates its practical side as a discipline that is capable of providing the factual knowledge needed to make evidence-based decisions on political and moral issues concerning the family.

As depicted in the YouTube video, "Modern Family" (see above) what constitutes a "typical family" in Canada has changed tremendously over the past decades. One of the most notable changes has been the increasing number of mothers who work outside the home. Earlier in Canadian society, most family households consisted of one parent working outside the home and

the other being the primary child care provider. Because of traditional gender roles and family structures, this was typically a working father and a stay-at-home mom. Research shows that in 1951 only 24% of all women worked outside the home (Li, 1996). In 2009, 58.3% of all women did, and 64.4% of women with children younger than three years of age were employed (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Sociologists interested in this topic might approach its study from a variety of angles. One might be interested in its impact on a child's development; another sociologist may explore its effect on family income; while a third sociologist might examine how other social institutions have responded to this shift in society. A sociologist studying the impact of working mothers on a child's development might ask questions about children raised in child care settings outside the home. How is a child socialized differently when raised largely by a child care provider rather than a parent? Do early experiences in a school-like child care setting lead to improved academic performance later in life? How does a child with two working parents perceive gender roles compared to a child raised with a stay-at-home parent? Another sociologist might be interested in the increase in working mothers from an economic perspective. Why do so many households today have dual incomes? Has this changed the income of families substantially? How do women's dual roles in the household and in the wider economy affect their occupational achievements and ability to participate on an equal basis with men in the workforce and in society more generally? What impact does the larger economy play in the economic conditions of an individual household? Do people view money — savings, spending, debt — differently than they have in the past (e.g., recall themes highlighted by Nancy Folbre in the video "What is work?", Module 7).

Curiosity about this trend's influence on social institutions might lead a researcher to explore its effect on the nation's educational and child care systems. Has the increase in working mothers shifted traditional family responsibilities onto schools, such as providing

lunch and even breakfast for students? How does the creation of after-school care programs shift resources away from traditional school programs? What would the effect be of providing a universal, subsidized child care program on the ability of women to pursue uninterrupted careers? Or how does the shift to dual income earners within households impact the provision of, and more importantly, the division of emotional labour?

As these examples show, sociologists study many real-world topics. Their research often influences social policies and political issues. Results from sociological studies on this topic might play a role in developing federal policies like the Employment Insurance maternity and parental benefits program, or they might bolster the efforts of an advocacy group striving to reduce social stigmas placed on stay-at-home dads, or they might help governments determine how to best allocate funding for education. Many European countries like Sweden have substantial family support policies, such as a full year of parental leave at 80% of wages when a child is born, and heavily subsidized, high-quality daycare and preschool programs. In Canada, a national subsidized daycare program existed briefly in 2005 but was scrapped in 2006 by the Conservative government and replaced with a $100-a-month direct payment to parents for each child. Sociologists might be interested in studying whether the benefits of the Swedish system — in terms of children's well-being, lower family poverty, and gender equality — outweigh the drawbacks of higher Swedish tax rates.

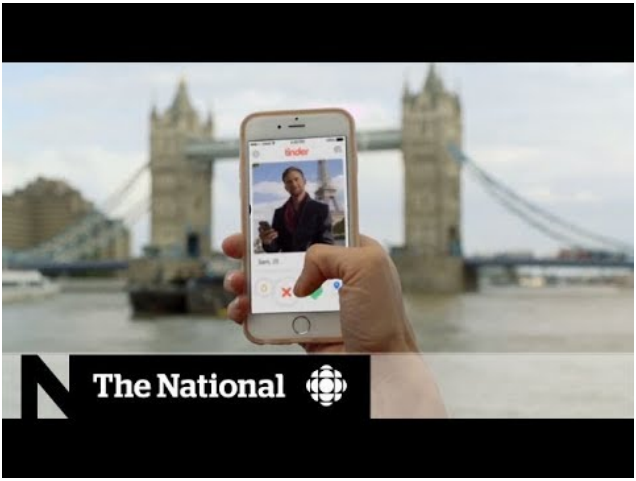
The family is an excellent example of an institution that can be examined at the micro-, meso-, and macro- levels of analysis. For example, the debate between functionalist and critical sociologists on the rise of non-nuclear family forms is a macro-level debate. It focuses on the family in relationship to a society as a whole. Since the 1950s, the functionalist approach to the family has emphasized the importance of the **nuclear family** — a cohabiting man and woman who maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and have at least one child — as the basic unit of an orderly and functional society. Although only 39% of families conformed to this

model in 2006, in functionalist approaches, it often operates as a model of the 'normal family', with the implication that non-normal family forms lead to a variety of society-wide dysfunctions such as crime, drug use, poverty, and welfare dependency .

On the other hand, critical perspectives emphasize the inequalities and power relations within the family and their relationship to inequality in the wider society. The contemporary diversity of family forms does not indicate the "decline of the family" (i.e., of the ideal of the nuclear family) but the diverse responses of the family form to the tensions of gender inequality and historical changes in the economy and society. The typically large, extended family of the rural, agriculture-based economy 100 years ago in Canada was very different from the single breadwinner-led "nuclear" family of the Fordist economy following World War II; it is different again from today's families who have to respond to economic conditions of precarious employment, fluid modernity, and norms of gender and sexual equality. In the critical perspective, the nuclear family should be thought of less as a normative model for how families should be and more as an historical anomaly that reflected the specific social and economic conditions of the two decades following the Second World War. These are analyses that set out to understand the family within the context of macro-level processes or society as a whole.

At the meso-level, the sociology of mate selection and marital satisfaction reveal the various ways in which the dynamics of the group, or the family form itself, act upon the desire, preferences, and choices of individual actors. At the meso-level, sociologists are concerned with the interactions within groups where multiple social roles interact simultaneously. Since the spontaneity of romantic love and notions of individual "chemistry" have become so central to our concepts of mate selection in Western societies, it is interesting to note the social and group influences that impinge on what otherwise seems a purely individual choice: the appraisal of socially defined "assets" in potential mates, in-group/out-group dynamics in mate preference, and demographic variables that affect

the availability of desirable mates (see discussion below). In the age of digital technology and the increased availability/use of online dating apps a sociologist working at the Meso-level of analysis may investigate how these technologies are impacting the dating 'market'? For example, are online dating apps significantly expanding the pool of potential partners and increasing options for individual choice which may lead to intimate partnerships that are based on greater compatibility between the individuals involved? Alternatively, a sociologist working at the macro level of analysis may be more inclined to examine how the use of online dating apps is indicative of increased penetration of financial markets into the sphere of intimate human relationships



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Another area of study at the Meso-level of analysis may involve examination of the life cycle of marriages and family independently

of the specific individuals involved. Marital dissatisfaction and divorce peak in the 5th year of marriage and again between the 15th and 20th years of marriage. The presence or absence of children in the home also affects marital satisfaction — nonparents and parents whose children have left home have the highest level of marital satisfaction. Thus, the family form itself appears to have built-in qualities or dynamics regardless of the personalities or specific qualities of family members.

At the micro-level of analysis, sociologists focus on the dynamics between individuals within families. One example, of which probably every married couple is acutely aware, is the interactive dynamic described by **exchange theory**. Exchange theory proposes that all relationships are based on giving and returning valued "goods" or "services." Individuals seek to maximize their rewards in their exchanges with others. How do they weigh up who is contributing more, and who is contributing less, of the valuable resources that sustain the marriage relationship (such as money, time, chores, emotional support, romantic gestures, quality time, etc.)? What happens to the family dynamic when one spouse is a net debtor and another a net creditor in the exchange relationship? In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, the Czech novelist Milan Kundera describes the way every relationship forges an implicit contract regarding these exchanges within the first 6 weeks. It is as if a template has been established that will govern the nature of the conflicts, tensions, and disagreements between a married couple for the duration of their relationship. Kundera is writing fiction, but the dynamic he describes exemplifies a micro-level analysis in that this "contract" is a form created through the interaction between specific individuals. Afterwards, it acts as a structure that constrains their interaction. In the more severe cases of unequal exchange, domestic violence, whether physical or emotional, can be the result. The dynamics of "intimate terrorism" and "violent resistance" describe the extreme outcomes of unequal exchange.

Symbolic interactionist theories indicate that families are groups in which participants view themselves as family members and act

accordingly. In other words, families are groups in which people come together to form a strong primary group connection, maintaining emotional ties to one another over a long period of time. Such families could potentially include groups of close friends as family. However, the way family groupings view themselves is not independent of the wider social forces and current debates in society at large. The discussion of how the different theoretical perspectives contribute to our understanding of marriage and family in society is elaborated more fully below. Prior to developing that discussion further it is useful to undertake a more detailed examination of the fit between perceptions about marriage and family in society, and what the empirical evidence indicates about the diversity experience within marital and familial relationships.

North Americans are somewhat divided when it comes to determining what does and what does not constitute a family. In a 2010 survey conducted by Ipsos Reid, participants were asked what they believed constituted a family unit. 80% of respondents agreed that a husband, wife, and children constitute a family. 66% stated that a common-law couple with children still constitutes a family. The numbers drop for less traditional structures: a single mother and children (55%), a single father and children (54%), grandparents raising children (50%), common-law or married couples without children (46%), gay male couples with children (45%) (Postmedia News, 2010). This survey revealed that children tend to be the key indicator in establishing "family" status: the percentage of individuals who agreed that unmarried couples constitute a family nearly doubled when children were added.

Another study also revealed that 60% of North Americans agreed that if you consider yourself a family, you are a family (a concept that reinforces an interactionist perspective) (Powell et al., 2010). Canadian statistics are based on the more inclusive definition of "census families." Statistics Canada defines a census family as "composed of a married or common-law couple, with or without children, or of a lone parent living with at least one child in the same dwelling. Couples can be of the opposite sex or of the same

sex" (Statistics Canada, 2012). Census categories aside, sociologists would argue that the general concept of family is more diverse and less structured than in years past. Society has given more leeway to the design of a family — making room for what works for its members (Jayson, 2010).

Family is, indeed, a subjective concept, but it is a fairly objective fact that family (whatever one's concept of it may be) is very important to North Americans. In a 2010 survey by Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., 76% of adults surveyed stated that family is "the most important" element of their life — just 1% said it was "not important" (Pew Research Center, 2010). It is also very important to society. American President Ronald Reagan notably stated, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedoms" (Lee, 2009). The dark side of this importance can also be seen in Reagan's successful use of "family values" rhetoric to attack welfare mothers. His infamous "welfare queen" story about a Black single mother in Chicago, who supposedly defrauded the government of $150,000 in welfare payments, was a complete fabrication that nevertheless "worked" politically because of widespread social anxieties about the decline of the family. While the design of the family may have changed in recent years, the fundamentals of emotional closeness and support are still present. Most respondents to the Pew survey stated that their family today is at least as close (45%) or closer (40%) than the family with which they grew up (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Alongside the debate surrounding what constitutes a family is the question of what North Americans believe constitutes a marriage. Many religious and social conservatives believe that marriage can only exist between man and a woman, citing religious scripture and the basics of human reproduction as support. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper put it, "I have no difficulty with the recognition of civil unions for nontraditional relationships but I believe in law we should protect the traditional definition of marriage" (*Globe and*

Mail, 2010). Social liberals and progressives, on the other hand, believe that marriage can exist between two consenting adults — be they a man and a woman, a woman and a woman, or a man and a man — and that it would be discriminatory to deny such a couple the civil, social, and economic benefits of marriage.

With single parenting and **cohabitation** (when a couple shares a residence but not a marriage) becoming more acceptable in recent years, people may be less motivated to get married. In a recent survey, 39% of respondents answered "yes" when asked whether marriage is becoming obsolete (Pew Research Center, 2010). The institution of marriage is likely to continue, but some previous patterns of marriage will become outdated as new patterns emerge. In this context, cohabitation contributes to the phenomenon of people getting married for the first time at a later age than was typical in earlier generations (Glezer, 1991). Furthermore, marriage will continue to be delayed as more people place education and career ahead of "settling down."

North Americans typically equate marriage with **monogamy**, when someone is married to only one person at a time. In many countries and cultures around the world, however, having one spouse is not the only form of marriage. In a majority of cultures (78%), **polygamy**, or being married to more than one person at a time, is accepted (Murdock, 1967), with most polygamous societies existing in northern Africa and East Asia (Altman and Ginat, 1996). Instances of polygamy are almost exclusively in the form of polygyny. **Polygyny** refers to a man being married to more than one woman at the same time. The reverse, when a woman is married to more than one man at the same time, is called **polyandry**. It is far less common and only occurs in about 1% of the world's cultures (Altman and Ginat, 1996). The reasons for the overwhelming prevalence of polygamous societies are varied but they often include issues of population growth, religious ideologies, and social status.

While the majority of societies accept polygyny, the majority of people do not practise it. Often fewer than 10% (and no more than

25 to 35%) of men in polygamous cultures have more than one wife; these husbands are often older, wealthy, high-status men (Altman and Ginat, 1996). The average plural marriage involves no more than three wives. Negev Bedouin men in Israel, for example, typically have two wives, although it is acceptable to have up to four (Griver, 2008). As urbanization increases in these cultures, polygamy is likely to decrease as a result of greater access to mass media, technology, and education (Altman and Ginat, 1996).

In Canada, polygamy is considered by most to be socially unacceptable and it is illegal. The act of entering into marriage while still married to another person is referred to as **bigamy** and is prohibited by Section 290 of the Criminal Code of Canada (Minister of Justice, 2014). Polygamy in Canada is often associated with those of the Mormon faith, although in 1890 the Mormon Church officially renounced polygamy. Fundamentalist Mormons, such as those in the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), on the other hand, still hold tightly to the historic Mormon beliefs and practices and allow polygamy in their sect.

The prevalence of polygamy among Mormons is often overestimated due to sensational media stories such as the prosecution of polygamous sect leaders in Bountiful, B.C., the Yearning for Zion ranch raid in Texas in 2008, and popular television shows such as HBO's *Big Love* and TLC's *Sister Wives*. It is estimated that there are about 37,500 fundamentalist Mormons involved in polygamy in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, but that number has shown a steady decrease in the last 100 years (Useem, 2007).

North American Muslims, however, are an emerging group with an estimated 20,000 practicing polygamy. Again, polygamy among North American Muslims is uncommon and occurs only in approximately 1% of the population (Useem, 2007). For now, polygamy among North American Muslims has gone fairly unnoticed by mainstream society, but like fundamentalist Mormons whose practices were off the public's radar for decades, they may someday find themselves at the centre of social debate.

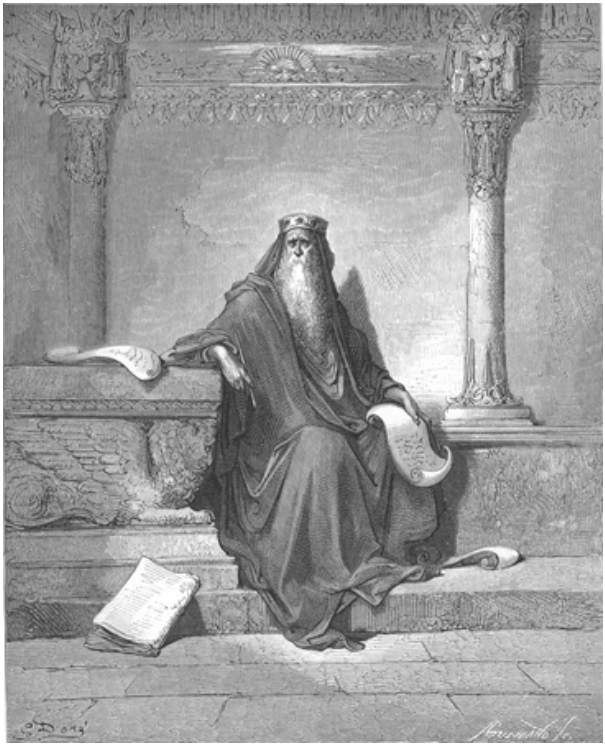

***Figure 9.3**. Polygamy has a Judeo-Christian tradition, as exemplified by King Solomon, who was thought to have had more than 700 wives. (King Solomon in Old Age is in the Public Domain.)*

When considering their lineage, most Canadians look to both their father's and mother's sides. Both paternal and maternal ancestors are considered part of one's family. This pattern of tracing kinship is called **bilateral descent**. Note that **kinship**, or one's traceable ancestry, can be based on blood, marriage, or adoption. 60% of societies, mostly modernized nations, follow a bilateral descent pattern. **Unilateral descent** (the tracing of kinship through one parent only) is practised in the other 40% of the world's societies, with high concentration in pastoral cultures (O'Neal, 2006).

There are three types of unilateral descent: **patrilineal**, which follows the father's line only; **matrilineal**, which follows the mother's side only; and **ambilineal**, which follows either the father's only or the mother's side only, depending on the situation. In partrilineal societies, such as those in rural China and India, only males carry on the family surname. This gives males the prestige of permanent family membership while females are seen as only temporary members (Harrell, 2001). North American society assumes some aspects of partrilineal decent. For instance, most children assume their father's last name even if the mother retains her birth name.

In matrilineal societies, inheritance and family ties are traced to women. **Matrilineal descent** is common in Native American societies, notably the Crow and Cherokee tribes. In these societies, children are seen as belonging to the women and, therefore, one's kinship is traced to one's mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and so on (Mails, 1996). In ambilineal societies, which are most common in Southeast Asian countries, parents may choose to associate their children with the kinship of either the mother or the father. This choice may be based on the desire to follow stronger or more prestigious kinship lines or on cultural customs, such as men following their father's side and women following their mother's side (Lambert, 2009).

Tracing one's line of descent to one parent rather than the other can be relevant to the issue of residence. In many cultures, newly married couples move in with, or near to, family members. In a **patrilocal residence** system it is customary for the wife to live with (or near) her husband's blood relatives (or family of orientation). Patrilocal systems can be traced back thousands of years. In a DNA analysis of 4,600-year-old bones found in Germany, scientists found indicators of patrilocal living arrangements (Haak et al. 2008). Patrilocal residence is thought to be disadvantageous to women because it makes them outsiders in the home and community; it also keeps them disconnected from their own blood relatives. In China, where patrilocal and patrilineal customs are common, the

written symbols for maternal grandmother (*wáipá*) are separately translated to mean "outsider" and "women" (Cohen, 2011).

Similarly, in **matrilocal residence** systems, where it is customary for the husband to live with his wife's blood relatives (or her family of orientation), the husband can feel disconnected and can be labelled as an outsider. The Minangkabau people, a matrilocal society that is indigenous to the highlands of West Sumatra in Indonesia, believe that home is the place of women and they give men little power in issues relating to the home or family (Joseph and Najmabadi, 2003). Most societies that use patrilocal and patrilineal systems are patriarchal, but very few societies that use matrilocal and matrilineal systems are matriarchal, as family life is often considered an important part of the culture for women, regardless of their power relative to men.

9.2 Variations in Family Life: Historically and within Individual Families

Whether you grew up watching the Cleavers, the Waltons, the Huxtables, or the Simpsons, most of the iconic families you saw in television sitcoms included a father, a mother, and children cavorting under the same roof while comedy ensued. The 1960s was the height of the suburban American nuclear family on television with shows such as *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best*. While some shows of this era portrayed single parents (*My Three Sons* and *Bonanza*, for instance), the single status almost always resulted from being widowed, not divorced or unwed.

Although family dynamics in real North American homes were changing, the expectations for families portrayed on television were not. North America's first reality show, *An American Family* (which aired on PBS in 1973) chronicled Bill and Pat Loud and their children as a "typical" American family. Cameras documented the typical

coming and going of daily family life in true cinéma-vérité style. During the series, the oldest son, Lance, announced to the family that he was gay, and at the series' conclusion, Bill and Pat decided to divorce. Although the Loud's union was among the 30% of marriages that ended in divorce in 1973, the family was featured on the cover of the March 12 issue of *Newsweek* with the title "The Broken Family" (Ruoff, 2002).

Less traditional family structures in sitcoms gained popularity in the 1980s with shows such as *Diff'rent Strokes* (a widowed man with two adopted African American sons) and *One Day at a Time* (a divorced woman with two teenage daughters). Still, traditional families such as those in *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show* dominated the ratings. The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the introduction of the dysfunctional family. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Married with Children*, and *The Simpsons* portrayed traditional nuclear families, but in a much less flattering light than those from the 1960s did (Museum of Broadcast Communications, 2011).

Over the past 10 years, the nontraditional family has become somewhat of a tradition in television. While most situation comedies focus on single men and women without children, those that do portray families often stray from the classic structure: they include unmarried and divorced parents, adopted children, gay couples, and multigenerational households. Even those that do feature traditional family structures may show less traditional characters in supporting roles, such as the brothers in the highly rated shows *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Two and Half Men*. Even wildly popular children's programs as Disney's *Hannah Montana* and *The Suite Life of Zack & Cody* feature single parents.

In 2009, ABC premiered an intensely nontraditional family with the broadcast of *Modern Family*. The show follows an extended family that includes a divorced and remarried father with one stepchild, and his biological adult children — one of who is in a traditional two-parent household, and the other who is a gay man in a committed relationship raising an adopted daughter. While this dynamic may be more complicated than the typical "modern"

family, its elements may resonate with many of today's viewers. "The families on the shows aren't as idealistic, but they remain relatable," states television critic Maureen Ryan. "The most successful shows, comedies especially, have families that you can look at and see parts of your family in them" (Respers France, 2010).

As we have established, the concept and reality of family has changed greatly over time. Historically, it was often thought that most (certainly many) families evolved through a series of predictable stages. Developmental or "stage" theories used to play a prominent role in family sociology (Strong and DeVault, 1992). Today, however, these models have been criticized for their linear and conventional assumptions as well as for their failure to capture the diversity of family forms. While reviewing some of these once-popular theories, it is important to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

The set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time is referred to as the **family life cycle**. One of the first designs of the family life cycle was developed by Paul Glick in 1955. In Glick's original design, he asserted that most people will grow up, establish families, rear and launch their children, experience an "empty nest" period, and come to the end of their lives. This cycle will then continue with each subsequent generation (Glick, 1989). Glick's colleague, Evelyn Duvall, elaborated on the family life cycle by developing these classic stages of family (Strong and DeVault, 1992):

Table 9.1. Stage Theory. This table shows one example of how a "stage" theory might categorize the phases a family goes through.

Stage	Family Type	Children
1	Marriage Family	Childless
2	Procreation Family	Children ages 0 to 2.5
3	Preschooler Family	Children ages 2.5 to 6
4	School-age Family	Children ages 6–13
5	Teenage Family	Children ages 13–20
6	Launching Family	Children begin to leave home
7	Empty Nest Family	"Empty nest"; adult children have left home

The family life cycle was used to explain the different processes that occur in families over time. Sociologists view each stage as having its own structure with different challenges, achievements, and accomplishments that transition the family from one stage to the next. The problems and challenges that a family experiences in Stage 1 as a married couple with no children are likely very different than those experienced in Stage 5 as a married couple with teenagers. Marital satisfaction of husbands and wives, for example, tends to be high at the beginning of the marriage and remain so into the procreation stage (children ages 0-2.5), falls as children age and reaches its lowest point when the children are teenagers, and then increases again when the children reach adulthood and leave home (Lupri and Frideres, 1981). The most maritally satisfied couples are those who do not have children and those whose children have left home ("empty nesters"), which is ironic considering people often get married to have children (Murphy and Staples, 1979). Some interpret this pattern as meaning simply that between couples "illusions disappear and disenchantment ensues," whereas the developmental approach of family stages suggests "that meanings couples attached to their relationship and their roles change over time and thus affect marital satisfaction" (Lupri and Frideres, 1981). The success of a family can be measured by how well they adapt to these challenges and transition into each stage.

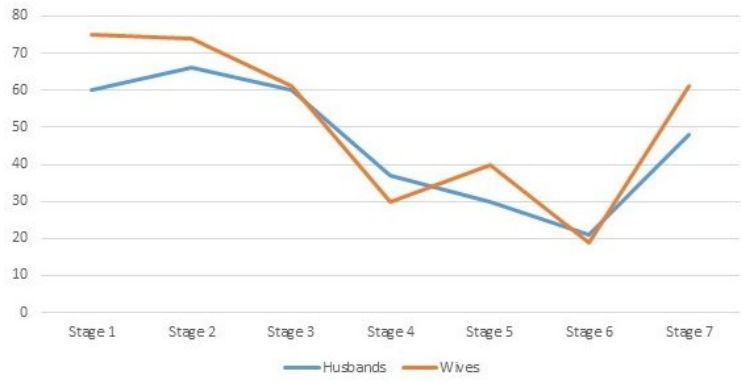

Figure 9.4*. Percentages of husbands and wives in each of seven stages of the family life cycle reporting "very satisfying" marriages. (Based on Lupri and Frideres, 1981.)*

As early "stage" theories have been criticized for generalizing family life and not accounting for differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, and lifestyle, less rigid models of the family life cycle have been developed. One example is the **family life course**, which recognizes the events that occur in the lives of families but views them as parting terms of a fluid course rather than in consecutive stages (Strong and DeVault, 1992). This type of model accounts for changes in family development, such as the fact that today, childbearing does not always occur with marriage. It also sheds light on other shifts in the way family life is practised. Society's modern understanding of family rejects rigid "stage" theories and is more accepting of new, fluid models. In fact contemporary family life has not escaped the phenomenon that Zygmunt Bauman calls **fluid** (or **liquid**) **modernity**, a condition of constant mobility and change in relationships (2000).

The combination of husband, wife, and children that 80% of Canadians believes constitutes a family is not representative of the majority of Canadian families. According to 2011 census data, only 31.9% of all census families consisted of a married couple with

children, down from 37.4% in 2001. 63% of children under age 14 live in a household with two married parents. This is a decrease from almost 70% in 1981 (Statistics Canada, 2012). As we noted above, this two-parent family structure is known as a *nuclear family*, referring to married parents and children as the nucleus, or core, of the group. Recent years have seen a rise in variations of the nuclear family with the parents not being married. The proportion of children aged 14 and under who live with two unmarried cohabiting parents increased from 12.8% in 2001 to 16.3% in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Figure 9.5. *One in five Canadian children live in a single-parent household.* (*Mother and Child* *by Ross Griff under a CC BY 2.0 License*)

Single-parent households are also on the rise. In 2011, 19.3% of children aged 14 and under lived with a single parent only, up

slightly from 18% in 2001. Of that 19.3% , 82% live with their mother (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Stepparents are an additional family element in two-parent homes. A stepfamily is defined as "a couple family in which at least one child is the biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship" (Statistics Canada, 2012). Among children living in two parent households, 10% live with a biological or adoptive parent and a stepparent (Statistics Canada, 2012).

In some family structures a parent is not present at all. In 2010, 106,000 children (1.8% of all children) lived with a guardian who was neither their biological nor adoptive parent. Of these children, 28% lived with grandparents, 44% lived with other relatives, and 28% lived with non-relatives or foster parents. If we also include families in which both parents and grandparents are present (about 4.8% of all census families with children under the age of 14 years), this family structure is referred to as the **extended family**, and may include aunts, uncles, and cousins living in the same home. Foster children account for about 0.5% of all children in private households.

In the United States, the practice of grandparents acting as parents, whether alone or in combination with the child's parent, is becoming more common (about 9%) among American families (De Toledo and Brown, 1995). A grandparent functioning as the primary care provider often results from parental drug abuse, incarceration, or abandonment. Events like these can render the parent incapable of caring for his or her child. However, in Canada, census evidence indicates that the percentage of children in these "skip-generation" families remained more or less unchanged between 2001 and 2011 at 0.5% (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Changes in the traditional family structure raise questions about how such societal shifts affect children. Research, mostly from American sources, has shown that children living in homes with both parents grow up with more financial and educational advantages than children who are raised in single-parent homes

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Canadian data is not so clear. It is true that children growing up in single-parent families experience a lower economic standard of living than families with two parents. In 2008, female lone-parent households earned an average of $42,300 per year, male lone-parent households earned $60,400 per year, and two-parent families earned $100,200 per year (Williams, 2010). However, in the lowest 20% of families with children aged four to five years old, single-parent families made up 48.9% of households while intact or blended households made up 51.1% (based on 1998/99 data). Single-parent families do not make up a larger percentage of low-income families (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003). Moreover, both the income (Williams, 2010) and the educational attainment (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003) of single mothers in Canada has been increasing, which in turn is linked to higher levels of life satisfaction.

In research published from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (a long-term study initiated in 1994 that is following the development of a large cohort of children from birth to the age of 25), the evidence is ambiguous as to whether having single or dual parents has a significant effect on child development outcomes. For example, indicators of vocabulary ability of children aged four to five years old did not differ significantly between single- and dual-parent families. However, aggressive behaviour (reported by parents) in both girls and boys aged four to five years old was greater in single-parent families (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003). In fact, significant markers of poor developmental attainment were more related to the sex of the child (more pronounced in boys), maternal depression, low maternal education, maternal immigrant status, and low family income (To, et al., 2004). We will have to wait for more research to be published from the latest cycle of the National Longitudinal Survey to see whether there is more conclusive evidence concerning the relative advantages of dual- and single-parent family settings.

Nevertheless, what the data show is that the key factors in children's quality of life are the educational levels and economic

condition of the family, not whether children's parents are married, common-law, or single. For example, young children in low-income families are more likely to have vocabulary problems, and young children in higher-income families have more opportunities to participate in recreational activities (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003). This is a matter related more to public policy decisions concerning the level of financial support and care services (like public child care) provided to families than different family structures per se. In Sweden, where the government provides generous paid parental leave after the birth of a child, free health care, temporary paid parental leave for parents with sick children, high-quality subsidized daycare, and substantial direct child-benefit payments for each child, indicators of child well-being (literacy, levels of child poverty, rates of suicide, etc.) score very high regardless of the difference between single- and dual-parent family structures (Houseknecht and Sastry, 1996).

Living together before or in lieu of marriage is a growing option for many couples. Cohabitation, when a man and woman live together in a sexual relationship without being married, was practised by an estimated 1.6 million people (16.7% of all census families) in 2011, which shows an increase of 13.9% since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2012). This surge in cohabitation is likely due to the decrease in social stigma pertaining to the practice. In Quebec in particular, researchers have noted that it is common for married couples under the age of 50 to describe themselves in terms used more in cohabiting relationships than marriage: *mon conjoint* (partner) or *mon* chum (intimate friend) rather than *mon mari* (my husband) (Le Bourdais and Juby, 2002). In fact, cohabitation or common-law marriage is much more prevalent in Quebec (31.5% of census families) and the Northern Territories (from 25.1% in Yukon to 32.7% in Nunavut) than in the rest of the country (13% in British Columbia, for example) (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Cohabitating couples may choose to live together in an effort to spend more time together or to save money on living costs. Many couples view cohabitation as a "trial run" for marriage. Today,

approximately 28% of men and women cohabitated before their first marriage. By comparison, 18% of men and 23% of women married without ever cohabitating (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The vast majority of cohabitating relationships eventually result in marriage; only 15% of men and women cohabitate only and do not marry. About one-half of cohabitators transition into marriage within three years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

While couples may use this time to "work out the kinks" of a relationship before they wed, the most recent research has found that cohabitation has little effect on the success of a marriage. Those who do not cohabitate before marriage have slightly better rates of remaining married for more than 10 years (Jayson, 2010). Cohabitation may contribute to the increase in the number of men and women who delay marriage. The average age of first marriage has been steadily increasing. In 2008, the average age of first marriage was 29.6 for women and 31 for men, compared to 23 for women and 25 for men through most of the 1960s and 1970s (Milan, 2013).

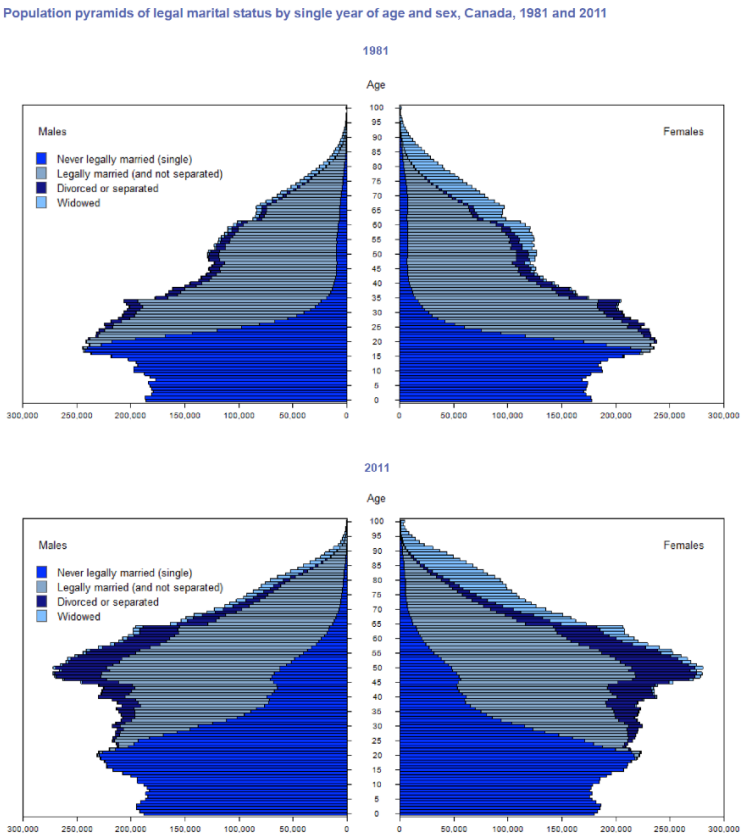

***Figure 9.6**. As shown by these population pyramids of marital status, more young people are choosing to delay or opt out of marriage.* (Milan, Anne. 2013; Population pyramids courtesy of Statistics Canada)

The number of same-sex couples has grown significantly in the past decade. The Civil Marriage Act (Bill C-38) legalized same sex marriage in Canada on July 20, 2005. Some provinces and territories had already adopted legal same-sex marriage, beginning with Ontario in June 2003. In 2011, Statistics Canada reported 64,575 same-sex couple households in Canada, up by 42% from 2006. Of these, about three in ten were same-sex married couples compared

to 16.5% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2012). These increases are a result of more coupling, the change in the marriage laws, growing social acceptance of homosexuality, and a subsequent increase in willingness to report it.

In Canada, same-sex couples make up 0.8% of all couples. Unlike in the United States where the distribution of same-sex couples nationwide is very uneven, ranging from as low as 0.29% in Wyoming to 4.01% in the District of Columbia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), the distribution of same-sex couples in Canada by province or territory is similar to that of opposite-sex couples. However, same-sex couples are more highly concentrated in big cities. In 2011, 45.6% of all same-sex sex couples lived in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, compared to 33.4% of opposite-sex couples (Statistics Canada, 2012). In terms of demographics, Canadian same-sex couples tended to be younger than opposite-sex couples. 25% of individuals in same-sex couples were under the age of 35 compared to 17.5% of individuals in opposite-sex couples. There were more male-male couples (54.5%) than female-female couples (Milan, 2013). Additionally, 9.4% of same-sex couples were raising children, 80% of whom were female-female couples (Statistics Canada, 2012).

While there is some concern from socially conservative groups (especially in the United States) regarding the well-being of children who grow up in same-sex households, research reports that same-sex parents are as effective as opposite-sex parents. In an analysis of 81 parenting studies, sociologists found no quantifiable data to support the notion that opposite-sex parenting is any better than same-sex parenting. Children of lesbian couples, however, were shown to have slightly lower rates of behavioural problems and higher rates of self-esteem (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010).

Gay or straight, a new option for many Canadians is simply to stay single. In 2011, about one-fifth of all individuals over the age of 15 did not live in a couple or family (Statistics Canada, 2012). Never-married individuals accounted for 73.1% of young adults in the 25 to 29 age bracket, up from 26% in 1981 (Milan, 2013). More young men in this age bracket are single than young women — 78.8% to 67.4%

— reflecting the tendency for men to marry at an older age and to marry women younger than themselves (Milan, 2013).

Although both single men and single women report social pressure to get married, women are subject to greater scrutiny. Single women are often portrayed as unhappy "spinsters" or "old maids" who cannot find a man to marry them. Single men, on the other hand, are typically portrayed as lifetime bachelors who cannot settle down or simply "have not found the right girl." Single women report feeling insecure and displaced in their families when their single status is disparaged (Roberts, 2007). However, single women older than 35 report feeling secure and happy with their unmarried status, as many women in this category have found success in their education and careers. In general, women feel more independent and more prepared to live a large portion of their adult lives without a spouse or domestic partner than they did in the 1960s (Roberts, 2007).

The decision to marry or not to marry can be based a variety of factors including religion and cultural expectations. Asian individuals are the most likely to marry while Black North Americans are the least likely to marry (Venugopal, 2011). Additionally, individuals who place no value on religion are more likely to be unmarried than those who place a high value on religion. For Black women, however, the importance of religion made no difference in marital status (Bakalar, 2010). In general, being single is not a rejection of marriage; rather, it is a lifestyle that does not necessarily include marriage. By age 40, according to census figures, 20% of women and 14% of men will have never married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Figure 9.7. *More and more Canadians are choosing lifestyles that don't include marriage. (Bar Friends by Glenn Harper under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

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It was noted above that having children is perceived to be a primary factor in being assigned the status of being a family in North America. Interestingly, however, there is a growing proportion of women, men and couples who are creating a life without children. Whether this is a situation of resulting from a conscious decision not to have children, or a result of the inability to have children, the individuals involved tend to confront similar pressures and reactions as a result of societal expectations.

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Male or female, growing older means confronting the psychological issues that come with entering the last phase of life. Young people moving into adulthood take on new roles and responsibilities as their lives expand, but an opposite arc can be observed in old age. What are the hallmarks of social and psychological change and how are these changes related to changes in marital and familial relationships?

Retirement — the idea that one may stop working at a certain age — is a relatively recent idea. Up until the late 19th century, people worked about 60 hours a week and did so until they were physically incapable of continuing. In 1889, Germany was the first country to introduce a social insurance program that provided relief from poverty for seniors. At the request of the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, the German emperor wrote to the German parliament: "those who are disabled from work by age and invalidity have a well-grounded claim to care from the state" (U.S. Social Security Administration, N.d.). The retirement age was initially set at age 70. In Canada, early Labour MPs (a precursor to the CCF and then the NDP) agreed to support the minority Liberal government, elected in 1925, in exchange for the introduction of the first Old Age Pensions Act (1927). In 1951 the Old Age Security Act was passed, creating the contemporary Old Age Security system, and in 1966 the Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan were introduced. These plans continued to provide benefits to seniors at age 70, but by 1971 age 65 had been gradually phased in (Canadian Museum of History, N.d.).

In the 21st century, most people hope that at some point they will be able to stop working and enjoy the fruits of their labour. But do people look forward to this time or do they fear it? When people retire from familiar work routines, some easily seek new hobbies, interests, and forms of recreation. Many find new groups and explore new activities, but others may find it more difficult to adapt to new routines and loss of social roles, losing their sense of self-worth in the process. This is also a point in time within a longstanding marital relationship that individuals may need to

become re-acquainted with spending significant amounts of time with one another in the absence of other distractions such as paid work and/or child care. It is also a phase in the marital relationship where there is increased potential for changes in the health status on one or both members of the relationship, and eventually the death of a partner.

Each phase of life has challenges that come with the potential for fear. Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994), in his view of socialization, broke the typical life span into eight phases. Each phase presents a particular challenge that must be overcome. In the final stage, old age, the challenge is to embrace integrity over despair. Some people are unable to successfully overcome the challenge. They may have to confront regrets, such as being disappointed in their children's lives or perhaps their own. They may have to accept that they will never reach certain career goals. Or they must come to terms with what their career success has cost them, such as time with their family or declining personal health. Others, however, are able to achieve a strong sense of integrity, embracing the new phase in life. When that happens, there is tremendous potential for creativity. They can learn new skills, practise new activities, and peacefully prepare for the end of life.

For some, overcoming despair might entail remarriage after the death of a spouse. A study conducted by Kate Davidson (2002) reviewed demographic data that asserted men were more likely to remarry after the death of a spouse, and suggested that widows (the surviving female spouse of a deceased male partner) and widowers (the surviving male spouse of a deceased female partner) experience their postmarital lives differently. Many surviving women enjoyed a new sense of freedom, as many were living alone for the first time. On the other hand, for surviving men, there was a greater sense of having lost something, as they were now deprived of a constant source of care as well as the focus on their emotional life.

***Figure 9.8**. From the movie, Harold and Maude. What is your response to this picture, given that the two people are meant to be lovers, not grandmother and grandson? (Harold and Maude courtesy of luckyjackson under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

It is no secret that Canadians are squeamish about the subject of sex. When the subject is the sexuality of elderly people no one wants to think about it or even talk about it. That fact is part of what makes the 1971 cult classic movie, *Harold and Maude*, so provocative. In this cult favourite film, Harold, an alienated, young man, meets and falls in love with Maude, a 79-year-old woman. What is so telling about the film is the reaction of his family, priest, and psychologist, who exhibit disgust and horror at such a match.

Although it is difficult to have an open, public national dialogue about aging and sexuality, the reality is that our sexual selves do not disappear after age 65. People continue to enjoy sex — and not always safe sex — well into their later years. In fact, some research suggests that as many as one in five new cases of AIDS occur in adults over 65 (Hillman, 2011).

In some ways, old age may be a time to enjoy sex more, not less. For women, the elder years can bring a sense of relief as the fear of an unwanted pregnancy is removed and the children

are grown and taking care of themselves. However, while we have expanded the number of psycho-pharmaceuticals to address sexual dysfunction in men, it was not until very recently that the medical field acknowledged the existence of female sexual dysfunctions (Bryant, 2004).

Figure 9.9. *As same-sex marriage becomes a possibility, many gay and lesbian couples are finally able to tie the knot—sometimes as seniors—after decades of waiting.* (*Gay marriage protester outside the Minnesota Senate chamber by Fibonacci Blue under a CC BY 2.0 License.*)

How do different groups in our society experience the aging process? Are there any experiences that are universal, or do different populations have different experiences? An emerging field of study looks at how lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people experience the aging process and how their experience differs from that of other groups or the dominant group. This issue is expanding with the aging of the baby boom generation; not only will aging boomers represent a huge bump in the general

elderly population, but the number of LGBT seniors is expected to double by 2030 (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011).

A recent study titled *The Aging and Health Report: Disparities and Resilience among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Older Adults* finds that LGBT older adults have higher rates of disability and depression than their heterosexual peers. They are also less likely to have a support system that might provide elder care: a partner and supportive children (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Even for those LGBT seniors who are partnered, in the United States some states do not recognize a legal relationship between two people of the same sex, reducing their legal protection and financial options. In Canada, Supreme Court decisions in 2003 and the *Civil Marriage Act* in 2005 legalized same sex marriage.

As they transition to assisted-living facilities, LGBT people have the added burden of "disclosure management:" the way they share their sexual and relationship identity. In one case study, a 78-year-old lesbian lived alone in a long-term care facility. She had been in a long-term relationship of 32 years and had been visibly active in the gay community earlier in her life. However, in the long-term care setting, she was much quieter about her sexual orientation. She "selectively disclosed" her sexual identity, feeling safer with anonymity and silence (Jenkins et al., 2010). A study from the National Senior Citizens Law Center reports that only 22% of LGBT older adults expect they could be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity in a long-term care facility. Even more telling is the finding that only 16% of non-LGBT older adults expected that LGBT people could be open with facility staff (National Senior Citizens Law Center, 2011).

Same-sex marriage can have major implications for the way the LGBT community ages. With marriage comes the legal and financial protection afforded to opposite-sex couples, as well as less fear of exposure and a reduction in the need to "retreat to the closet" (Jenkins et al., 2010).

Figure 9.10. *A young man sits at the grave of his great-grandmother. (andrew + great-grandmother sadie by Sara Goldsmith under a CC BY 2.0 License.)*

For most of human history, the standard of living was significantly lower than it is now. Humans struggled to survive with few amenities and very limited medical technology. The risk of death due to disease or accident was high in any life stage, and life expectancy was low. As people began to live longer, death became associated with old age.

For many teenagers and young adults, losing a grandparent or another older relative can be the first loss of a loved one they experience. It may be their first encounter with **grief**, a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event.

People tend to perceive death, their own and that of others, based on the values of their culture. While some may look upon death as the natural conclusion to a long, fruitful life, others may find the prospect of dying frightening to contemplate. People tend to

have strong resistance to the idea of their own death, and strong emotional reactions of loss to the death of loved ones. Viewing death as a loss, as opposed to a natural or tranquil transition, is often considered normal in North America.

What may be surprising is how few studies were conducted on death and dying prior to the 1960s. Death and dying were fields that had received little attention until psychologist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross began observing people who were in the process of dying. As Kübler-Ross witnessed people's transition toward death, she found some common threads in their experiences. She observed that the process had five distinct stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She published her findings in a 1969 book called *On Death and Dying*. The book remains a classic on the topic today.

Kübler-Ross found that a person's first reaction to the prospect of dying is *denial*, characterized by not wanting to believe that he or she is dying, with common thoughts such as "I feel fine" or "This is not really happening to me." The second stage is *anger*, when loss of life is seen as unfair and unjust. A person then resorts to the third stage, *bargaining*: trying to negotiate with a higher power to postpone the inevitable by reforming or changing the way he or she lives. The fourth stage, psychological *depression*, allows for resignation as the situation begins to seem hopeless. In the final stage, a person adjusts to the idea of death and reaches *acceptance*. At this point, the person can face death honestly, regarding it as a natural and inevitable part of life, and can make the most of their remaining time.

The work of Kübler-Ross was eye-opening when it was introduced. It broke new ground and opened the doors for sociologists, social workers, health practitioners, and therapists to study death and help those who were facing death. Kübler-Ross's work is generally considered a major contribution to **thanatology**: the systematic study of death and dying.

Of special interests to thanatologists is the concept of "dying with dignity." Modern medicine includes advanced medical technology

that may prolong life without a parallel improvement to the quality of life one may have. In some cases, people may not want to continue living when they are in constant pain and no longer enjoying life. Should patients have the right to choose to die with dignity? Dr. Jack Kevorkian was a staunch advocate for **physician-assisted suicide**: the voluntary or physician-assisted use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one's life. Physician-assisted suicide is slightly different from *euthanasia*, which refers to the act of taking someone's life to alleviate that person's suffering, but that does not necessarily reflect the person's expressed desire to commit suicide.

In Canada, physician-assisted suicide is illegal, although suicide itself has not been illegal since 1972. On moral and legal grounds, advocates of physician-assisted suicide argue that the law unduly deprives individuals of their autonomy and right to freely choose to end their own life with assistance; that existing palliative care can be inadequate to alleviate pain and suffering; that the law discriminates against disabled people who are unable, unlike able-bodied people, to commit suicide by themselves; and that assisted suicide is taking place already in an informal way, but without proper regulations. Those opposed argue that life is a fundamental value and killing is intrinsically wrong, that legal physician-assisted suicide could result in abuses with respect to the most vulnerable members of society, that individuals might seek assisted suicide for financial reasons or because services are inadequate, and that it might reduce the urgency to find means of improving the care of people who are dying (Butler, Tiedemann, Nicol, and Valiquet, 2013).

The controversy surrounding death with dignity laws is emblematic of the way our society tries to separate itself from death. Health institutions have built facilities to comfortably house those who are terminally ill. This is seen as a compassionate act, helping relieve the surviving family members of the burden of caring for the dying relative. But studies almost universally show that people prefer to die in their own homes (Lloyd, White, and Sutton, 2011). Is it our social responsibility to care for elderly relatives up

until their death? How do we balance the responsibility for caring for an elderly relative with our other responsibilities and obligations? As our society grows older, and as new medical technology can prolong life even further, the answers to these questions will develop and change.

The changing concept of **hospice** is an indicator of our society's changing view of death. Hospice is a type of health care that treats terminally ill people when cure-oriented treatments are no longer an option (Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, N.d.). Hospice doctors, nurses, and therapists receive special training in the care of the dying. The focus is not on getting better or curing the illness, but on passing out of this life in comfort and peace. Hospice centres exist as places where people can go to die in comfort, and increasingly, hospice services encourage at-home care so that someone has the comfort of dying in a familiar environment, surrounded by family (Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, N.d.). While many of us would probably prefer to avoid thinking of the end of our lives, it may be possible to take comfort in the idea that when we do approach death in a hospice setting, it is in a familiar, relatively controlled place.

9.3 Challenges Families Face

9.3.1 Divorce and Remarriage

As the structure of family changes over time, so do the challenges families face. Events like divorce and remarriage present new difficulties for families and individuals. Other long-standing domestic issues, such as abuse, continue to strain the health and stability of families.

Divorce, while fairly common and accepted in modern Canadian

society, was once a word that would only be whispered and was accompanied by gestures of disapproval. Prior to the introduction of the Divorce Act in 1968 there was no federal divorce law in Canada. In provincial jurisdictions where there were divorce laws, spouses had to prove adultery or cruelty in court. The 1968 Divorce Act broadened the grounds for divorce to include mental and physical cruelty, desertion, and/or separation for more than three years, and imprisonment. In 1986, the Act was amended again to make "breakdown of marriage" the sole ground for divorce. Couples could divorce after one year's separation, and there was no longer a requirement to prove "fault" by either spouse.

These legislative changes had immediate consequences on the divorce rate. In 1961, divorce was generally uncommon, affecting only 36 out of every 100,000 married persons. In 1969, the year after the introduction of the Divorce Act, the number of divorces doubled from 55 divorces per 100,000 population to 124. The divorce rate peaked in 1987, after the 1986 amendment, at 362 divorces per 100,000 population. Over the last quarter century divorce rates have dropped steadily, reaching 221 divorces per 100,000 population in 2005 (Kelly, 2010). The dramatic increase in divorce rates after the 1960s has been associated with the liberalization of divorce laws (as noted above); the shift in societal makeup, including the increase of women entering the workforce (Michael, 1978); and marital breakdowns in the large cohort of baby boomers (Kelly, 2010). The decrease in divorce rates can be attributed to two probable factors: an increase in the age at which people get married, and an increased level of education among those who marry — both of which have been found to promote greater marital stability.

Table 9.2. Crude divorce rate per 100,000 people in Canada, provinces, and territories: 1961-2005. After peaking in 1987 there has been a steady decrease in divorce rates. (Source: Kelly (2010). Table courtesy of Statistics Canada)

[Skip Table]

Province or Territory	**1961**	**1968**	**1969**	**1985**	**1986**	**1987**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**
Canada	**36.0**	**54.8**	**124.2**	**238.9**	**298.8**	**362.3**	**282.3**	**262.2**	**231.2**	**220.7**
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.3	3.0	20.0	96.6	118.8	193.7	175.5	170.6	169.9	153.5
Prince Edward Island	7.6	18.2	91.9	166.3	154.5	213.1	214.4	191.0	197.0	204.8
Nova Scotia	33.2	64.8	102.1	263.3	292.4	307.8	265.1	244.6	218.2	209.5
New Brunswick	32.4	22.9	55.3	187.3	237.6	273.1	228.7	191.6	227.3	192.2
Québec	6.6	10.2	49.2	236.4	282.5	324.7	291.6	274.5	231.2	203.0
Ontario	43.9	69.3	160.4	223.4	290.7	403.7	280.2	264.4	223.8	229.4
Manitoba	33.9	47.9	136.3	213.3	272.6	356.5	252.4	235.3	212.0	206.9
Saskatchewan	27.1	40.0	92.1	187.3	240.0	286.4	233.9	228.4	214.7	194.1
Alberta	78.0	125.7	221.0	336.0	391.8	390.2	332.1	276.6	271.7	246.4
British Columbia	85.8	110.8	205.0	278.6	374.1	397.6	296.1	275.0	246.8	233.8
Yukon	164.1	200.0	262.5	389.9	379.6	546.6	289.0	371.9	222.4	350.2
Northwest Territories		36.7	96.8	130.8	171.6	195.8	115.0	142.8	229.8	152.5
Nunavut	Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2000.								25.5	33.3

So what causes divorce? While more young people are choosing to postpone or opt out of marriage, those who enter into the union do so with the expectation that it will last. A great deal of marital problems can be related to stress, especially financial stress. According to researchers participating in the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project, couples who enter marriage without a strong asset base (like a home, savings, and a retirement plan) are 70% more likely to be divorced after three years than are couples

with at least $10,000 in assets. This is connected to factors such as age and education level that correlate with low incomes.

The addition of children to a marriage creates added financial and emotional stress. Research has established that marriages enter their most stressful phase upon the birth of the first child (Popenoe and Whitehead, 2001). This is particularly true for couples who have multiples (twins, triplets, and so on). Married couples with twins or triplets are 17% more likely to divorce than those with children from single births (McKay, 2010). Another contributor to the likelihood of divorce is a general decline in marital satisfaction over time. As people get older, they may find that their values and life goals no longer match up with those of their spouse (Popenoe and Whitehead, 2004).

Divorce is thought to have a cyclical pattern. Children of divorced parents are 40% more likely to divorce than children of married parents. And when we consider children whose parents divorced and then remarried, the likelihood of their own divorce rises to 91% (Wolfinger, 2005). This might result from being socialized to a mindset that a broken marriage can be replaced rather than repaired (Wolfinger, 2005). That sentiment is also reflected in the finding that when both partners of a married couple have been previously divorced, their marriage is 90% more likely to end in divorce (Wolfinger, 2005).

Samuel Johnson is quoted as saying that getting married a second time was "the triumph of hope over experience." In fact, according to the 2001 Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 43% of individuals whose first marriage failed married again, while 16% married again after the death of their spouse. Another 1% of the ever-married population (people who have been married but may not currently be married), aged 25 and over, had been married more than twice (Clark and Crompton, 2006). American data show that most men and women remarry within five years of a divorce, with the median length for men (three years) being lower than for women (4.4 years). This length of time has been fairly consistent since the

1950s. The majority of those who remarry are between the ages of 25 and 44 (Kreider, 2006).

Marriage the second time around (or third or fourth time around) can be a very different process than the first. Remarriage lacks many of the classic courtship rituals of a first marriage. In a second marriage, individuals are less likely to deal with issues like parental approval, premarital sex, or desired family size (Elliot, 2010). Clark and Crompton suggest that second marriages tend to be more stable than first marriages, largely because the spouses are older and more mature. At the time of the Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 71% of the remarried couples surveyed were still together and had been for an average of 13 years. Couples tend to marry a second time more for intimacy-based reasons rather than external reasons and therefore enjoy a greater quality of relationship (Clark and Crompton, 2006).

It is often cited that half of all marriages end in divorce. This statistic has made many people cynical when it comes to marriage, but it is misleading. A closer look at the data reveals a different story.

Using Statistics Canada data from 2008 that show a marriage rate of 4.4 (per 1,000 people) and a divorce rate of 2.11, it would appear that slightly less than one-half of all marriages failed (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014a, 2014b). Similar United States data for 2003 showed more or less exactly 50% of marriages ending in divorce (Hurley, 2005). This reasoning is deceptive, however, because instead of tracing actual marriages to see their longevity (or lack thereof), this compares unrelated statistics. That is, the number of marriages in a given year does not have a direct correlation to the divorces occurring that same year. American research published in the *New York Times* took a different approach — determining how many people had ever been married, and of those, how many later divorced. The result? According to this analysis, American divorce rates have only gone as high as 41% (Hurley, 2005).

Another way to calculate divorce rates is the **total divorce rate**, which projects how many new marriages would be expected to

fail after 30 years based on the divorce rate by marriage duration observed in a given year. In Canada, the total divorce rate figure reached a high of 50.6% in 1987, after the Divorce Act was amended to allow divorces after just one year of separation (rather than the mandatory three years previously). Since then, the total divorce rate has remained steady at between 35% and 42%. In 2008, 40.7% of marriages were projected to end before their 30th anniversary (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014a).

Sociologists can also calculate divorce rates through a cohort study. For instance, we could determine the percentage of marriages that are intact after, say, five or seven years, compared to marriages that have ended in divorce after five or seven years. Sociological researchers must remain aware of research methods and how statistical results are applied. As illustrated, different methodologies and different interpretations can lead to contradictory, and even misleading results.

Divorce and remarriage can be stressful for partners and children alike. Divorce is often justified by the notion that children are better off in a divorced family than in a family with parents who do not get along. Others argue that parents who divorce sacrifice their children's well-being to pursue their own happiness.

Research suggests that separating out particular factors of the divorce, especially whether or not the divorce is accompanied by parental conflict, is key to determining whether divorce has a significant negative impact on children (Amato and Keith, 1991). Certainly while marital conflict does not provide an ideal childrearing environment, going through a divorce can also be damaging. Children are often confused and frightened by the threat to their family security. They may feel responsible for the divorce and attempt to bring their parents back together, often by sacrificing their own well-being (Amato, 2000). Only in high-conflict homes do children benefit from divorce and the subsequent decrease in conflict. The majority of divorces however come out of lower-conflict homes, and children from those homes are more

negatively impacted by the stress of the divorce than the stress of unhappiness in the marriage (Amato, 2000).

On the other hand, Amato and Keith have argued that the overall effect of divorce on children's well-being is relatively weak and has been declining over time. Children of divorces experience higher levels of well-being than children of intact, but highly conflictual marriages Divorces that are not accompanied by parental conflict do less harm to children. (Amato and Keith, 1991). These findings would appear to lend credence to modern processes of *family mediation* in divorces where a neutral third party helps people to negotiate a settlement to their dispute (BC Ministry of Attorney General, 2003).

Children's ability to deal with a divorce may depend on their age. Research has found that divorce may be most difficult for school-aged children, as they are old enough to understand the separation but not old enough to understand the reasoning behind it. Older teenagers are more likely to recognize the conflict that led to the divorce but may still feel fear, loneliness, guilt, and pressure to choose sides. Infants and preschool-age children may suffer the heaviest impact from the loss of routine that the marriage offered (Temke, 2006).

Proximity to parents also makes a difference in a child's well-being after divorce. Boys who live or have joint arrangements with their fathers show less aggression than those who are raised by their mothers only. Similarly, girls who live or have joint arrangements with their mothers tend to be more responsible and mature than those who are raised by their fathers only. Nearly 70% of the children of parents who are divorced have their primary residence with their mother, leaving many boys without a father figure residing in the home. Another 15% of the children lived with their father and 9% moved back and forth between both parents equally (Sinha, 2014). Still, researchers suggest that a strong parent-child relationship can greatly improve a child's adjustment to divorce (Temke, 2006).

There is empirical evidence that divorce has not discouraged

children in terms of how they view marriage and family. In a survey conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, about three-quarters of high school students said it was "extremely important" to have a strong marriage and family life. And over half believed it was "very likely" that they would be in a lifelong marriage (Popenoe, and Whitehead, 2001). These numbers have continued to climb over the last 25 years.

9.3.2 Violence and Abuse

Violence and abuse are among the most disconcerting of the challenges that today's families face. Abuse can occur between spouses, between parent and child, as well as between other family members. The frequency of violence among families is difficult to determine because many cases of spousal abuse and child abuse go unreported. In any case, studies have shown that abuse (reported or not) has a major impact on families and society as a whole.

Domestic violence is a significant social problem in Canada. One in four victims of violent crime in Canada was victimized by a spouse or family member in 2010 (Sinha, 2012). Domestic violence is often characterized as violence between household or family members, specifically spouses. To include unmarried, cohabitating, and same-sex couples, family sociologists have created the term **intimate partner violence (IPV)**. Women are the primary victims of intimate partner violence. It is estimated that 1 in 4 women has experienced some form of IPV in her lifetime (compared to 1 in 7 men) (Catalano, 2007). In 2011, women in Canada had more than double the risk of men of becoming a victim of police-reported family violence (Sinha, 2012). IPV may include physical violence, such as punching, kicking, or other methods of inflicting physical pain; sexual violence, such as rape or other forced sexual acts; threats and intimidation that imply either physical or sexual abuse; and emotional abuse, such as harming another's sense of self-worth through words or controlling

another's behaviour. IPV often starts as emotional abuse and then escalates to other forms or combinations of abuse (Centers for Disease Control, 2012).

Figure 9.11*. Over the past 30 years, the rate of spousal homicides against females has consistently been about three to four times higher than that for males (Statistics Canada, 2011). What does this statistic reveal about societal patterns and norms concerning intimate relationships and gender roles? (Photo courtesy of Kathy Kimpel/flickr)*

In 2010, of IPV acts that involved physical actions against women, 71% involved physical assault (57% were common assaults including punching, slapping, and pushing, while another 10% were major assaults involving a weapon or causing major bodily injury); 3% involved sexual assault; 10% involved uttering threats; 5% indecent or threatening phone calls; and 9% criminal harassment or stalking (Sinha, 2012). This is slightly different than IPV abuse patterns for men, which show that 79% of acts of IPV take the form of physical violence, and less than 1% involve sexual assault (Sinha, 2012). Interestingly, in 2011, a slightly larger proportion of physical assaults against male intimate partners resulted in injury (55%) compared to

female intimate partners (51%) (Sinha, 2013). IPV affects women at greater rates than men because women often take the passive role in relationships and may become emotionally dependent on their partner. Perpetrators of IPV work to establish and maintain such dependence in order to hold power and control over their victims, making them feel stupid, crazy, or ugly — in some way worthless. Between 2000 and 2010, nearly one-quarter of women who were murdered by their intimate partners were murdered for reasons of jealousy — compared to 10% of male victims (Sinha, 2012).

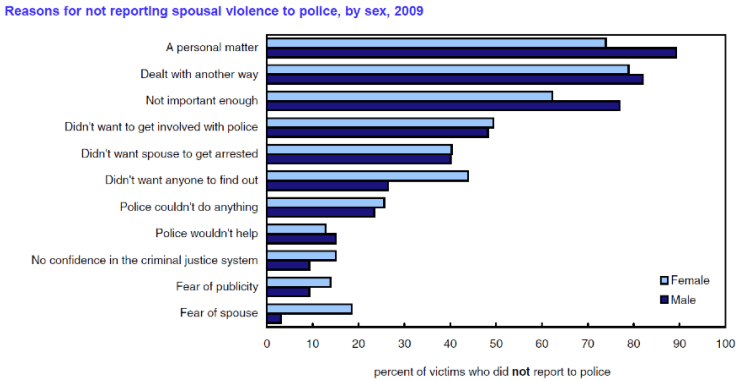
IPV affects different segments of the population at different rates. The rate of self-reported IPV for Aboriginal women is about 2.5 times higher than for non-Aboriginal women (Sinha, 2013). The severity of intimate partner violence also differed. Nearly 6 in 10 Aboriginal women reported injury as a result of IPV compared to 4 in 10 non-Aboriginal women. As a result, Aboriginal female victims were also much more likely to report that they feared for their lives as a result of IPV (52% compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal women) (Sinha, 2013). On the other hand, visible minority and immigrant groups do not have significantly different levels of self-reported spousal violence than the rest of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Those who are separated report higher rates of abuse than those with other marital statuses, as conflict is typically higher in those relationships. Similarly, those who are cohabitating or living in a common-law relationship are more likely than those who are married to experience IPV (Statistics Canada, 2011). American researchers have found that the rate of IPV doubles for women in low-income disadvantaged areas when compared to IPV experienced by women who reside in more affluent areas (Benson and Fox, 2004). In Canada, the statistics do not bear this relationship out. Household income and education levels appear to have little effect on experiencing spousal violence. Regardless of income level, the proportion of reported spousal violence was between 1 and 2%. However, rates of IPV were nearly double in rural Canada than in the major metropolitan areas (542 incidents per 100,000 population

compared to 294). Overall, women ages 25 to 34 are at the greatest risk of physical or sexual assault by an intimate partner (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Accurate statistics on IPV are difficult to determine, as less than one-quarter of victims report incidents to the police (Statistics Canada, 2011). It is not until victims choose to report crimes that patterns of abuse are exposed. Two-thirds of victims in Statistics Canada self-reported victimization studies stated that abuse had occurred more than once prior to their first police report. Nearly 3 in 10 stated that they had been abused more than 10 times prior to reporting (Statistics Canada, 2011).

According to the Statistics Canada General Social Survey (2009) , victims cite varied reasons why they are reluctant to report abuse, as shown in Table 14.3.



Note(s): Includes legally married, common-law, same-sex, separated and divorced spouses. Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Excludes data from the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

Table 9.3 This chart shows reasons that victims give for why they fail to report abuse to police authorities (Statistics Canada 2011).

IPV has significant long-term effects on individual victims and on society. Studies have shown that IPV damage extends beyond the direct physical or emotional wounds. Extended IPV has been linked to unemployment among victims, as many have difficulty finding

or holding employment. Additionally, nearly all women who report serious domestic problems exhibit symptoms of major depression (Goodwin, Chandler, and Meisel, 2003). Female victims of IPV are also more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, suffer from eating disorders, and attempt suicide (Silverman et al., 2001). In 2014, the Canadian Labour Congress and researchers at the University of Western Ontario partnered to conduct the first ever Canadian survey on domestic violence in the workplace.

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IPV is indeed something that impacts more than just intimate partners. In a survey, 34% of respondents said they have witnessed IPV, and 59% said that they know a victim personally (Roper Starch Worldwide, 1995). Many people want to help IPV victims but are hesitant to intervene because they feel that it is a personal matter

or they fear retaliation from the abuser — reasons similar to those of victims who do not report IPV.

News reports in June 2013 broke the sensational story of dozens of children being apprehended by Child and Family Services from a small Old Order Mennonite community in southern Manitoba. Several members of the community were charged by police with assault when they received reports that children had been disciplined using a leather strap, whip, and cattle prod (Hitchen, 2013). At one point, all the children except for one 17-year-old had to be apprehended by authorities (CBC News, 2013). The 1892 law that permits the use of corporal punishment for children in Canada was upheld by a Supreme Court ruling in 2004 within certain restrictions, but corporal punishment remains a controversial issue in Canada (CBC News, 2004).

Physical abuse of children may come in the form of beating, kicking, throwing, choking, hitting with objects, burning, or other methods. Injury inflicted by such behaviour is considered abuse even if the parent or caregiver did not intend to harm the child. Other types of physical contact that are characterized as discipline (spanking, for example) are not considered abuse as long as no injury results. The Supreme Court ruling stated that teachers and parents can use reasonable corrective force against children between the ages of 2 and 12 years old as long as the force is "minor" and of "a transitory and trifling nature" (CBC News, 2004). The court ruled that it was unacceptable to strike a child with an object, like a strap or whip, and striking a child in the head was also unacceptable.

This issue is rather controversial among modern-day Canadians. While some parents feel that physical discipline, or corporal punishment, is an effective way to respond to bad behaviour, others feel that it is a form of abuse. According to a 2005 study of mothers with preschoolers in Manitoba and Ontario, 70% of respondents reported using corporal punishment. One-third of them used it at least once a week. A poll conducted by the *Globe and Mail* in 2007 found that 78% of Canadian parents with children under 18 believed

that parents do not discipline their children enough, and another 42% believed spanking benefited child development (Pearce, 2012).

However, studies have shown that spanking is not an effective form of punishment and may lead to aggression by the victim, particularly in those who are spanked at a young age (Berlin, 2009). A meta-analysis of research conducted over two decades published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* found that spanking was no better than other parenting methods at eliciting compliance in children and was in fact linked not only to increased levels of childhood aggression but also to long-term effects such as depression, emotional and behavioural problems, and drug and alcohol use in adulthood (Durrant and Ensom, 2012). This research led the editor-in-chief of the journal to call for the repeal of the spanking law from the Criminal Code. "It is time for Canada to remove this anachronistic excuse for poor parenting from the statute book" (Fletcher, 2012, p. 1339).

Children are among the most helpless victims of abuse. In 2010, more than 18,000 children and youth under the age of 17 were victims of police-reported family violence in Canada, accounting for nearly a quarter of all violent offences against children and youth (Sinha, 2012). Child abuse may come in several forms, the most common being neglect, followed by physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological maltreatment, and medical neglect (Child Help, 2011). Whereas the overall rate of violent crime involving children and youth is lower than the rate for the population as a whole, the rate of sexual assault is five times higher (Sinha, 2012). Level 1 sexual assault (not involving a weapon or aggravated assault) comprised 75% of these offences, while child-specific sexual crimes including sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, luring a child via a computer, and corrupting children comprised another 22%. Girls were 37% more likely than boys to be the victim of family violence (and almost twice as likely by the time they reached ages 12 to 17 years). In large part, this is because girls are almost four times as likely to be a victim of sexual assault by a family member than boys are.

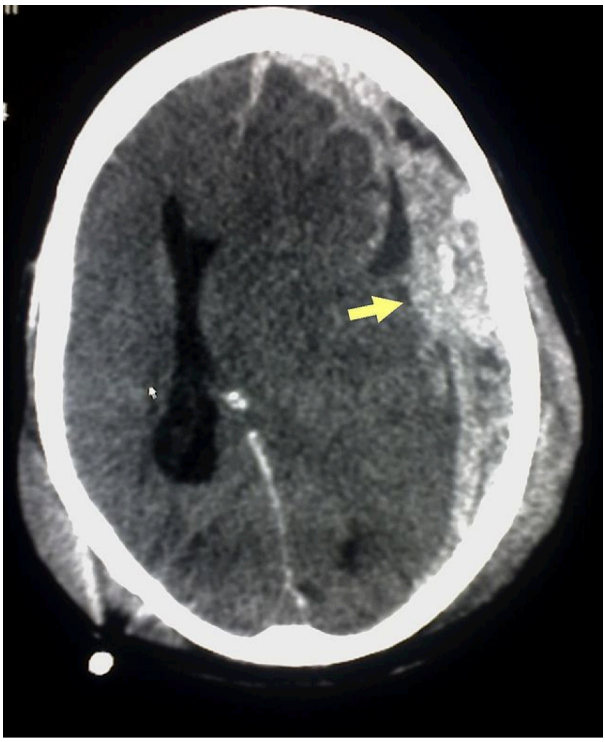

Figure 9.12*. The arrow indicates subdural hematoma or bleeding between the dura mater and the brain: one cause of death from shaken-baby syndrome. (Trauma subdural arrow is in the Public Domain)*

25% of all violent crime against children and youth was perpetrated by a family member (parent, sibling, extended family member, or spouse), while another 54% involved an accused known to the victim (casual acquaintances, close friends, or dating partners) (Sinha, 2012). 59% of family violence against children was committed by parents, 19% by siblings, and 22% by other family members (Statistics Canada, 2011). Understandably, these figures vary with the age of the child. As Sinha (2012) notes, "among youth aged 12 to 17 who had been victimized, about one in five (18%) were

violently victimized by someone within their own family network. This compares to 47% of child victims aged 3 to 11 years, and 70% of infant and toddler victims under the age of 3 years" (p. 58).

In terms of child abuse reported to provincial and territorial child welfare authorities, infants (children less than 1 year old) were the most victimized population with an incident rate of 52 investigations per 1,000 children, compared to 43 per 1,000 for 1- to 3-year-olds, the next highest category (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010). Infants younger than 1 year are also the most vulnerable to family homicide, 98% of which were committed by parents (27 per million between 2000 and 2010, compared to 9 per million for 1-to 3-year olds, the next highest category) (Sinha, 2012). This age group is particularly vulnerable to neglect because they are entirely dependent on parents for care. Some parents do not purposely neglect their children; factors such as cultural values, standard of care in a community, and poverty can lead to hazardous levels of neglect. If information or assistance from public or private services are available and a parent fails to use those services, child welfare services may intervene (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010).

Infants are also often victims of physical abuse, particularly in the form of violent shaking. This type of physical abuse is referred to as **shaken-baby syndrome**, which describes a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or causing impact to an infant's head. A baby's cry is the number one trigger for shaking. Parents may find themselves unable to soothe a baby's concerns and may take their frustration out on the child by shaking him or her violently. Other stress factors such as a poor economy, unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with parental life may contribute to this type of abuse. Shaken-baby syndrome was attributed as the cause of nearly one-third (31%) of family-related homicides of infants less than 1 year between 2000 and 2010 (Sinha, 2012).

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Marriage and Family

As highlighted above, sociologists study families on macro, meso, and micro-levels to determine how families function in society. Sociologists may use a variety of theoretical perspectives to explain events that occur within and outside of the family. In this *Introduction to Sociology*, we have been focusing on three perspectives: structural functionalism, critical sociology, and symbolic interactionism.

9.4.1 Functionalism

When considering the role of family in society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status roles in a marriage or family. The family — and its members — perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society.

Anthropologist George Murdock defined the family narrowly as "a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction," which "includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children" (Murdock, 1949). Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic (Lee, 1985). In each society, although the structure of the family varies, the family performs these four functions.

According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the existence or impact of premarital or extramarital

sex, but states that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults (Lee, 1985). Although societies differ greatly to the degree that they place limitations on sexual behaviour, all societies have norms governing sexual behavior. The function of the family is to establish the stated norms around sexual gratification.

This outlet for legitimate sexual relations gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society. Each society needs to replace the older people with new generations of young people. Again, the institution of the family provides a socially legitimate and regulated form in which children are produced and given recognized status in society. Societies which practice celibacy, like the religious community of the Shakers — an offshoot of the Quakers who believed in the second appearance of Jesus Christ — were dysfunctional in this regard as they were unable to maintain sufficient population to remain viable. By the 1920s there were only 12 Shaker communities left in the United States.

Once children are produced, the family plays a vital role in training them for adult life. As the primary agent of socialization, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follow social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Parents teach their children manners and civility. A well-mannered child (presumably) reflects a well-mannered parent. In most societies, the family unit is responsible for establishing the emotional security and sense of personal self-worth of its members, which begins in childhood. When families fail to do this they are seen as dysfunctional.

Parents also teach children gender roles. Gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. The functionalist Talcott Parsons (1943) emphasized that in each family, there is a division of labour that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family status. Women tend to assume the expressive roles, which typically involve work

inside of the family, which provides emotional support and physical care for children (Crano and Aronoff, 1978). According to functionalists, the differentiation of the roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are well-balanced and coordinated. Each family member is seen as performing a specific role and function to maintain the functioning of the family as a whole. Each family member has a socially recognized role that reduces internal competition for status within the family, and ambiguity about the status of the family in the external community.

When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role, such as providing daytime care for the children, the mother must take on an instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home in order for the family to maintain balance and function. Stay-at-home dads are becoming more common today but their non-traditional role still produces ambiguity in their claim to status in the community.

Parsons (1943) also argued that in modern North American society, the differentiation between these roles created tension or strain on individuals as they tried to adapt to the conflicting norms or requirements (roles) between the American occupational and kinship systems. There was an "asymmetrical relation of the marriage pair to the occupational structure" in which the norms of equality between spouses in the family system were undermined by the inequality of status in the occupational system between paid employment outside the home and unpaid domestic work inside the home. Parsons argued that the result of this division was strain in relation to the patterning of sex roles. While men became narrow instrumental specialists, incapable of a full expressive life, women turned "neurotically" to expressive tasks to create a functional equivalent to demonstrate their skills and fundamental equality to their husbands.

There is also, however, a good deal of direct evidence of

> tension in the feminine role. In the "glamour girl" pattern, use of specifically feminine devices as an instrument of compulsive search for power and exclusive attention are conspicuous. Many women succumb to their dependency cravings through such channels as neurotic illness or compulsive domesticity and thereby abdicate both their responsibilities and their opportunities for genuine independence. Many of the attempts to excel in approved channels of achievement are marred by garishness of taste, by instability in response to fad and fashion, by a seriousness in community or club activities which is out of proportion to the intrinsic importance of the task. In all these and other fields there are conspicuous signs of insecurity and ambivalence. Hence it may be concluded that the feminine role is a conspicuous focus of the strains inherent in our social structure, and not the least of the sources of these strains is to be found in the functional difficulties in the integration of our kinship system with the rest of the social structure (Parsons, 1949)

The fourth function of the family Murdock identified is economic. The family is understood as a primary economic unit where the economic well-being of family members is provided. In premodern family forms, the extended family itself is the basis of the economy. As a unit it produces the basic needs of its members including food, shelter, health care, and comfort in general. In modern society, some of these economic functions, like production and health care, are taken over by other social institutions, but the family remains the principle unit of consumption. Family members coordinate their incomes to provide economically for the rest of the family.

9.4.2 Critical Sociology

Critical sociologists are quick to point out that North American families have been defined as private entities, the consequence of which (historically) has been to see family matters as issues concerning only those within the family. Serious issues including domestic violence and child abuse, inequality between the sexes, the right to dispose of family property equally, and so on, have been historically treated as being outside of state, legal, or police jurisdiction. The feminist slogan of the 1960s and 1970s — "the personal is the political" — indicates how feminists began to draw attention to the broad social or *public* implications of matters long considered private or inconsequential. As women's roles had long been relegated to the private sphere, issues of power that affected their lives most directly were largely invisible. Speaking about the lives of middle-class women in mid-century North America, Betty Friedan described this problem as "the problem with no name":

> The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night — she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question — "Is this all?" (1963, p. 15).

One focus of critical sociology therefore is to highlight the political-economic context of the inequalities of power in family life. The family is often not a haven but rather an arena where the effects of societal power struggles are felt. This exercise of power often entails the differentiation and performance of family status roles. *Why* are women expected to perform the "expressive" roles in the

family while the men perform "instrumental" roles, and what are the implications of this division of labour? Critical sociologists therefore study conflicts as simple as the enforcement of rules from parent to child, or more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and child), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest, as products of power structures in broader society. Blood and Wolfe's classic (1960) study of marital power found that the person with the most access to valued resources held the most power. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labour outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home. Disputes over the division of household labour tend also to be a common source of marital discord. Household labour offers no wages and, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men do more housework, women experience more satisfaction in their marriages, reducing the incidence of conflict (Coltrane, 2000).

The political and economic context is also key to understanding changes in the structure of the family over the 20th and 21st centuries. The debate between functionalist and critical sociologists on the rise of non-nuclear family forms is a case in point. Since the 1950s, the functionalist approach to the family has emphasized the importance of the nuclear family — a married man and woman in a socially approved sexual relationship with at least one child — as the basic unit of an orderly and functional society. Although only 39% of families conformed to this model in 2006, in functionalist approaches, it often operates as a model of the *normal* family, with the implication that non-normal family forms lead to a variety of society-wide dysfunctions. On the other hand, critical perspectives emphasize that the diversity of family forms does not indicate the "decline of the family" (i.e., of the ideal of the nuclear family) so much as the diverse response of the family form to the tensions of gender inequality and historical changes in the economy and society. As stated earlier in this module, critical sociologists argue that the nuclear family should be thought of less as a normative model for how families should be, and more as an historical anomaly

that reflected the specific social and economic conditions of the two decades following World War II.

9.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists view the world in terms of symbols and the meanings assigned to them (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). The family itself is a symbol. To some, it is a father, mother, and children; to others, it is any union that involves respect and compassion. Interactionists stress that family is not an objective, concrete reality. Like other social phenomena, it is a social construct that is subject to the ebb and flow of social norms and ever-changing meanings.

Consider the meaning of other elements of family: "parent" was a symbol of a biological and emotional connection to a child. With more parent-child relationships developing through adoption, remarriage, or change in guardianship, the word "parent" today is less likely to be associated with a biological connection than with whoever is socially recognized as having the responsibility for a child's upbringing. Similarly, the terms "mother" and "father" are no longer rigidly associated with the meanings of caregiver and breadwinner. These meanings are more free-flowing through changing family roles.

Interactionists also recognize how the family status roles of each member are socially constructed, which plays an important part in how people perceive and interpret social behaviour. Interactionists view the family as a group of role players or "actors" that come together to act out their parts in an effort to construct a family. These roles are up for interpretation. In the late 19th and early 20th century, a "good father," for example, was one who worked hard to provide financial security for his children. Today, a "good father" is one who takes the time outside of work to promote his children's emotional well-being, social skills, and intellectual growth — in some ways, a much more daunting task.

Symbolic interactionism therefore draws our attention to *how* the norms that define what a "normal" family is, and how it should operate, come into existence. The rules and expectations that coordinate the behaviour of family members are products of social processes and joint agreement, even if the agreements are tacit or implicit. In this perspective, norms and social conventions are not regarded as permanently fixed by functional requirements or unequal power relationships. Rather, new norms and social conventions continually emerge from ongoing social interactions to make family structures intelligible in new situations, and to enable them to operate and sustain themselves.

Key Terms and Concepts

ambilineal: A type of unilateral descent that follows either the father's or the mother's side exclusively.

bigamy: The act of entering into marriage while still married to another person.

bilateral descent: The tracing of kinship through both parents' ancestral lines.

cohabitation: When a couple shares a residence but is not married.

exchange theory: Social relationships are based on giving and returning valued goods or services. Individuals seek to maximize their rewards in their interactions with others.

extended family: A household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

family: Socially recognized groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption, and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society.

family life course: A sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages.

family life cycle: A set of predictable steps and patterns that families experience over time.

family of orientation: The family into which one is born.

family of procreation: A family that is formed through marriage.

fluid modernity: A condition of constant mobility and change in relationships within contemporary society.

intimate partner violence (IPV): Violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship; includes unmarried, cohabiting, and same-sex couples, as well as heterosexual married couples.

kinship: A person's traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption).

liquid modernity: See *fluid modernity.*

marriage: A legally recognized contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship, who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship.

matrilineal descent: A type of unilateral descent that follows the mother's side only.

matrilocal residence: A system in which it is customary for a husband to live with his wife's family.

monogamy: When someone is married to only one person at a time.

nuclear family: A cohabiting man and woman who maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and have at least one child.

patrilineal descent: A type of unilateral descent that follows the father's line only.

patrilocal residence: A system in which it is customary for a wife to live with (or near) her husband's family.

polyandry: A form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time.

polygamy: The state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time

polygyny: a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time.

shaken-baby syndrome: A group of medical symptoms, such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage, resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant's head.

total divorce rate: A projection of how many new marriages are expected to fail after 30 years, based on the divorce rate by marriage duration observed in a given year.

unilateral descent: The tracing of kinship through one parent only.

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10. Module 10: Religion

Figure 10.1*. The elephant-headed Ganesh, remover of obstacles, finds a home in Vancouver. Late modern society is characterized by strange and unexpected blendings of the sacred and profane. (Photo courtesy of Rob Brownie)*

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between substantial, functional, and family resemblance definitions of religion.
- Describe the four dimensions of religion: Belief, ritual, experience, and community.
- Distinguish between classifications of religion, like animism, polytheism, monotheism, and atheism.
- Distinguish between different types of religious organizations: Churches, ecclesia, sects, and cults.
- Compare and contrast classical sociological theories on religion (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber).
- Describe current global and Canadian trends of secularization and religious belief.
- Discuss the current religious diversity of Canada and its implications for social policy.
- Compare and contrast new religious movements to fundamentalist movements in terms of their relationship to social and political issues.
- Explain the basis of contemporary issues of science and faith.

10.0 Introduction to Religion

***Figure 10.2**. Religion is defined by its unique ability to provide individuals with answers to the ultimate questions of life, death, existence. and purpose. (Un coro de ángeles, con sus melodías ahuyenta los pesares de San Francisco by José Benlliure y Gil is in the Public Domain.)*

It is commonly said that there are only two guarantees in life — death and taxes — but what can be more taxing than the prospect of one's own death? Ceasing to exist is an overwhelmingly terrifying thought and it is one which has plagued individuals for centuries. This ancient stressor has been addressed over time by a number of different religious explanations and affirmations. Arguably, this capacity to provide answers for fundamental questions is what defines religion. For instance, under Hindu belief one's soul lives on after biological death and is reborn in a new body. Under Christian belief one can expect to live in a heavenly paradise once one's time runs out on earth. These are just two examples, but the extension of

the self beyond its physical expiration date is a common thread in religious texts.

These promises of new life and mystifying promise lands are not simply handed out to everyone, however. They require an individual to faithfully practice and participate in accordance to the demands of specific commandments, doctrines, rituals, or tenants. Furthermore, despite one's own faith in the words of an ancient text, or the messages of a religious figure, an individual will remain exposed to the trials, tribulations, and discomforts that exist in the world. During these instances a theodicy — a religious explanation for such sufferings — can help keep one's faith by providing justification as to why bad things happen to good, faithful people. **Theodicy** is an attempt to explain or justify the existence of bad things or instances that occur in the world, such as death, disaster, sickness, and suffering. Theodicies are especially relied on to provide reason as to why a religion's God (or God-like equivalent) allows terrible things to happen to good people.

Is there truly such a thing as heaven or hell? Can we expect to embody a new life after death? Are we really the creation of an omnipotent and transcendent Godly figure? These are all fascinating **ontological** questions — i.e., questions that are concerned with the nature of reality, our being and existence — and ones for which different religious traditions have different answers. For example, Buddhists and Taoists believe that there is a life force that can be reborn after death, but do not believe that there is a transcendent creator God, whereas Christian Baptists believe that one can be reborn once, or even many times, within a single lifetime. However, these questions are not the central focus of sociologists. Instead sociologists ask about the different social forms, experiences, and functions that religious organizations evoke and promote within society. What is religion as a social phenomenon? Why does it exist? In other words, the "truth" factor of religious beliefs is not the primary concern of sociologists. Instead, religion's significance lies in its practical tendency to bring people together and, in notable cases, to violently divide them. For sociologists, it is

key that religion guides people to act and behave in particular ways. How does it do so?

Regardless if one personally believes in the fundamental values, beliefs, and doctrines that certain religions present, one does not have to look very far to recognize the significance that religion has in a variety of different social aspects around the world. Religion can influence everything from how one spends their Sunday afternoon –-singing hymnals, listening to religious sermons, or refraining from participating in any type of work — to providing the justification for sacrificing one's own life, as in the case of the Solar Temple mass suicide (Dawson & Thiessen, 2014). Religious activities and ideals are found in political platforms, business models, and constitutional laws, and have historically produced rationales for countless wars. Some people adhere to the messages of a religious text to a tee, while others pick and choose aspects of a religion that best fit their personal needs. In other words, religion is present in a number of socially significant domains and can be expressed in a variety of different levels of commitment and fervour.

In this module, classical social theorists Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber provide the early insights that have come to be associated with the critical, functionalist, and interpretive perspectives on religion in society. Interestingly, each of them predicted that the processes of modern secularization would gradually erode the significance of religion in everyday life. More recent theorists like Peter Berger, Rodney Stark (feminist), and John Caputo take account of contemporary experiences of religion, including what appears to be a period of religious revivalism. Each of these theorists contribute uniquely important perspectives that describe the roles and functions that religion has served society over time. When taken altogether, sociologists recognize that religion is an entity that does not remain stagnant. It evolves and develops alongside new intellectual discoveries and expressions of societal, as well as individual, needs and desires.

***Figure 10.3**. Pope Francis was named Time magazine's "Person of the Year" in 2013, where he was identified as "poised to transform a place [i.e., the Vatican] that measures change by the century" (Chua-Eoan & Dias 2013). What types of impact can the words of a religious leader have on society today? (Papa rock star by Edgar Jiménez under a CC-BY-SA 2.0 License).*

A case in point would be the evolution of belief in the Catholic Church. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Roman Catholic Church responded to the challenges brought forth by secularization, scientific reasoning, and rationalist methodologies with Pope Pius X's encyclical Pascendi dominici gregis (1907). This letter was circulated among all of the Catholic churches and identified the new "enemy of the cross" as the trend towards modernization. A secretive "Council of Vigilance" was established in each diocese to purge church teachings of the elements of modernism. The true faith "concerns itself with the divine reality which is entirely unknown to science."

However, in the 21st century, the Catholic Church appears to be adapting its attitudes towards modernization. The 266th Roman Catholic Pope, Pope Francis, has made public statements such as, "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I

to judge?" (Reuters, 2013) and "We cannot limit the role of women in the Church to altar girls or the president of a charity, there must be more" (BBC News, 2013). These statements seem to align the Church's position with contemporary attitudes towards homosexuality and gender. Pope Francis has also addressed contemporary issues of climate change. At the 2015 U.N. climate conference in Paris, France, he stated that "[e]very year the problems are getting worse. We are at the limits. If I may use a strong word I would say that we are at the limits of suicide" (Pullella, 2015). As society becomes increasingly diverse, how is this impacting religious institutions and how are those institutions responding?

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https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=949

10.1 Religion as a Social Institution

From the Latin *religio* (respect for what is sacred) and *religare* (to bind, in the sense of an obligation), the term religion describes various systems of belief and practice concerning what people determine to be sacred or spiritual (Durkheim, 1915/1964; Fasching and deChant, 2001). Throughout history, and in societies across the world, leaders have used religious narratives, symbols, and traditions in an attempt to give more meaning to life and to understand the universe. Some form of religion is found in every known culture, and it is usually practiced in a public way by a group. The practice of religion can include feasts and festivals, God or

gods, marriage and funeral services, music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, and other aspects of culture.

10.1.1 Defining Religion

***Figure 10.4**. Santo Daime is a syncretic religion founded in Brazil in the 1930s that draws on elements of Catholicism, spiritualism, and Indigenous animism. The entheogenic brew Ayahuasca (or "Daime"), shown here in bottles, is used in religious rituals that often last many hours. (Daime Encontro by Aiatee under a CC-BY-SA 3.0 Unported License.)*

There are three different ways of defining religion in sociology — substantial definitions, functional definitions, and family resemblance definitions — each of which has consequences for what counts as a religion, and each of which has limitations and

strengths in its explanatory power (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014). The problem of defining religion is not without real consequences, not least for questions of whether specific groups can obtain legal recognition as religions. In Canada there are clear benefits to being officially defined as a religion in terms of taxes, liberties, and protections from persecution. Guarantees of religious freedom under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms stem from whether practices or groups are regarded as legitimately religious or not. What definitions of religion do we use to decide these questions?

For example, the Céu do Montréal was established in 2000 as a chapter of the Brasilian *Santo Daime* church (Tupper, 2011). One of the sacraments specified in church doctrine and used in ceremonial rituals is ayahuasca, a psychedelic or entheogenic "tea" that induces visions when ingested. It has to be imported from the Amazon where its ingredients are found. But because it contains N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) and harmala alkaloids, it is a controlled substance under Canadian law. Importing and distributing it constitute trafficking and are subject to criminal charges. Nevertheless because of ayahuasca's role as a sacrament in the church's religious practice, Céu do Montréal was able to apply to the Office of Controlled Substances of Health Canada for a legal, Section 56 exemption to permit its lawful ceremonial use. Other *neo-Vegetalismo* groups who use ayahuasca in traditional Amazonian healing ceremonies in Canada, but do not have affiliations with a formal church-like organization, are not recognized as official religions and, therefore, their use of ayahuasca remains criminalized and underground.

The problem of any definition of religion is to provide a statement that is at once narrow enough in scope to distinguish religion from other types of social activity, while taking into account the wide variety of practices that are recognizably religious in any common sense notion of the term. **Substantial definitions** attempt to delineate the crucial characteristics that define what a religion is and is not. For example, Sir Edward Tylor argued that "a minimum definition of Religion [is] the belief in spiritual beings" (Tylor, 1871,

cited in Stark, 1999), or as Sir James Frazer elaborated, "religion consists of two elements… a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or appease them" (Frazer, 1922, cited in Stark, *ibid.*). These definitions are strong in that they identify the key characteristic — belief in the supernatural — that distinguishes religion from other types of potentially similar social practice like politics or art. They are also easily and simply applied across societies, no matter how exotic or different the societies are. However, the problem with substantial definitions is that they tend to be *too* narrow. In the case of Tylor's and Frazer's definitions, emphasis on belief in the supernatural excludes some forms of religion like Theravadan Buddhism, Confucianism, or neo-paganism that do not recognize higher, spiritual beings, while also suggesting that religions are primarily about systems of *beliefs*, (i.e., a *cognitive* dimension of religion that ignores the emotive, ritual, or habitual dimensions that are often more significant for understanding actual religious practice).

On the other hand, **functional definitions** define religion by what it does or how it functions in society. For example, Milton Yinger's definition is: "Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group struggles with the ultimate problems of human life" (Yinger, 1970, cited in Dawson and Thiessen, 2014). A more elaborate functional definition is that of Mark Taylor (2007): religion is "an emergent, complex, adaptive network of symbols, myths, and rituals that, on the one hand, figure schemata of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that lend life meaning and purpose and, on the other, disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure." These definitions are strong in that they can capture the many forms that these religious problematics or dynamics can take — encompassing both Christianity and Theravadan Buddhism for example — but they also tend to be *too* inclusive, making it difficult to distinguish religion from non-religion. Is religion for example the only means by which social groups struggle with the ultimate problems of human life?

The third type of definition is the **family resemblance** model

in which religion is defined on the basis of a series of commonly shared attributes (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014). The family resemblance definition is based on the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's ordinary language definition of games (Wittgenstein, 1958). Games, like religions, *resemble* one another — we recognize them as belonging to a common category — and yet it is very difficult to decide precisely and logically what the rule is that subsumes tiddly winks, solitaire, Dungeons and Dragons, and ice hockey under the category "games." Therefore the family resemblance model defines a complex "thing" like religion by listing a cluster of related attributes that are distinctive and shared in common by different versions of that thing, while noting that not every version of the thing will have all of the attributes. The idea is that a family – even a real family – will hold a number of, say, physiological traits in common, which can be used to distinguish them from other families, even though each family member is unique and any particular family member might not have all them. You can still tell that the member belongs to the family and not to another because of the traits he or she shares.

It is also possible to define religion in terms of a cluster of attributes based on family resemblance. This cluster includes four attributes: particular types of belief, ritual, experience, and social form. This type of definition has the capacity to capture aspects of both the substantive and functional definitions. It can be based on common sense notions of what religion is and is not, without the drawback of being overly exclusive. While the concept, "religion," itself becomes somewhat hazy in this definition, it does permit the sociologist to examine and compare religion based on these four dimensions while remaining confident that he or she is dealing with the same phenomenon.

10.1.2 The Four Dimensions of Religion

The incredible amount of variation between different religions makes it challenging to decide upon a concrete definition of religion that applies to all of them. In order to facilitate the sociological study of religion it is helpful to turn our attention to four dimensions that seem to be present, in varying forms and intensities, in all types of religion: belief, ritual, spiritual experience, and unique social forms of community (Dawson & Thiessen, 2014).

The first dimension is one that comes to mind for most Canadians when they think of religion, some systematic form of beliefs. Religious **beliefs** are a generalized system of ideas and values that shape how members of a religious group come to understand the world around them (see Table 15.1 and 15.2 below). They define the *cognitive* aspect of religion. These beliefs are taught to followers by religious authorities, such as priests, imams, or shamen, through formal creeds and doctrines as well as more informal lessons learned through stories, songs, and myths. A **creed** outlines the basic principles and beliefs of a religion, such as The Nicene creed in Christianity ("I believe in the father, the son and the holy ghost…"), which is used in ceremonies as a formal statement of belief (Knowles, 2005).

Table 10.1. One way scholars have categorized religions is by classifying what or who they hold to be divine.

Religious Classification	What/Who Is Divine	Example
Polytheism	Multiple gods	Hinduism, Ancient Greeks and Romans
Monotheism	Single god	Judaism, Islam, Christianity
Atheism	No deities	Atheism, Buddhism, Taoism
Animism	Nonhuman beings (animals, plants, natural world)	Indigenous nature worship, Shinto

Belief systems provide people with certain ways of thinking and knowing that help them cope with ultimate questions that cannot be explained in any other way. One example is Weber's (1915) concept of **theodicy** — an explanation of why, if a higher power does exist, good and innocent people experience misfortune and suffering. Weber argues that the problem of theodicy explains the prevalence of religion in our society. In the absence of other plausible explanations of the contradictory nature of existence, religious theodicies construct the world as meaningful. He gives several examples of theodicies — including karma, where the present actions and thoughts of a person have a direct influence on their future lives, and predestination, the idea that all events are an outcome of God's predetermined will.

Figure 10.5*. Prayer is a ritualistic practice or invocation common to many religions in which a person seeks to attune themselves with a higher order. One of the five pillars of Islam requires Salat, or five daily prayers recited while facing the Kaaba in Mecca. (May the Almighty grants our prayers by Shaeekh Shuvro under a CC-BY-SA 2.0 License.)*

The second dimension, ritual, functions to anchor religious beliefs.

Rituals are the repeated physical gestures or activities, such as prayers and mantras, used to reinforce religious teachings, elicit spiritual feelings, and connect worshippers with a higher power. They reinforce the division between the sacred and the profane by defining the intricate set of processes and attitudes with which the sacred dimension of life can be approached.

A common type of ritual is a **rite of passage**, which marks a person's transition from one stage of life to another. Examples of rites of passage common in contemporary Canadian culture include baptisms, Bar Mitzvahs, and weddings. They sacralize the process of identity transformation. When these rites are religious in nature, they often also mark the spiritual dangers of transformation. The Sun Dance rituals of many Native American tribes are rites of renewal which can also act as initiation-into-manhood rites for young men. They confer great prestige onto the pledgers who go through the ordeal, but there is also the possibility of failure. The sun dances last for several days, during which young men fast and dance around a pole to which they are connected by rawhide strips passed through the skin of the chest (Hoebel, 1978). During their weakened state, the pledgers are neither the person they were, nor yet the person they are becoming. Friends and family members gather in the camp to offer prayers of support and protection during this period of vulnerable "liminality." Overall, rituals like these function to bring a group of people (although not necessarily just religious groups) together to create a common, elevated experience that increases social cohesion and solidarity.

From a psychological perspective, rituals play an important role in providing practitioners with access to spiritual "powers" of various sorts. In particular, they can access powers that both relieve or induce anxieties within a group depending on the circumstances. In relieving anxieties, religious rituals are often present at times when people face uncertainty or chance. In this sense they provide a basis of psychological stability. A famous example of this is Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea (1948). When fishing in the sheltered coves of the islands very little ritual was involved.

It was not until fishermen decided to venture into the much more dangerous open ocean in search of bigger and riskier catches that a rigorous set of religious rituals were invoked, which worked to subdue the fears of not only the fisherman but the rest of the villagers.

In contrast, rituals can also be used to create anxieties that keep people in line with established norms. In the case of **taboos**, the designation of certain objects or acts as prohibited or sacred creates an aura of fear or anxiety around them. The observance of rituals is used to either prevent the transgression of taboos or to return society to normal after taboos have been transgressed. For example, early hunting societies observed a variety of rituals in their hunting practices in order to return the soul of the animal to its supernatural "owner." Failure to observe these rituals was a transgression that threatened to unbalance the cosmological order and impact the success of future hunts. This failure could only be resolved through further specific rituals (Smith, 1982). In this example, sociologists would note that the taboo acts as a form of ritualized social control that encourages people to act in ways that benefit the wider society, such as the prevention of overhunting.

A third common dimension of various religions is the promise of access to some form of unique **spiritual experience** or feeling of immediate connection with a higher power. The pursuit of these indescribable experiences explains one set of motives behind the continued prevalence of religion in Canada and around the world. From this point of view, religion is not so much about *thinking* a certain way (i.e., a formal belief system) as about *feeling* a certain way. These experiences can come in several forms: the incredible visions or revelations of the religious founders or prophets (e.g., the experiences of the Buddha, Jesus, or Muhammed), the act of communicating with spirits through the altered states of consciousness used by tribal shamen, or the unique experiences of expanded consciousness accessed by individuals through prayer or meditation.

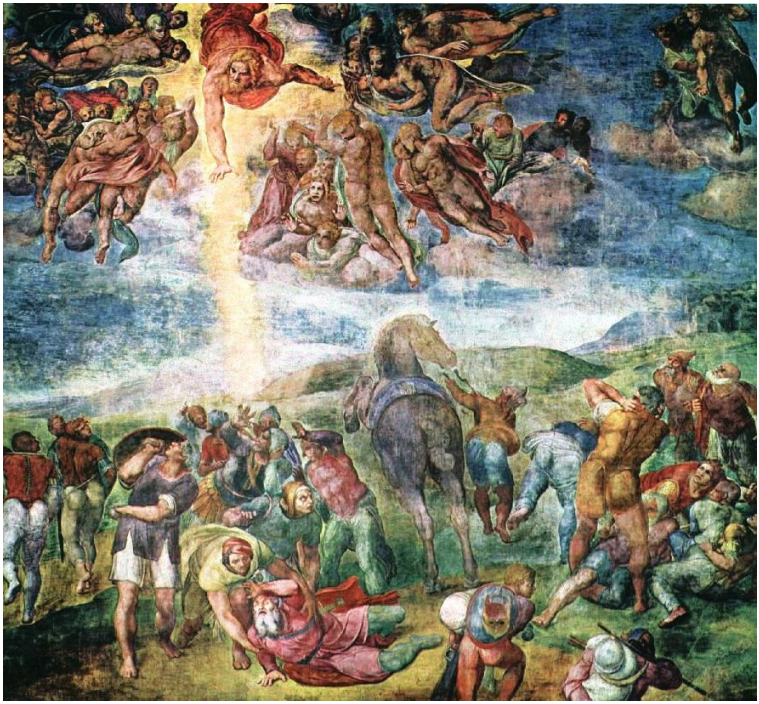

***Figure 10.6**. Michelangelo's "Conversion of Saul" (1542) depicts the overpowering nature of the transformative experience, or mysterium tremendum, that lies at the core of religion. (Conversion of Saint Paul by Michelangelo is in the Public Domain.)*

While being exposed to a higher power can be awe inspiring, it can also be intensely overwhelming for those experiencing it. These experiences reveal a form of knowledge that is instantly transformative. The historical example of Saul of Tarsus (later renamed St. Paul the Apostle) in the Christian New Testament is an example. Saul was a Pharisee heavily involved in the persecution of Christians. While on the road to Damascus Jesus appeared to him in a life-changing vision.

> And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

> And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
> And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.
> And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.
> And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.
> And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.
> And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink (Acts 9:1-22).

The experience of divine revelation overwhelmed Saul, blinded him for three days, and prompted his immediate conversion to Christianity. As a result he lived out his life spreading Christianity through the Roman Empire.

While specific religious experiences of transformation like Saul's are often the source or goal of religious practice, established religions vary in how they relate to them. Are these types of experiences open to all members or just those spiritual elites like prophets, shamen, saints, monks, or nuns who hold a certain status? Are practitioners encouraged to seek these experiences or are the experiences suppressed? Is it a specific cultivated experience that is sought through disciplined practice, as in Zen Buddhism, or a more spontaneous experience of divine inspiration, like the experience of speaking in tongues in Evangelical congregations? Do they occur quite often or are they more rare/singular? Each religion has their own answers to these questions.

Finally, the forth common dimension of religion is the formation of specific forms of social organization or **community**. Durkheim (1915/1964) emphasized that religious beliefs and practices "unite

in one single community called a Church, all those who adhere to them," arguing that one of the key social functions of religion is to bring people together in a unified moral community. Dawson and Thiessen (2014) elaborate on this social dimension shared by all religions. First, the beliefs of a religion gain their credibility through being shared and agreed upon by a group. It is easier to believe if others around you (who you respect) believe as well. Second, religion provides an authority that deals specifically with social or moral issues such as determining the best way to live life. It provides a basis for ethics and proper behaviours, which establish the normative basis of the community. Even as many Canadians move away from traditional forms of religion, many still draw their values and ideals from some form of shared beliefs that are religious in origin (e.g., "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"). Third, religion also helps to shape different aspects of social life, by acting as a form of social control, and supporting the formation of self-control, that is vital to many aspects of a functional society. Fourth, although it may be on the decline in Canada, places of religious worship function as social hubs within communities, providing a source of entertainment, socialization, and support.

By looking at religions in terms of these four dimensions — belief, ritual, experience, and community — sociologists can identify the important characteristics they share while taking into consideration and allowing for the great diversity of the world religions.

Table 10.2. The Religions of the World.

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Judaism Symbol: The star of David	Judaism began in ancient Israel about 4,000 years ago. The prophet Abraham was the first to declare that there was to be only one true God. Moses, centuries later, then led the Jewish people away from slavery in Egypt, which was a defining moment for Judaism. Moses is credited with writing the Torah, the sacred Jewish texts, which consists of the five books of Moses.	Followers of Judaism are **monotheistic**, believing that there is only one true God. Israel is the sacred land of the Jewish people, and it is seen as gift to them — the children of Israel — from God. According to the Torah, Jewish believers must live a life of obedience to God because life itself is a gift granted by God to his disciples (Sanders, 2009). Followers of Judaism live in accordance to the ten commandments revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. These commandments outline the instructions for how to live life according to God.	Judaism has many rituals and practices that followers of the faith carry out. Jewish people have strict dietary laws that originate in the Torah, called Kosher laws. The goal of these laws is not a concern for health, but for holiness. Examples of foods that are prohibited include, pig, hare, camel, and ostrich meat, and crustacean and molluscan seafood. Additionally, certain food groups are banned from being consumed when combined, for example, meat and dairy together (Tieman & Hassan, 2015). Other examples of Jewish rituals are the practices of circumcision and Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. These rites of passage for young boys (bar) and young

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
			girls (bat) mark the transition into manhood and womanhood. During these celebrations, the coming of age process is celebrated. Jewish followers also carry out multiple prayers each day, reaffirming and demonstrating their reciprocal love with God.

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Christianity Symbol: The Cross	Christianity began in approximately 35 CE — i.e., the date of the crucifixion — in the area of the Middle East that is now known as Israel. Christianity began with recognition of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth (Dunn, 2003). A poor Jewish man, Jesus was unsatisfied with Judaism and took it upon himself to seek a stronger connection to the word of God defined by the prophets. Thus, Christianity initially developed as a sect of Judaism. It developed into a distinct religion as Jesus developed a stronger following of those who believed that he was the son of God. The crucifixion of Jesus was the first of many tests of faith of Christians	At the core, to be Christian is to believe in the trinity of father, son, and holy spirit as one God: the God of love. Out of love for humanity, God allowed his only son to be sacrificed in the crucifixion to expiate their sins. Christians are admonished to love God, and to love their neighbours and enemies "as themselves." They believe in God's love for all things, have faith that God is watching over them at all times and that Jesus, the son of God, will return when the world is ready. Jesus is the exemplar of the religion, demonstrating the way in which to be a proper Christian. In the Christian faith, the **theodicy**, or the way that Christianity explains why God allows bad things happen to good people, is shown through faith in Jesus. If believers follow in Jesus' footsteps, they will have access to heaven. Unfortunate occurrences are acts of God that test the faith of his followers. Therefore, by maintaining faith in God's love, Christians are able to carry on with their lives when confronted with tragedy, injustice and	There are many rituals and practices that are central to Christianity, known as the sacraments. For example, the sacrament of baptism involves the literal washing of the person with water to represent the cleansing of their sins. Today, the ritual of baptism has become less common, however, historically the process of baptism was considered an integral rite in order to christen the individual and to wipe away their ancestral or original sin (Hanegraaff, 2009). Other sacraments include the Eucharist (or communion), confirmation, penance, anointing the sick, marriage, and Holy Orders (or ordination). However, not all sects of Christianity follow these. One of the core qualities and

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	(Guy, 2004). A division emerged within Christianity between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism with the division of the Roman Empire into East and West. A second division occurred during the Protestant Reformation when Protestant sects emerged to challenge the authority of the Catholic church and Papacy to be intermediaries between God and Christian believers.	suffering	practices of Christianity is caring for the poor and disadvantaged. Jesus, a poor man himself, fed and nurtured the poor, demonstrating care for all, and is thus seen to be the exemplar of morality (Dunn, 2003). Christian churches are often institutions that demonstrate how to follow Jesus, running charities and food banks, and housing the homeless and the sick.

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Islam Symbol: Crescent and the Star	Originating in Saudi Arabia, Islam is a monotheistic religion that developed in approximately 600 CE. During this time, the society of **Mecca** was in turmoil. Muhammad, God's messenger, received the verses of the Quran directly from the Angel Gabriel during a period of isolated prayer on Mt. Hira. He developed a following of people who eventually united Arabia into a single state and faith through military struggle against polytheistic pagans. Followers of the Islamic faith are referred to as Muslims. Today, a division exists with Islam originating from disagreement regarding Muhammad's legitimate successor. These two	Central to Islam is the belief that the God, Allah, is the only true God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger, otherwise known as the Prophet. God also demands that Muslims be fearful and subservient to him as He is the master, and the maker of law (Ushama, 2014). In Islamic faith, the Quran is the sacred text that Muslims believe is the direct word of God, dictated by the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad (Ushama, 2014).	Islam outlines five pillars that must be upheld by Islamic followers if they are to be true Muslims. 1) Daily recitation of the creed (Shahadah) which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is God's messenger; 2) Prayer five times daily; 3) Providing financial aid to support poor Muslims and to promote the practice of Islam; 4) Participation in the month long fast during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar; 5) Completion of a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life ("Pillars of Islam," 2008).

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	groups are known as Sunni's and Shia's, the former making up the majority of Muslims.		

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Hinduism Symbol: Om or Aum	Hinduism originated in India and Nepal, however the exact origin of this widespread religion is highly contested. There is no known founder, differing strongly from the other religions discussed here, which have strong origin stories of the individuals that first posited the specific way of religious life (Flood, 1996).	The beliefs characteristic of Hinduism are a belief in reincarnation, and a belief that all actions have direct effects, referred to as Karma (Flood, 1996). In contrast with other world religions, Hinduism is not as strongly defined by what followers believe in but instead by what they do. The Dharma is what outlines a Hindu's duty in life, identifying individuals with a place within the dharmic social stratification system, or the caste system. This classification greatly dictates what a Hindu can and cannot do. Hindu followers believe in one God that is represented by a multitude of sacred forms known as **deities** (Flood, 1996). In Hindu religion, in death, only the body dies while the soul lives on. Individuals are reincarnated, surviving death to be reborn in a new form. This new form is believed to be dependent on the way in which the individual lived their life, with the proper way being identified as their acting in accordance to the duties of their caste position (Flood, 1996).	In the religion of Hinduism, practice is more important than belief. One ritualistic practice that is carried out by Hindu followers is the act of making offerings of incense to the deities. This act of offering is seen as a "mediation" to open to the lines of communication between the sacred and the profane, or the deity and the individual. This correspondence is of great significance to Hindu followers (Flood, 1996). Another widespread ritual practice is yoga, which is a practice of holding postures while focusing on one's breath. Yoga is used to silence the mind, allowing it to reflect the divine world. This practice brings the believer closer to unification with the divine.

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Buddhism Symbol: The Dharma Wheel (the eight spokes of this wheel represent the eightfold path).	Buddhism refers to the teachings of Guatama Buddha. It originated in India in approximately 600 BCE. Buddha, originally a follower of the Hindu faith, experienced enlightenment, or Bohdi, while sitting under a tree. It was in this moment that Buddha was awakened to the truth of the world, known as the Dharma. Buddha, an ordinary man, taught his followers how to follow the path to Enlightenment. Thus Buddhism does not believe in a divine realm or God as a supernatural being, but instead follows the wisdom of the founder (Rinpoche, 2001).	Buddhists are guided through life by the Dharma or four noble truths. 1) The truth that life is impermanent and therefore generates suffering such as sickness or misfortune; 2) The truth that the origin of suffering is due to the existence of desire or craving; 3) The truth that there is a way to bring this suffering to a halt and achieve release from the cycle of suffering and rebirth; 4) The truth of following the eight-fold path as a way to end this suffering (Tsering, 2005). This path consists of the 'right' view to carry out one's life. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and that one will continue to be reborn, requiring them to continue the study of and dedication to the four noble truths and the eightfold path until Enlightenment is achieved. Only then will the cycle stop. Therefore, the end to suffering is only reached through the cessation of the craving or desire that drives the cycle of rebirth (Tsering, 2005).	The noble eight-fold path includes eight prescriptions: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These outline the "middle path" between the extremes of sensualism and acseticism, which gives rise to true knowledge, peace, and Enlightenment (Tsersing, 2005). A key ritual practice of Buddhism is meditation. This practice is used by followers to learn detachment from desire and gain insight into the inner workings of their mind in order to come to greater understandings of the truth of the world. In the Buddha's example, meditation on breath or on chanted mantras, which are often key passages of the

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
			Buddha's sutras (teachings), is a key practice to reach the place of Enlightenment or awakening.

10.1.3 Types of Religious Organization

In every society there are different organizational forms that develop for the practice of religion. Sociologists are interested in understanding how these different types of organization affect spiritual beliefs and practices. They can be categorized according to their size and influence into churches (ecclesia or denomination), sects, and cults. This allows sociologists to examine the different types of relationships religious organization has with the dominant religions in their societies and with society itself.

A **church** is a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society. Two types of church organizations exist. The first is the **ecclesia**, a church that has formal ties with the state. Like the Anglican Church of England, an ecclesia has most or all of a state's citizens as its members. As such, the ecclesia forms the national or state religion. People ordinarily do not join an ecclesia, instead they automatically become members when they are born. Several ecclesiae exist in the world today, including Salifi Islam in Saudi Arabia, the Catholic Church in Spain, the Lutheran Church in Sweden, and, as noted above, the Anglican Church in England.

In an ecclesiastic society there may be little separation of church and state, because the ecclesia and the state are so intertwined. Many modern states deduct tithes automatically from citizen's salaries on behalf of the state church. In some ecclesiastic societies,

such as those in the Middle East, religious leaders rule the state as **theocracies** — systems of government in which ecclesiastical authorities rule on behalf of a divine authority — while in others, such as Sweden and England, they have little or no direct influence. In general, the close ties that ecclesiae have to the state help ensure they will support state policies and practices. For this reason, ecclesiae often help the state solidify its control over the populace.

The second type of church organization is the **denomination,** a religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society but is not a formal part of the state. In modern religiously pluralistic nations, several denominations coexist. In Canada, for example, the United Church, Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Seventh-day Adventists are all Christian denominations. None of these denominations claim to be Canada's national or official church, but exist instead under the formal and informal historical conditions of separation between church and state.

So historically, in Canada, denominationalism developed formally (as a result of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which granted Roman Catholics the freedom to practice their religion) and informally (as a result of the immigration of people with different faiths during the expansion of settlement of Canada in the 19th and early 20th centuries). Under the model of denominationalism, many different religious organizations compete for people's allegiances, creating a kind of marketplace for religion. In the United States, this is a formal outcome of the Constitutional 1st Amendment protections ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"). In Canada, "freedom of religion" was not constitutionally protected until the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

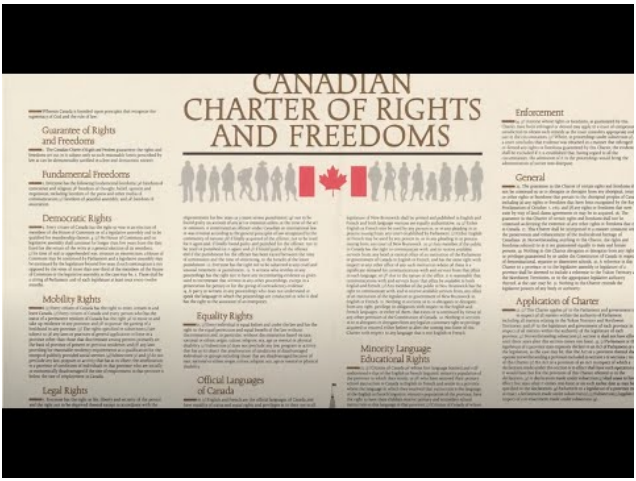

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Figure 10.7. *A 62-foot-tall Jesus sculpture — "King Of Kings" — at the Solid Rock megachurch north of Cincinnati, Ohio. (Solid Rock megachurch by Joe Shlabotnik via Wikimedia Commons)*

A relatively recent development in religious denominationalism is the rise of the so-called *megachurch* in the United States, a church at which more than 2,000 people worship every weekend on the average (Priest, Wilson, & Johnson, 2010; Warf & Winsberg, 2010). These are both denominational and non-denominational, (meaning not officially aligned with any specific established religious denomination). About one-third are nondenominational, and one-fifth are Southern Baptist, with the remainder primarily of other Protestant denominations. Several dozen have at least 10,000 worshippers and the largest U.S. mega church, in Houston, has more than 35,000 worshippers, nicknamed a "gigachurch." There are more than 1,300 mega churches in the United States — a steep increase from the 50 that existed in 1970 — and their total membership exceeds 4 million.

Compared to traditional, smaller churches, mega churches are more concerned with meeting their members' non-spiritual,

practical needs in addition to helping them achieve religious fulfillment. They provide a "one-stop shopping" model of religion. Some even conduct market surveys to determine these needs and how best to address them. As might be expected, their buildings are huge by any standard, and they often feature bookstores, food courts, and sports and recreation facilities. They also provide day care, psychological counseling, and youth outreach programs. Their services often feature electronic music and light shows. Despite their popularity, they have been criticized for being so big that members are unable to develop close bonds with each other and with members of the clergy that are characteristic of smaller houses of worship. On the other hand, supporters say that mega churches bring many people into religious worship who would otherwise not be involved.

A **sect** is a small religious body that forms after a group breaks away from a larger religious group, like a church or denomination. Dissidents believe that the parent organization does not practice or believe in the true religion as it was originally conceived (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). Sects are relatively small religious organizations that are not closely integrated into the larger society. They often conflict with at least some of its norms and values. The Hutterites are perhaps the most well-known example of a contemporary sect in Canada; an Anabaptist group — literally "one who baptizes again" — that broke away from mainstream Christianity in the 16th century. Their migration from Tyrol, Austria, due to persecution eventually lead to their immigration to the Dakotas in the 19th century and then to the Canadian prairies, as conscientious objectors following WWI.

Figure 10.8. *A Hutterite girl holding her baby sister in Southern Alberta, 1950s. (Hutterite girl holding her baby sister (3380762768) by Galt Museum & Archives under the Flickr's Commons ToU.)*

Typically, a sect breaks away from a larger denomination in an effort to restore what members of the sect regard as the original views of the religion. Because sects are relatively small, they usually lack the bureaucracy of denominations and ecclesiae, and often also lack clergy who have received official training. Their worship services can be intensely emotional experiences, often more so than those typical of many denominations, where worship tends to be more formal and restrained. Members of many sects typically proselytize and try to recruit new members into the sect. If a sect succeeds in attracting many new members, it gradually grows, becomes more bureaucratic, and, ironically, eventually evolves into a denomination. Many of today's Protestant denominations began as

sects, as did the Hutterites, Mennonites, Quakers, Doukhobors, Mormons, and other groups.

A **cult** or **New Religious Movement** is a small religious organization that is at great odds with the norms and values of the larger society. Cults are similar to sects but differ in at least three respects. First, they generally have not broken away from a larger denomination and instead originate outside the mainstream religious tradition. Second, they are often secretive and do not proselytize as much. Third, they are at least somewhat more likely than sects to rely on charismatic leadership based on the extraordinary personal qualities of the cult's leader.

Although the term "cult" raises negative images of crazy, violent, small groups of people, it is important to keep in mind that major world religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, and denominations such as the Mormons all began as cults. Cults, more than other religious organizations, have been subject to contemporary moral panics about brainwashing, sexual deviance, and strange esoteric beliefs. However, research challenges several popular beliefs about cults, including the ideas that they brainwash people into joining them and that their members are mentally ill. In a study of the Unification Church (Moonies), Eileen Barker (1984) found no more signs of mental illness among people who joined the Moonies than in those who did not. She also found no evidence that people who joined the Moonies had been brainwashed into doing so.

Another source of moral panic about cults is that they are violent. In fact, most are not violent. Nevertheless, some cults have committed violence in the recent past. In 1995 the Aim Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) cult in Japan killed 10 people and injured thousands more when it released bombs of deadly nerve gas in several Tokyo subway lines (Strasser & Post, 1995). Two years earlier, the Branch Davidian cult engaged in an armed standoff with federal agents in Waco, Texas. When the agents attacked its compound, a fire broke out and killed 80 members of the cult, including 19 children; the origin of the fire remains unknown (Tabor & Gallagher, 1995).

Figure 10.9. *The Reverend Jim Jones of the People's Temple: "We didn't commit suicide; we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world."* (*Jim Jones in front of the International Hotel by Nancy Wong under a CC-BY-SA 3.0 Unported License.*)

A few cults have also committed mass suicide. More than three dozen members of the Heaven's Gate cult killed themselves in California, in March 1997, in an effort to communicate with aliens from outer space (Hoffman & Burke, 1997). Some two decades earlier, in 1978, more than 900 members of the People's Temple cult killed themselves in Guyana under orders from the cult's leader, the Reverend Jim Jones (Stoen, 1997). Similarly, in Canada, on the morning of October 4th, 1994, a blaze engulfed a complex of luxury condominiums in the resort town of Morin-Heights, Quebec. Firefighters found the bodies of a Swiss couple, Gerry and Collette Genoud, in its ruins. At first it was thought that the fire was accidental, but then news arrived from Switzerland of another odd set of fires at homes owed by the same men who owned the Quebec condominiums. All the fires had been set with improvised incendiary devices, which made the police realize they were dealing with a rare incidence of mass murder suicide involving members of an esoteric religious group known as the Solar Temple. From the

recorded and written messages left behind by the group, it is clear that the leaders felt it was time to effect what they called a transit to another reality associated with Sirius.

It is important to note that cults or new religious movements are very diverse. They offer spiritual options for people seeking purpose in the modern context of state secularism and religious pluralism. Being intense about one's religious views often breaks the social norms of largely secular societies, leading to misunderstandings and suspicions. Members of new religions run the risk of being stigmatized and even prosecuted (Dawson, 2007). Modern societies highly value freedom and individual choice, but not when exercised in a manner that defies expectations of what is normal.

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10.2 The Sociology of Religion: Classical Approaches

While some people think of religion as something individual (because religious beliefs can be highly personal), for sociologists religion is also a social institution. Social scientists recognize that religion exists as an organized and integrated set of beliefs, behaviours, and norms centred on basic social needs and values. Moreover, religion is a cultural universal found in all social groups. For instance, in every culture, funeral rites are practiced in some way, although these customs vary between cultures and within religious affiliations. Despite differences, there are common elements in a ceremony marking a person's death, such as announcement of the death, care of the deceased, disposition, and ceremony or ritual. These universals, and the differences in how societies and individuals experience religion, provide rich material for sociological study. But why does religion exist in the first place?

Where psychological theories of religion focus on the aspects of religion that can be described as products of individual subjective experience — the disposition towards self-transcendence, for example — sociological theories focus on the underlying social mechanisms religion sustains or serves. They tend to suspend questions about whether religious world views are true or not — e.g., does God exist? Is enlightenment achievable through meditation? etc. — and adopt some version of WI Thomas's (1928) *Thomas Theorem:* "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

From the point of view of the classical theorists in sociology, Thomas's theorem was already implicit in the premise that the relationship to religion was a key variable needed to understand the transition from traditional society to modern society. Marx, Durkheim, Weber and other early sociologists lived in a time when the validity of religion had been put into question. Traditional societies had been thoroughly religious societies, whereas modern

society corresponded to the declining presence and influence of religious symbols and institutions. Nationalism and class replaced religion as a source of identity. Religion became increasingly a private, personal matter with the separation of church and state. In traditional societies the religious attitude towards the world had been "real in its consequences" for the conduct of life, for institutional organization, for power relations, and all other aspects of life. However, modern societies seemed inevitably to be on the path towards secularization in which people would no longer define religion as real. The question these sociologist grappled with was whether societies could work without the presence of a common religion.

10.2.1 Karl Marx

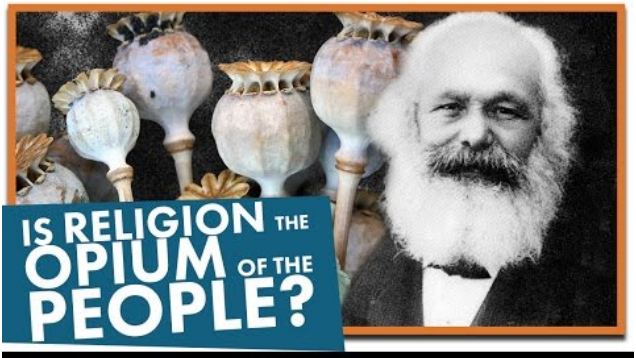
Karl Marx explained religion as a product of human creation: "man makes religion, religion does not make man" (Marx, 1844/1977). In his theory, there was no "supernatural" reality or God. Instead religion was the product of a projection. Humans projected an image of themselves *onto* a supernatural reality, which they then turned around and submitted to in the form of a superhuman God. It is in this context that Marx argued that religion was "the opium of the people" (Marx, 1844/1977). Religious belief was a kind of narcotic fantasy or illusion that prevented people from perceiving their true conditions of existence, firstly as the creators of God, and secondly as beings whose lives were defined by historical, economic and class relations. The suffering and hardship of people, central to religious mythology, were products of people's location within the class system, not of their relationship to God, nor of the state of their souls. Their suffering was real, but their explanation of it was false. Therefore "religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering."

However, Marx was not under the illusion that the mystifications

of religion belief would simply disappear, vanquished by the superior knowledge of science and political-economic analysis. The problem of religion was in fact the central problem facing all critical analysis: the attachment to explanations that *compensate* for real social problems but do not allow them to be addressed. As he said, "the criticism of religion is the supposition [or beginning of] of all criticism" (Marx, 1844/1977). Until humans were able to recognize their power to change their circumstances in "the here and now" rather than "the beyond," they would be prone to religious belief. They would continue to live under conditions of social inequality and grasp at the illusions of religion in order to cope. The critical sociological approach he proposed would be to thoroughly *disillusion* people about the rewards of the afterlife and bring them back to earth where real rewards could be obtained through collective action.

> The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion.... Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chains not so that man may bear chains without any imagination or comfort, but so that he may throw away the chains and pluck living flowers . The criticism of religion disillusions man so that he may think, act, and fashion his own reality as a disillusioned man come to his senses; so that he may revolve around himself as his real sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself (Marx, 1844/1977).

Nevertheless, if Marx's analysis is correct, it is a testament both to the persistence of the social conditions of suffering and to the comforts of holding to illusions, that religion not only continues to exist 170 years after Marx's critique, but in many parts of the world appears to be undergoing a revival and expansion.



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10.2.2 Emile Durkheim

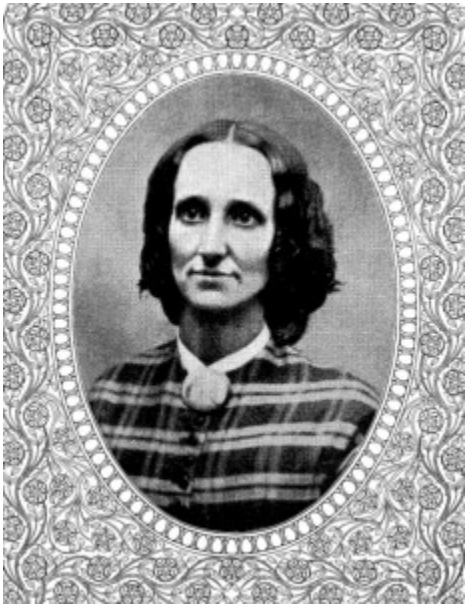

Figure 10.10. *"Divine love always has met and always will meet every human need." Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science Church in 1879, describes divine love in terms similar to Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion (Mary Baker Eddy, c. 1864 is in the Public Domain).*

Durkheim's father was the eighth in a line of father-son rabbis. Although Émile (1859-1917) was the second son, he was chosen to pursue his father's vocation and was given a good religious and secular education. He abandoned the idea of a religious or rabbinical career, however, and became very secular in his outlook. His sociological analysis of religion in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915/1964) was an example of this. In this work he was not interested in the theological questions of God's existence

or purpose, but in developing a very secular, sociological question: Whether God exists or not, how does religion *function socially* in a society?

He argued that beneath the irrationalism and the "barbarous and fantastic rites" of both the most primitive and the most modern religions is their ability to satisfy real social and human needs (Durkheim, 1915/1964). "There are no religions which are false," he said. Religion performs the key function of providing social solidarity in a society. The rituals, the worship of icons, and the belief in supernatural beings "excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states" that bring people together, provide a ritual and symbolic focus, and unify them. This type of analysis became the basis of the functionalist perspective in sociology. He explained the existence and persistence of religion on the basis of the necessary function it performed in unifying society.

Like Marx, therefore, he argued that it was necessary to examine religion as a product of society, rather than as a product of a transcendent or supernatural presence (Durkheim, 1915/1964). Unlike Marx, however, he argued that religion fulfills real needs in each society, namely to reinforce certain mental states, sustain social solidarity, establish basic rules or norms, and concentrate collective energies. These can be seen as the universal social functions of religion that underlie the unique natures of different religious systems all around the world, past and present (Sachs, 2011). He was particularly concerned about the capacity of religion to continue to perform these functions as societies entered the modern era in the 19th and 20th centuries. Durkheim hoped to uncover religion's future in a new world that was breaking away from the traditional social norms that religion had sustained and supported (Durkheim, 1915/1964).

The key defining feature of religion for Durkheim was its ability to distinguish sacred things from profane things. In his last published work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, he defined religion as: "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and

practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1915/1964). **Sacred** objects are things said to have been touched by divine presence. They are set apart through ritual practices and viewed as forbidden to ordinary, everyday contact and use. **Profane** objects on the other hand are items integrated into ordinary everyday living. They have no religious significance. From Durkheim's social scientific point of view, it is the act of setting sacred and profane apart which contributes to their spiritual significance and reverence, rather than anything that actually inheres in them.

This basic dichotomy creates two distinct aspects of life, that of the ordinary and that of the sacred, that exist in mutual exclusion and in opposition to each other. This is the basis of numerous codes of behavior and spiritual practices. Durkheim argues that all religions, in any form and of any culture, share this trait. Therefore, a belief system, whether or not it encourages faith in a supernatural power, is identified as a religion of it outlines this divide and creates ritual actions and a code of conduct of how to interact with and around these sacred objects.

Durkheim examined the social functions of the division of the world into sacred and profane by studying a group of Australian Aboriginals that practiced totemism. He described **totemism** as the most basic and ancient forms of religion, and therefore the core of religious practice itself (Durkheim, 1915/1964). A **totem**, such as an animal or plant, is a sacred "symbol, a material expression of something else" such as a spirit or a god. Totemic societies are divided into clans based on the different totemic creatures each clan revered. In line with his argument that religious practice needs to be understood in sociological terms rather than supernatural terms, he noted that totemism existed to serve some very specific social functions. For example, the sanctity of the objects venerated as totems infuse the clan with a sense of social solidarity because they bring people together and focus their attention on the shared practice of ritual worship. They function to divide the sacred from the profane thereby establishing a ritually reinforced structure of

social rules and norms, they enforce the social cohesion of the clans through the shared belief in a transcendent power, and they protect members of the society from each other since they all become sacred as participants in the religion.

In essence, totemism, like any religion, is merely a product of the members of a society projecting themselves and the real forces of society onto 'sacred' objects and powers. In Durkheim's terms, all religious belief and ritual function in the same way. They create a collective consciousness and a focus for collective effervescence in society. **Collective consciousness** is the shared set of values, thoughts, and ideas that come into existence when the combined knowledge of a society manifests itself through a shared religious framework (Mellor & Shilling, 1996). **Collective effervescence**, on the other hand, is the elevated feeling experienced by individuals when they come together to express beliefs and perform rituals together as a group: the experience of an intense and positive feeling of excitement (Mellor & Shilling, 2011). In a religious context, this feeling is interpreted as a connection with divine presence, as being filled with the spirit of supernatural forces, but Durkheim argues that in reality it is the material force of society itself, which emerges whenever people come together and focus on a single object. As individuals actively engage in communal activities, their belief system gains plausibility and the cycle intensifies. In worshipping the sacred, people worship society itself, finding themselves together as a group, reinforcing their ties to one another and reasserting solidarity of shared beliefs and practices (Mellor & Shilling, 1998).

The fundamental principles that explain the most basic and ancient religions like totemism, also explain the persistence of religion in society as societies grow in scale and complexity. However, in modern societies where other institutions often provide the basic for social solidarity, social norms, collective representations, and collective effervescence, will religious belief and ritual persist?

In his structural-functional analysis of religion, Durkheim

outlined three functions that religion still serves in society, which help to explain its ongoing existence in modern societies. First, religion ensures social cohesion through the creation of a shared consciousness from participation in rituals and belief systems. Second, it formally enforces social norms and expectations of behavior, which serve to ensure predictability and control of human action. Third, religion serves to answer the most universal, 'meaning of life' questions that humans have pondered since the dawn of consciousness. As long as the needs remain unsatisfied by other institutions in modern social systems, religion will exist to fill that void.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLwYA0zgOfo

10.2.3 Max Weber

Figure 10.11. *Here the Christian devil is depicted in a detail of The Last Judgement by Jacob de Backer (circa 1580s) as a composite of goat, ram and pig. (The Last Judgment by Jacob de Backer is in the Public Domain.)*

If Marx's analysis represents the classical sociological formulation of the critical perspective on religion, and Durkheim's the functionalist formulation, Max Weber's analysis represents the classical formulation of the interpretive perspective on religion within sociology. His approach was to determine the *meaning* of religion in the conduct of life for members of society. Three key themes concerning religion emerge from his work: the concept of theodicy, the disenchantment of the world, and the Protestant Ethic.

One of Weber's explanations for the origin and persistence of religion in society concerns its role in providing a meaningful explanation for the unequal "distribution of fortunes among men" (Weber, 1915 (1958)). As described earlier in the module, this is religion's unique ability and authority to provide a **theodicy**: an explanation for why all-powerful Gods allow suffering, misfortune and injustice to occur, even to "good people" who follow the moral and spiritual practices of their religion. Religious theodicies resolve the contradiction between "destiny and merit"(Weber, 1915 (1958)). They give *meaning* to why good or innocent people experience misfortune and suffering. Religion's exist therefore because they (successfully) claim the authority to provide such explanations.

Weber describes three dominant forms of theodicy in world religions: **dualism**, predestination and karma. In dualistic religions like Zoroastrianism, the power of a god is limited by the powers of evil–"the powers of light and truth, purity and goodness coexist and conflict with the powers of darkness and falsehood" (Weber, 1915 (1958))–and therefore suffering is explained as a consequence of the struggle between the dual powers of good and evil, gods and demons, in which evil occasionally wins out. The doctrine of **predestination**, which became very important in Weber's theory of Calvinism and the Protestant Ethic (see below), explains suffering as the outcome of a destiny that a god has pre-assigned to individuals. God's reasoning is invisible to believers and therefore inscrutable. Therefore believers must accept that there is a higher divine reason for their suffering and continue to strive to be good. Finally, the belief in **karma**, central to religions such as Hinduism and

Buddhism, explains suffering as a product of acts one committed in former lives. Individuals must struggle in this life to rectify the evils accumulated from previous lives. Each form of theodicy provides "rationally satisfying answers" to persistent questions about why gods permit suffering and misfortune without undermining the obligation of believers to pursue the religion's values.

Weber's analysis of religion was concerned not only with why religion exists, but with the role it played in social change. In particular, he was interested in the development of the modern worldview which he equated with the widespread processes of *rationalization*: the general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of technical reason, precise calculation, and rational organization. Again, central to his interpretivist framework, *how* people interpreted and saw the world provided the basis for an explanation of the types of social organization they created. In this regard, one of his central questions was to determine why rationalization emerged in the West and not the East. Eastern societies in China, India, and Persia had been in many respects more advanced culturally, scientifically and organizationally than Europe for most of world history, but had not taken the next step towards developing thoroughly modern, rationalized forms of organization and knowledge. The relationship to religion formed a key part of his answer.

One component of rationalization was the process Weber described as the **disenchantment of the world**, which refers to the elimination of a superstitious or magical relationship to nature and life. Weber noted that many societies prevented processes of rationalization from occurring because of religious interdictions and restrictions against certain types of development. He describes, for example, the way Chinese geomancy interfered with the construction of railroads in China because building structures "on certain mountains, forests, rivers, and cemetery hills" threatened to "disturb the rest of the spirits" (Weber, 1966). A contemporary example might be the beliefs concerning the sacredness of human life, which serve to restrict experimenting with human stem cells

or genetic manipulation of the human genome. In modernity, the fundamental orientation to the world becomes increasingly disenchanted in the sense that "mysterious incalculable forces" of a spiritual or sacred nature no longer "come into play" in peoples understanding of it. Rather, "one can, in principle, master all things by calculation." When the world becomes disenchanted, "one need not have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service" (Weber, 1919 (1958)). For Weber, disenchantment was one source for the rapid development and power of Western society, but also a source of irretrievable loss.

A second component of rationalization, particularly as it applies to the rise of capitalism as a highly rationalized *economic* system, was the formation of the **Protestant Ethic**. This will be discussed more fully below. The key point to note here is that Weber makes the argument that a specific ethic or way of life that developed among a few Protestant sects on the basis of religious doctrine or belief, (i.e. a way of interpreting the world and the role of humans within it), became a central material force of social change. The restrictions that religions had imposed on economic activities and that had prevented them from being pursued in a purely rational, calculative manner, were challenged or subverted by the emergence and spread of new, equally religious, forms of belief and practice. However, the irony that Weber noted in the relationship between the Protestant sects and the rise of capitalism, was that while the Protestant's "duty to work hard in one's calling" persisted, the particular beliefs in God that produced this "ethic" were replaced by secular belief systems. Capitalist rationality dispensed with religious belief but remained "haunted by the ghosts of dead religious beliefs" (Weber 1904 (1958)).

Weber is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He noted that in modern industrial societies, business leaders and owners of capital, the higher grades of skilled labour, and the most technically and commercially trained

personnel were overwhelmingly Protestant. He also noted the uneven development of capitalism in Europe, and in particular how capitalism developed first in those areas dominated by Protestant sects. He asked, "Why were the districts of highest economic development at the same time particularly favourable to a revolution in the Church?" (i.e., the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648)) (Weber 1904 (1958)). His answer focused on the development of the **Protestant Ethic—**the duty to "work hard in one's calling"—in particular Protestant sects such as Calvinism, Pietism, and Baptism.

As opposed to the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church in which *poverty* was a virtue and labour simply a means for maintaining the individual and community, the Protestant sects began to see hard, continuous labour as a spiritual end in itself. Hard labour was firstly an ascetic technique of worldly renunciation and a defense against temptations and distractions: the unclean life, sexual temptations, and religious doubts. Secondly, the doctrine of predestination among the Protestant sects believed that God's disposition toward the individual was predetermined and could never be known or influenced by traditional Christian practices like confession, penance, and buying indulgences. However, one's chosen occupation was a "calling" given by God, and the only sign of God's favour or recognition in this world was to receive good fortune in one's calling. Thus material success and the steady accumulation of wealth through personal effort and prudence was seen as a sign of an individual's state of grace. Weber argued that the *ethic*, or way of life, that developed around these beliefs was a key factor in creating the conditions for both the accumulation of capital, as the goal of economic activity, and for the creation of an industrious and disciplined labour force.

In this regard, Weber has often been seen as presenting an interpretivist explanation of the development of capital, as opposed to Marx's historical materialist explanation. It is an element of *cultural belief* that leads to social change rather than the concrete organization and class struggles of the economic structure. It might

be more accurate, however, to see Weber's work building on Marx's analysis of capitalism and to see his Protestant Ethic thesis as part of a broader set of themes concerning the *process of rationalization*: the general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of instrumental reason—rational bureaucratic organization, calculation, and technical reason—and the overcoming of "magical" thinking (which we earlier referred to as the "disenchantment of the world"). As the impediments toward rationalization were removed, organizations and institutions were restructured on the principle of maximum efficiency and specialization, while older, traditional (i.e. inefficient) types of organization were gradually eliminated because they could not compete.

The irony of the Protestant Ethic as one stage in this process is that the rationalization of capitalist business practices and organization of labour eventually dispensed with the religious goals of the ethic. At the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber pessimistically describes the fate of modern humanity as an "iron cage." The iron cage is Weber's metaphor for the condition of modern humanity in a technical, rationally defined, and "efficiently" organized society. Having forgotten the spiritual (and other) goals of life, humanity succumbs to the goals of pure efficiency: an order "now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production" (Weber 1904 (1958)). The modern subject in the iron cage is "only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him [or her] an essentially fixed route of march" (Weber 1922 (1958)).

The video "No Rest For the Wicked: Protestantism and Economy" at https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=39847 is accessible in the LMS, and will highlight some of these

key ideas.

10.3 The Sociology of Religion: Feminist Challenges

***Figure 10.12**. Fertility Goddess from Cypress (3000 BCE). Merlin Stone's When God was a Woman (1976) traces the pre-history of European society back to feminine-centred cultures based on fertility and creator goddesses. It was not until the invasions of the Kurgans from the northeast and Semites from the south in the fifth millennium BCE that hierarchical and patriarchal religions became dominant. (Arte calcolitica, da cipro, divinità fertile, 3000-2500 ac by Dave & Margie Hill under a CC-BY-SA 3.0 Unported License.)*

Feminist theories of religion analyze and critique the ways in which sacred texts and religious practices portray and subordinate—or empower—women, femininity, and female sexuality (Zwissler, 2012). Theorists within this area of study look at religion's contribution to the oppression or empowerment of women within society, as well as provide analyses of the challenges that women face within different religious practices. The crucial insight into religion that forms the basis for feminist research is the *gendered nature* of religion (Erikson, 1992). Women's place and experience within religious traditions differ significantly from men's. Feminists therefore argue that questions about gender are essential for a meaningful analysis and explanation of religion.

In one line of inquiry, feminist theorists of religion have analyzed the representation of women within sacred religious texts, identifying and critiquing the way women are portrayed. For example, the gender of the deity is an issue for women, particularly in the monotheistic Abrahamic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism (Zwissler, 2012). God, within these religious beliefs, is usually understood as male. Mary Daly (1973), a feminist theologian, famously stated, "if God is male, then the male is God." Individuals within these religious practices are socialized to see men and the qualities of masculinity as having greater importance than women and the qualities of femininity, thus perpetuating the rationales and gender ideologies that legitimate women's subordination in society. The question this raises is whether religion is therefore the direct cause of **misogyny**—the aversion or distaste for people of the female sex, including belittling, sexual objectification, sexual violence, and discrimination against women—or whether male-dominated religious practices are the product of broader gendered inequalities and societal norms outside of religion (Zwissler, 2012)?

Figure 10.13. *Feminist theorists focus on gender inequality and promote leadership roles for women in religion. (Clergy sing Happy Birthday to Benedictus XVI by David Bohrer is in the Public Domain.)*

A second line of inquiry focuses on why power relationships within religious institutions are typically gendered (Erikson, 1992). Feminist theorists note that women are frequently prevented from holding positions of power within religious practice. Ministers, imams, rabbis, buddhas, and Brahmin priests are positions within religious hierarchies which have traditionally excluded women. Despite this, cross-culturally women are proportionately more religious than men. Surveys across North America and Europe demonstrate that more women identify as being religious more than men, have deeper levels of religiosity than men, and attend church more regularly than men by a ratio of 3:2 (Dawson & Thiessen, 2014). This can be seen as a paradox within feminist religious studies. In an ideal meritocracy, spiritual elites would be chosen from those with the most spiritual "experience," but this is not the case.

Linda Woodhead's (2007) research seeks to examine the question of why more women than men identify as being religious when religions are typically patriarchal, both in their contents and their institutional hierarchies. Her key insight is that women's position

in patriarchal religion is not monolithic. Women differ in how they "negotiate" their gender status and their religious practice. Placed along two axes (see Figure 15.23) , Woodhead identifies four distinct religious "strategies" women adopt to position themselves within the dominant religious narrative ("mainstream" or "marginal") and with respect to the religious status quo ("confirmatory" or "challenging"):

1. The *consolidating strategy* of women who accept the existing gendered distribution of power within their religion as a means of affirming and consolidating the security and predictability that traditional gender roles provide;

1. The *tactical strategy* of women who take part in and use religion in order to have the intimate interaction and support of other women;

1. The *questing strategy* of women who seek out different forms of religion like New Age spiritualties, meditation or Wikka in order to find fulfilment through an inner spiritual quest (rather than addressing the social power structures of religion directly);

1. The *counter-cultural strategy* of women that reject traditional religion and create religious communities that focus on empowering women (eg. the goddess feminist movement of Starhawk and others).

The challenges faced by women are different within each religion, and therefore the strategies women of faith use to change or work within their respective religion may vary. Woodhead's model emphasizes however that women are not simply manipulated by religious traditions but exercise agency, albeit with different orientations and goals (Woodhead, 2007).

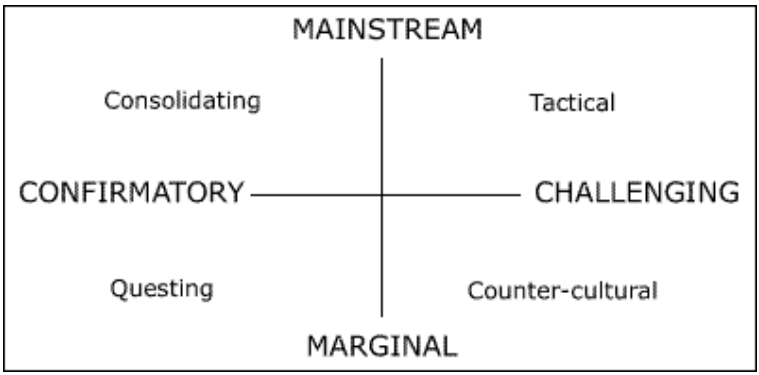

Figure 10.14. *Linda Woodhead's diagram mapping the different strategic positions of women with regard to patriarchal religion (from Woodhead, 2007).*

Being an interdisciplinary perspective, feminism brings a diversity of voices into the discussion, illuminating important issues of inequality, oppression, and power imbalance, all of which are of great importance to the study of sociology. Through analysis of the gender structures within religious practices worldwide, a deeper understanding of how different cultures and traditions function is revealed. The understanding that women frequently do not identify as being oppressed by their religion is an important insight in trying to fully understand the nature of gendered religious practice on a global scale–issues which are explored more fully in the following video.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=949

10.4 Religion and Social Change

Religion, often portrayed as a source of social order and control in society, has also been a major impetus to social change. In early Europe, the translation of sacred texts into everyday, non-scholarly language empowered people to shape their religions. Disagreements between religious groups and instances of religious persecution have led to mass resettlement, war, and even genocide. To some degree, the modern sovereign state system and international law might be seen as products of the conflict between religious beliefs as these were founded in Europe by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Years War. As outlined

below, Canada is no stranger to religion as an agent of social change. Nevertheless debate continues in sociology concerning the nature of religion and social change particularly in three areas: secularization, religious diversity, and new religious movements.

The video "Religion, Law and Politics" at https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=115846 is accessible in the LMS, and will highlight some of these key ideas.

10.3.1 Secularization

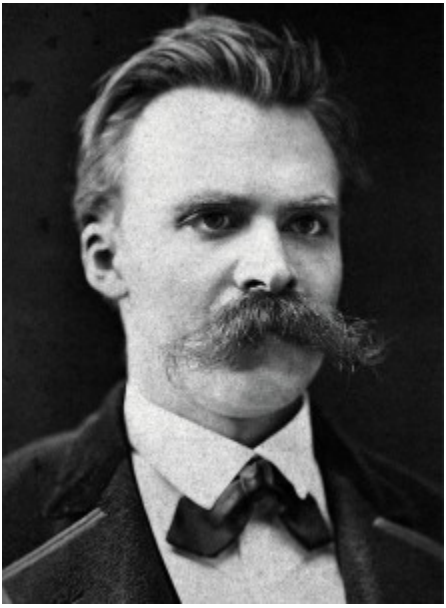

Figure 10.15*. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) parable of the madman in the market is the source of one of the most famous slogans of secularization: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him… There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us — for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto" (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). (Nietzsche187a by Friedrich Hartmann is in the Public Domain.)*

Loek Halman and Erik van Ingen argue that "[f]or centuries, religion was regarded as a more or less obvious pillar of people's moral views," but since the 19th century it steadily lost significance in society while the sources of people's opinions and moral values became more diverse. **Secularization** refers to the decline of

religiosity as a result of the modernization of society. More precisely, secularization "refers to the process by which religion and the sacred gradually have less validity, influence, and significance in society and the lives of individuals" through the impact of modern processes like rationalization, pluralism, and individualism (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014). For example, while in 1957 82% of Canadians were official members of church congregations, only 29% were in 1990 (Bibby, 1993). According to Statistics Canada's 2011 census, 7,850,605 Canadians had no religious affiliation, making them the second largest group after Catholics at 12,810,705. This is a large increase from the 202,025 Canadians who claimed no religious affiliation in the 1971 Statistics Canada census (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Sociologists suggest that it is important to distinguish between three different types of secularization: societal secularization, organizational secularization, and individual secularization. Karel Dobbelaere (2002) defines **societal secularization** as "the shrinking relevance of the values, institutionalized in church religion, for the integration and legitimation of everyday life in modern society." In Quebec until the early 1960s for example, the Catholic Church was the dominant institution in the province, providing health care, education, welfare, municipal boundaries (parishes), records of births and deaths as well as religious services, but with the modernization programme of the LaSalle government during the "Quiet Revolution" the state took over most of these tasks. **Organizational secularization** refers to the "modernization of religion" from within, namely the efforts made by religious organizations themselves to update their beliefs and practices to reflect changes in contemporary life. The move to ordinate female ministers to reflect the growing gender equality in society or the use of commercial marketing techniques to attract congregations are examples. **Individual secularization** is the decline in involvement in churches and denominations or the decline in belief and practice of individual members.

As we saw earlier in the chapter, the equation of secularization

with modernity has been the view of many important sociologists including Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. But in more recent years there has been a growing number of sociologists who question the universality of the process of secularization and propose that contemporary society is going through a period of religious revitalization. Peter Berger (1999) for example reversed the secularization thesis he proposed in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), when he noted that most of the world is as "furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever." A religious resurgence is evident in particular in the growth in Islam around the world as well as in the growth and export of Pentecostalism in and from the United States. Similarly, Fink and Stark (2005) have argued that Americans, at least, actually became more religious as American society modernized. Even in Europe, where church attendance is very low, they suggest that religious practice is stable rather than in long term decline and that people still hold religious beliefs like the belief in God or life after death.

However, Canada, like most of Europe, appears to be an exception to the trend of religious resurgence, meaning there has been less of an emergence of new and revived religious groups, as opposed to the U.S. and the rest of the world. Prior to the 1960s Canada was a more religious nation than the United States, now it is much less religious by any standard measure. Nevertheless, Reginald Bibby's research (2011) on religiosity in Canada describes a situation that is more complicated than the secularization thesis suggests. Rather than a progressive and continuous process of secularization, Bibby argues that there have been three consecutive trends in Canada since the 1960s: secularization, revitalization and polarization. After a period of steady secularization between the 1950s and 1990 (measured by levels of church attendance), Bibby presents evidence of revitalization in the 1990s including small increases in weekly or monthly attendance for different age groups. He also notes the four fold increase of non-Christians (Muslims, Buddhists, Jews) in Canada since the 1950s, the high level of spiritual belief among people who do not attend church, the way that many people retain

connections with churches for special occasions, and surveys that report that many would consider attending regularly if organizational or personal factors could be addressed. Since the 1990s, Bibby describes a third trend of polarization, with the public increasingly divided into opposite poles of the highly religious and the non-religious. However, according to Dawson and Thiessen, this last trend identified by Bibby does not take into account the almost 50% of the population who are in the middle (i.e., neither highly religious nor completely non-religious), nor the fact that longitudinal measures of religious belief and religiosity show the trend to continued decreases among the highly religious and increases to the non-religious (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014).

Overall it can be said that understanding secularization and desecularization is an essential part of the sociological analysis of religion. Knowing the relationship between modernity and religion provides insight into the complex dynamics of the late modern world and allows sociologists to predict what is to come for religion in the future. The question is whether secularization necessarily accompanies modernization or whether there is a cyclical process between secularization and religious revivalism. Are secular or non-secular societies the exceptions to the dominant trend of modern society? The revised thesis that Peter Berger offers is perhaps the most promising solution to the conflicting data: "Modernity does not necessarily produce secularity. It necessarily produces pluralism, by which I mean the coexistence in the same society of different worldviews and value systems" (Berger quoted in Thuswaldner, 2014). In other words, in modern societies there is neither a steady one-way process of secularization nor a religious revitalization, but a growing diversity of belief systems and practices.

10.3.2 Religious Diversity

The practice of religion in Canada is ever changing and has recently become increasingly diverse. **Religious diversity** can be defined as a condition in which a multiplicity of religions and faiths co-exist in a given society (Robinson, 2003). Because of religious diversity, many speculate that Canada is turning into a **Post-Christian society**, in the sense that Christianity has increasingly become just one among many religious beliefs, including the beliefs of a large number of people who claim no religion. For those who report having a Christian heritage, only a minority can articulate the basic elements of Christian doctrine or read the bible on a regular basis. To an ever greater extent, Christianity no longer provides the basic moral foundation for Canadian values and practices. Canada appears to moving towards a much more religiously plural society. This is not without its problems however.

Religious diversity in Canada has accelerated in the last twenty years due to globalization and immigration. Until 1951, Canada was overwhelmingly a Christian nation with about 96 percent of the population a member of either a Protestant denomination (50%) or Catholic (46%) (Statistics Canada, 2001). There were only a handful of members from the other main world religions. Other religions during this time such as Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus only made up a negligible percentage of the population. With the opening up of immigration to non-Europeans in the 1960s, this began to change.

In the 21st century, religion in Canada has become increasingly diverse. Including the various Protestant denominations Statistics Canada surveyed 80 different religious groups in Canada in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Those who identified as Christian had gone down by nearly 22 percent since the 1970's from 88% to 66% or two-thirds of the population. The percentage of other religions like Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Eastern Orthodox

Christianity increased from 4% to 11% of the population (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Religious diversity does not only include the increased number of people who participate in non-Christian religions. Instead, the group that identifies themselves as **religious "nones"** has become increasingly significant in society. A religious none refers to a person who chooses the category "none" on surveys about religious affiliation. They consist of atheists, agnostics, and people who simply say they subscribe to no religion in particular (Statistics Canada, 2011). It was not until the 1980's that the group of religious nones became prevalent. During its first appearance, approximately four percent of the population in Canada identified as religiously unaffiliated. By 2011, that number had increased nearly a quarter, rising to about 24 percent (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Canadians have had varying responses to religious diversity. On an individual level, while many accept religious beliefs other than their own, others do not. Individuals are either open to embracing these differences or intolerant of the varying viewpoints surrounding them. Wuthnow (2005) describes three types of individual response to religious diversity. Firstly there are those who fully embrace the religious practices of others, to the point of creating hybrid beliefs and practices. Christians might practice yoga or Eastern meditation techniques, for example. Secondly, there are those who tolerate other religions or accept the value of other religious beliefs while maintaining religious distinctions intact. Finally, there are those who reject the value of other religious beliefs or feel that other religions are a threat to the integrity of "Christian" society. This can manifest in the range of negative individual responses to Muslim women who wear a hijab or headscarf for example.

On a societal level, there are three main types of social response to religious diversity: exclusion, assimilation and pluralism. **Exclusion** occurs when the majority population does not accept varying or non-traditional beliefs, and therefore believe that other religions should be denied entry into their society. The exclusionary

response tends to happen when a society that identifies with a previously homogeneous faith community is confronted with the spread of religious diversity. Some of the early religious diversity in Canada was a product of faith groups like the Hutterites and Doukhobor's immigrating to Canada after being excluded and persecuted in Russia, Europe and the United States on the basis of their beliefs. On the other hand, the Canadian policy towards Jews was exclusionary until relatively recently. Universities like McGill and the University of Toronto had quota systems that restricted the number of Jewish students until the 1960s. Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany in the 1930s were brutally turned away by Canadian officials. Today issues of *Islamophobia*, "fear, hatred or prejudice against Islam and Muslims," have been prevalent since the threat of *jihadi* terrorism became a widespread concern in Canada (International Civil Liberties Alliance, 2013).

A step beyond exclusion is assimilation. **Assimilation** occurs when people of all faiths are welcomed into the majority culture, but on the condition that they leave their beliefs behind and adopt the majority's faith as their own. An example of assimilation in Canada is the history of Indigenous spiritual practices like the sun dance, spirit dance and sweat lodge ceremonies. Between 1880 and mid-20th century these practices were outlawed and suppressed by both the Canadian state and Church organizations. They were seen as counter to the project of assimilating First Nations people into Christian European society and a settled, agricultural way of life (Waldram, Herring and Young, 2006). In 1885 and 1906, first a pass system and then an outright ban on leaving reserves were imposed on Plains Indian people to prevent them from congregating for Sun Dances, where they sought to honour the Great Spirit and renew their communities. The man who was eventually the deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, Duncan Campbell Scott, wrote that the sun dances "cause waste of time, interfere with the occupations of the Indians, unsettle them for serious work, injure their health [and] encourage them in sloth and idleness… they should not be allowed to dissipate their energies and abandon

themselves to demoralizing amusements" (Scott quoted in Waldram et al., 2006).

Residential schools were a key institution responsible for the undermining of Indigenous culture in Canada. Residential schools were run by the Canadian government alongside the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and United Churches (Blackburn, 2012). These schools were created with the purpose of assimilating Indigenous children into North American culture (Woods, 2013).

In 1920 the government legally mandated that all Indigenous children between the ages of seven and fifteen attend these schools (Blackburn, 2012). They took the children away from their families and communities to remove them from all influence of their Indigenous identities that could inhibit their assimilation. Many families did not want their children to be taken away and would hide them, until it became illegal (Neeganagwedgin, 2014). Under the Indian Act, they were also not allowed lawyers to fight government action, which added greatly to the systemic marginalization of these people. The churches were responsible for daily religious teachings and daily activities, and the government was in charge of the curriculum, funding, and monitoring the schools (Blackburn, 2012).

There were as many as 80 residential schools in Canada by 1931 (Woods, 2013). It was known early on in this system that there were flaws, but they still persisted until the last residential school was abolished in 1996. As we now know, the experience of residential schools for Indigenous children was traumatic and dreadful. Within the walls of these schools, children were exposed to sexual and physical abuse, malnourishment, and disease. They were not provided with adequate clothing or medical care, and the buildings themselves were unsanitary and poorly built.

The Roman Catholic Church created the most residential schools, with the Anglican Church second (Woods, 2013). There has been much debate surrounding the Church's involvement in these atrocious organizations. Former Primate and Archbishop Michael Peers apologized in 1993 for the Anglican Church's part in the

residential schools. Canada's first Indigenous Anglican Bishop Gordon Beardy forgave the Anglican Church in 2001.

By 2001, there were more than 8,500 lawsuits against the Churches and Canadian government for their role in the residential schools (Woods, 2013). Because of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, former students of the residential schools are now eligible for $10,000, on top of $3,000 for each year they attended the schools. A lawsuit filed by former students of the Alberni Indian Residential School was one of the first to get to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the first to deem both the government and church equally responsible.

Apologies are still being made on behalf of the churches involved in the residential schools, but the effects it has had on the Indigenous peoples and their culture are perpetuating today. The Christian churches and mission groups have done good things for societies, but their role in these residential schools was immoral and unjust to the Indigenous people.

The most accommodating response to religious diversity is pluralism. **Pluralism** is the idea that every religious practice is welcome in a society regardless of how divergent its beliefs or social norms are. This response leads to a society in which religious diversity is fully accepted (Berry, 1974). Today pluralism is the official response to religious diversity in Canada and has been institutionalized through the establishment of Multicultural policy and the constitutional protections of religious freedoms. However, some thorny issues remain when the values of different religious groups clash with each other or with the secular laws of the criminal code. The right to follow Sharia law for Muslims, the right to have several wives for Mormons, the right to carry ceremonial daggers to school for Sikhs, the right to refuse to marry homosexual couples for Christian Fundamentalists, are all issues that pit fundamental religious freedoms against a unified sovereign law that applies to all equally. The acceptance of religious diversity in the pluralistic model is not without its problems.

For example, one pluralistic strategy for managing the diversity

of beliefs has been to regard religious practice as a purely private matter. In order to avoid privileging one religious belief system over another in the public sphere, (e.g., in government agencies or public schools), governments have attempted to equally ban all religious expressions in public spaces. From the relatively trivial use of the term "holiday season" to replace "Christmas" in public schools to the more ambitious attempt to implement the Quebec Charter of Values, which would have banned the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols or face coverings for all public personnel in the Province of Quebec, the idea is to solve the problem of religious diversity by "privatizing" religious belief and practice. All religious faiths and practices are equal, included and accommodated as long as they remain private. However, people's religious identities and commitments are often part of their public persona as well as their private and inform their political and social engagement in the public sphere. In the guise of implementing pluralism, the attempt to secularize the public sphere artificially restricts it (Connelly, 1999).

Religious freedom and diversity keeps the religious life of Canadians interesting. The full acceptance of religious differences may take some time, however studies show that Canadians are moving in this direction. The evidence is that as people become more exposed to religious diversity and interact with people of other religions more frequently, they become more accepting of beliefs and practices that diverge from their own (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014).

While veiling continues to be practiced by Muslim women, and is more often associated with Islam than with other religious traditions, the practice of veiling has been integral to all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Christian and Jewish women wear headscarves as a cultural practice or commitment to modesty or piety, particularly in religious sects and cultural traditions like the Amish or Hutterites for example.

The word hijab is the Arabic word for a "screen" or "cover". Today, we know the hijab to be worn as a headscarf covering the whole

head and neck, while leaving the face uncovered. The niqab is a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear and is worn accompanying the hijab. The burka is a one-piece loose fitting garment that covers the head, the face and entire body, leaving a mesh screen to see through.

There is a popular belief among Muslims and non-Muslims alike that Islam dictates veiling upon Muslim women. Furthermore, there is a parallel belief among both Muslims and non-Muslims that the prescription of veiling is stated clearly in the Koran, the Holy Book of Islam. As to the question of whether or not it is obligatory for women to wear hijab, the Koran states that women should cover their bosoms and wear long clothing, but does not specifically say that they need to cover their faces or hair (Koran, 24:31). The best dress according to the Koran is the garment of righteousness, which is not a garment in a literal sense, but a commitment to live in a manner that pleases God: "O children of Adam, we have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But the best garment is the garment of righteousness. These are some of God's signs, that they may take heed" (Koran, 7:26). The hijab as we know it today, is not mentioned specifically in the Koran. The prophet Mohammed was once asked by a woman if it was okay for women to go to prayers without their veils. His reply to her was, "She should cover herself with the veil of her companion and should participate in the good deeds and in the religious gathering of the Muslims."

Critics of the veiling tradition argue that women do not wear the veil by choice, but are forced to cover their heads and bodies. The veil represents a larger, patriarchal gendered division of privileges and freedoms that severely restrict women's choices and movements while liberating men's. The tradition of "purdah" in the Pushtun areas of Afghanistan for example requires women to be either secluded within the home or veiled when in public in order to protect the family's honour (Moghadam, 1992). Purdah is part of the Pushtunwali or customary law in which women are regarded as the property of men. Similar arguments can be made for the wearing

of the veil in Saudi Arabia and Iran, where Islamist governments impose a dress code and restrictions on women's movements by law. It is significant that following the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the seizing of power in Afghanistan by the Taliban in 1996, the new Islamist governments forced unveiled women to wear the hijab (in Iran) and the burqa (in Afghanistan) as one of the first policies enacted to signal the Islamization of cultural practices. Raheel Raza (2015), president of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, argues that as such "the niqab and burka have nothing to do with Islam. They're the political flags of the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, the Taliban, al-Qaida and Saudi Arabia. "The salience of this criticism may be due to the significant influence the media has on the western world in particular.

Muslim women who choose to wear coverings are seen as oppressed and without a voice. However, Muslim women choose to wear the hijab or other coverings for a variety of reasons. Many daughters of Muslim immigrants in the West contend that they choose to wear the veil as a symbol of devotion, piety, religious identity and self-expression (Zayzafoon, 2005). Through their interpretation of the Koran, they believe that God has instructed them to do so as a means of fulfilling His commandment for modesty, while others wear it as a fashion statement. Furthermore, studies have shown that for some women, the hijab raises self-esteem and is used as form of autonomy. Some Muslim women do not perceive the hijab to be obligatory to their faith, while others wear the hijab as a means of visibly expressing their Muslim identity.

Particularly since 9/11, the hijab is perceived to be synonymous with Islam. Unfortunately this association has also occasionally resulted in the violent assaults of Muslim women wearing hijab. By making assumptions about the reasons women have for veiling, the freedom of these women to wear what they feel is appropriate and comfortable is taken away.

Most people view the hijab as cultural or religious, but for some, it carries political overtones. Muslim women who wear the hijab to communicate their political and social alliance with their birth

country do so by challenging the prejudices of the Western world. (Zayzafoon, 2005). Wearing hijab is also used as a tool to protest Western feminist movements which present hijab-wearing women as oppressed or silenced. Although the principles of modesty are distinctly outlined in the Koran, some Muslim women perceive the wearing of the headscarf as a cultural interpretation of these scriptures, and choose to shift their focus internally to build a deeper spiritual relationship with God. While wearing hijab granted women in the past to engage outside the home without bringing attention to them, the headscarf in modern Western society has an adverse effect by attracting more attention to them which ultimately contradicts the hijabs original purpose. Overall, most Muslim women agree that it is a woman's choice whether or not she wears the hijab.

10.3.3 New Religious Movements and Trends

Figure 10.16. *New Age spirituality is an example of the new forms of spiritual orientation in Late Modernity. (The Shaman by Temari 09 under a CC-BY-SA-ND 2.0 License.)*

Despite the assumptions of secularization theory and some of the early classical sociologists that religion is a static phenomenon associated with fixed or traditional beliefs and lifestyles, it is clear that the relationship of believers to their religions does change through time. We discussed the emergence of the **New Religious Movements** or **cults** above for example. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, cults represented particularly intense forms of religious experimentation that spoke to widespread feelings of dissatisfaction with materialism, militarism and conventional religiosity. They were essentially new religious social forms. Below we will examine the rise of **fundamentalism** as another new religious social form that responds to issues of globalization and social diversity. Here we will broaden the concept of "new religious movements" beyond the cult phenomenon to discuss what exactly has been "in movement" in the relationship of believers to their religions in contemporary society.

Sociologists note that the decline in conventional religious observance in Canada, Europe and elsewhere has not necessarily entailed a loss of religious or spiritual practices and beliefs *per se* (Dawson and Thiessen, 2014). One aspect of this phenomenon has been the development of a new religious sensibility, which Grace Davie (1994) referred to as "**believing without belonging**." People, especially young people, often say that they are 'not religious, but they are spiritual.' What does this mean for contemporary religious belief and practice? Firstly, surveys show that people retain fairly high levels of belief in God or supernatural forces, or belief in the efficacy of prayer or other ritual practices, even though they might never attend conventional churches or services. Secondly, the *orientation* to these beliefs and practices has also changed. People are seeking more holistic, flexible, 'spiritual growth' oriented types of religious experience (Beckford, 1992). **New Age spirituality** — the various forms and practices of spiritual inner-exploration that draw on non-Western traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, Indigenous spirituality) or esoteric Western traditions (e.g., witchcraft, Gnosticism) — is emblematic of this new religious sensibility but it

also increasingly characterizes people with otherwise conventional religious affiliations.

Dawson (1998) has characterized this new religious sensibility in terms of six key characteristics:

- *Individualistic*: unlike conventional religious beliefs and moral codes which focus on transcendent or external spiritual beings, in the new religious sensibility the locus of the sacred is found within. The goal of religious practice is therefore not to conform to externally imposed codes of behaviour but to express the inner authenticity of personal identity.

- *Experiential*: rather than focusing on formal religious beliefs, doctrines and ritual practices, the emphasis is on attaining direct spiritual experiences through practices of spiritual transformation such as meditation or yoga.

- *Pragmatic*: the approach to religious authority is not one of submission but of pragmatic evaluation of the authority's ability to facilitate spiritual transformation

- *Relativistic*: rather than exclusive adherence to a particular doctrine or tradition, the attitude is one of tolerance and acceptance towards other religious perspectives, even to the point of syncretistically borrowing and blending the appealing elements of a variety of different traditions.

- *Holistic*: unlike the dualisms of conventional religious belief (God/human, spirit/body, good/evil, human/nature, etc.), the emphasis is on the holistic interconnectness of all things.

- *Organizationally open and flexible*: instead of the traditional commitments to a religious organization or faith, there is a tendency to model the interaction in the form of clients seeking and receiving services in order to maximize individual choice in how the spirtitual practice is pursued.

What this appears to suggest is that a significant number of people in contemporary society retain an interest in or "need" for what religions provide, but seek it through individualistic, non-dogmatic, non-institutional frameworks of spiritual practice. This has lead to increasingly individual, subjective, and private forms of religiosity, which conform to the dominant emphasis on the autonomy of the individual in late modern society (Hervieu-Léger, 2006). Religious practices are not only subject to a kind of "do-it-yourself" bricolage, assembled from a multiplicity of religious "symbolic stocks" that are now accessible through globalized media and interaction, but if they do not bring tangible, immediate benefits to individuals they are quickly abandoned. At the same time, the basic questions of fate, suffering, illness, transformation and meaning have not been satisfactorily answered by science or other secular institutions, which creates a continued demand for religious or spiritual solutions.

10.3.4 Contemporary Fundamentalist Movements

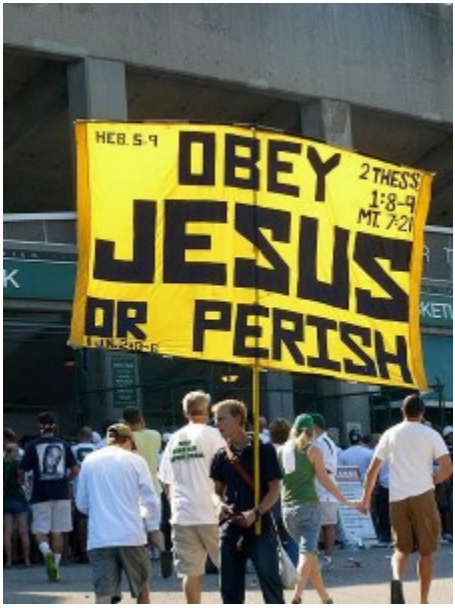

***Figure* 10.17**. *Here we see a young man sharing his religious affiliation through biblical signage at a widely attended sporting event. Adopting the methods of the 1960's protest movements, displays such as this are a common method in which fundamentalists make their core beliefs known to the public. Themes of being "doomed" or "damned" are projected towards those who are not aligned with the projected faith.* (*DavidWoronieckiWithSign by Saraware under a CC-BY 3.0 Unported License.*)

During her walk to school, an eight year old girl, Naama Margolese, became the subject of the ignominious side of religious fundamentalism when she was spat on and called a "whore" by a group of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Men in Beith Shemesh, Israel. This group of men wished to enforce their "strict interpretation of

modesty rules" (Kershner, 2011) even though Margolese was wearing long sleeves and a skirt. Another extreme fundamentalist group, the Westboro Baptist Church, picket the funerals of fallen military personnel (Hurdle, 2007), of the victims of the Boston Marathon bombings (Linkins, 2013), and even of the brutal greyhound bus stabbing in Winnipeg, Canada (CBC News, 2008). They interpret these tragic events as demonstrations of God's discontent and of society's rejection of fundamentalist interpretations of gay marriage, divorce and abortion. The public demonstrations of the Ultra-Orthodox men and the Westboro Baptist Church provide a platform for these groups to disseminate their beliefs, mobilize supporters and recruit new followers. However, the controversial protests also attack routine norms of civility — the right of 8 year old girls to walk to school unmolested by adult men; the solemnity of funeral rites and the mourning processes of the bereaved — and lead to communal disruption and resentment, as well as the alienation of these groups from broader society.

One of the key emblems of the contemporary rise of religious fundamentalism is that conflicts, whether they are playground disagreements or extensive political confrontations, tend to become irreconcilable when fundamental beliefs are at the core of said disputes. These types of issue are one of the defining features of the contemporary era. Unlike discussions relating to secular business or political interests, fundamentalist beliefs associated with religious ideology seem non-negotiable and therefore prone to violent conflict. In an increasingly globalized and diverse world, where people are obliged to live in close proximity with "Others" who hold different truths, the militant insistence on ultimate religious truths seems problematic.

The rise of fundamentalism also poses problems for the sociology of religion. For many decades theorists such as Berger (1967), Wilson (1982; 1985) and Bruce (1999) argued that the modernization of societies, the privatization of religion, and the global spread of religious and cultural pluralism meant that societies would continue to secularize and levels of religiosity would steadily decline.

However, other theorists such as Hadden (1987; 1989), Stark (1994; 1999) and Casanova (1994; 1999) have recently begun to reconsider the secularization thesis. They argue that religious diversity and pluralism have sparked new interpretations of religion and new revivals of religiosity. Dawson (2006) observes that the inability of late modern societies to produce concrete answers to basic questions about the existential experiences of human life or provide meaningful responses to miraculous or tragic events "has implicitly kept the door open to religious worldviews" (pp. 113-14). In other words, these new sociological interpretations of religion propose that rather than withering away, fundamentalist groups will continue to thrive because they offer individuals answers to ultimate questions and give meaning to a complicated world.

Interestingly enough, in his later works, Berger (1999) abandoned his original theory of secularization. Even though contemporary society is increasingly modern — globally linked, diverse, technologically sophisticated, capitalist — it is as "furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more than ever" (1999). Berger gives the example of the "Islamic upsurge" as an "impressive revival of emphatically religious commitments" (1999) and presents the worldwide adoption of evangelicalism as "breathtaking in scope" (1999). The growth of evangelical Protestantism is noted to have gained a substantial numbers of converts all around the world, but most prominently in Latin America, which Berger identifies as having "between forty and fifty million Evangelical Protestants south of the U.S. border" (1999, p.8), many of which are assumed to be of first-generation.

The Pew Research Center has recently presented some interesting findings that can also provide a general sense of what the future for religious fundamentalism may hold. First, Pew (2015a) identifies that in the United States, one of the most modern societies in the world, "[s]ix-in-ten adults — and three-quarters of Christians — believe the Bible or other holy scripture is the word of God." In addition to this "[r]oughly three-in-ten adults (31%) and four-in-ten Christians (39%) go a step further and say the Bible

should be interpreted literally, word for word". Second, Pew (2015b) identified Islam as the fastest growing religion in the world, and suggested that by 2050 "the number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world". While it is not clear from this research how many Muslims hold fundamentalist beliefs per se (eg. Wahhabi, Salifi, etc.), this is of interest because the more or less equal distribution of the two most popular world religions could result in an intensification of fundamentalist support. In other words, the anxieties around the encounter with the beliefs of the "Other" that leads people to seek out the "certainties" of fundamentalist belief systems, are likely to intensify once Christianity's spot as the world's most popular religion is threatened.

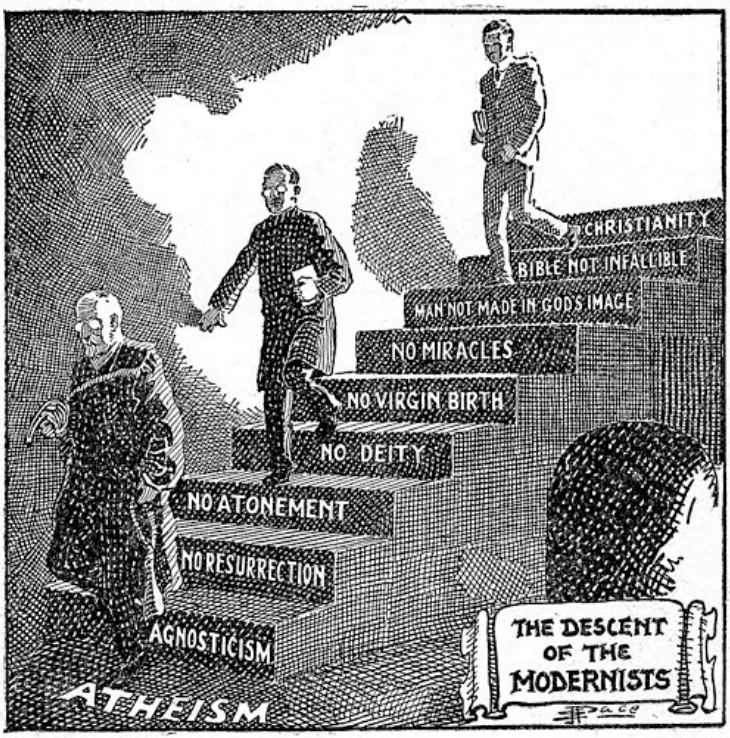

Figure 10.18. *A 1924 Christian Fundamentalist cartoon illustrates the progressive abandonment of fundamental Christian beliefs associated with modernist thinking. Can the origins of fundamentalism be explained as a response to the social changes of the 19th and 20th centuries? (Descent of the Modernists, E. J. Pace, Christian Cartoons, 1922 by E.J. Pace/Luinfana is in the Public Domain).*

How does the sociology of religion explain the rise of fundamentalist belief in an increasingly modern, global society then? The answer that sociologists have proposed is that fundamentalism and religious revivalism are modern. Rather than seeing it as a return to traditionalism, Ruthven (2005) defines fundamentalism as a modern religious movement that could only emerge under modern conditions: "a shrinking 'globalized' world where people of differing and competing faiths are having to live

in close proximity with each other." The encounter between faiths initiated by a globalized world provokes the fundamentalist reaction because, in the face of a bewildering diversity of ways to live, fundamentalism provides individuals with an opportunity to consolidate their identity around a core of "ultimate" beliefs which relieve anxiety and provide comfort and reassurance. In this way, Ruthven (2005) defines the common core of **fundamentalism** in different faith traditions as "a religious way of being that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or a group in the face of modernity and secularization."

The use of the term "fundamentalism" has its origin in the early 20th century Christian Evangelical and Pentecostal movements in Southern California. Oil tycoons, Milton and Lyman Stewart, sponsored a series of widely distributed pamphlets titled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*, which presented a core set of beliefs said to be fundamental to Christianity:

- Biblical inerrancy: The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible
- Creationism: God's direct creation of the world
- Divine intervention: The existence of miracles
- Divinity of Christ: The virgin birth of Jesus as the son of God
- Redemption: The redemption of the sins of humanity through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection
- Pre-millenarian dispensationalism: The Second Coming of Jesus, the end times, and the rapture

These pamphlets were not a return to pre-modern traditionalism however. They were an explicit response to *modern* forms of rationality, including the trend towards historical and scientific explanations of religious certainties. They also addressed the desire for clarity and simplification of religion in a complex "market" of diverse, competing religious doctrines and theologies. The Stewart's pamphlets can be therefore be interpreted as both a response to, and the product of modernity. A response, because of their

defensively orientated motivation to challenge the modernist movement; and a product, because of their use of modern techniques of mass communication and commercial promotion to transmit a particular set of beliefs in a clear and concise manner to a mass audience.

To expand the concept of fundamentalism beyond this specific usage in the context of 20th century Christian Protestantism poses some analytical problems. In a strict definition its use would be limited to this specific, early 20th century religious movement in the United States: "those who were prepared to do battle for *The Fundamentals*" (Ruthven, 2005). However its use in popular culture today has expanded far beyond this narrow reference. Fundamentalism not only refers to similar movements in other faiths like Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism, but it is also common to hear the term applied to "market fundamentalism," "secular fundamentalism," or "musical fundamentalism," etc. in non-religious contexts. It is even possible to describe New Age fundamentalisms, like *est* or the *Landmark Forum*, which promise to strip participants of their old and useless, counter-productive psychological defenses (or "rackets") and return them to their core moral purpose: to "take responsibility" for themselves.

In this expanded usage, fundamentalism loosely refers to the return to a core set of indisputable and literal principles derived from ancient holy, or at least unchallengeable, texts. However, even if we restrict the use of the term fundamentalism to a religious context, there are a number of problems of application. For example, the emphasis on the literalism of holy texts would not be able to distinguish between fundamentalist Islamic movements and mainstream Islam, because both regard the Koran to be the literal, and therefore indisputable word of God communicated to the prophet Mohamed by the Arch Angel Gabriel. On the other hand, the fundamentalist movements of Hinduism do not have a single, authoritative, holy text like the Bible or Koran to take as the literal word of God or Brahman.

In response to these problems, Ruthven (2005) proposes a **family**

resemblance definition (see Section 15.1 above) composed of a number of characteristics shared by most, but not all religious fundamentalisms:

- A return to the roots or core of scripture: a common style of reading holy texts
- The use of religious texts as blueprints for practical action rather than simply spiritual or moral inspiration
- A search for secure foundations of personal identity and cultural authenticity in a modern pluralistic world
- A rejection of cultural pluralism and diversity in favour of religious monoculture
- The projection of period of ignorance prior to the revelation of belief and the myth of a Golden Age when norms of religious tradition held sway
- A *theocratic* ideal of a political order ruled by God
- A belief in Messianism or end times when the divine will return to Earth
- A reaffirmation of traditional, patriarchal principles including the subordination of women and strict, separate gender roles

In this respect, the common sociological feature that unites various religious fundamentalisms, is their very *modern* reinvention of traditions in response to the complexity of social change brought about by globalization and the diversification of human populations. Globalization and late modernity introduce an anxiety-laden, plurality of life choices (including religious choices) where none existed before. As Ruthven (2005) puts it, "fundamentalism is one response to the crisis of faith brought on by awareness of

differences." It seeks to secure the certainty of individual or collective selfhoods by defining their roots in an all-encompassing, unquestioned, supernatural source of "ultimate referentiality" as Peter Berger described (see Section 15.2 above).

If religious fundamentalist movements primarily serve and protect the interests and rights of men, why do women continue to support and practice these religions in larger numbers than men? This is a difficult question that has not been satisfactorily answered. In the feminist view, women's subordinate role with respect to the leadership roles of men in religion is a manifestation of patriarchy. Women's place in these movements subjects them to oppressive religious social norms and prevents them from achieving social mobility or personal success. On the other hand, the traditional gender roles promoted by fundamentalist movements are seen by some women to provide a welcome clarity about men's and women's roles and responsibilities in the family and elsewhere in a period of late modernity when gender roles appear increasingly diverse and uncertain (Woodhead, 2007). From another angle, Mahmood (2005) has argued on the basis of her ethnographic research into the Da'wa or "Mosque Movement" among Egyptian Muslim women, that from the women's point of view, leading chaste, pious, disciplined lives of ritual practice apart from men and secular life is a form of spiritual exercise that actually *empowers* them and gives them strength. Strict observance of the rules of ritual observance is choice women make to bring themselves closer to God.

Control over female sexuality is a primary focus of all fundamentalist movements. Through fundamentalist religious beliefs, men are "reclaiming the family as a site of male power and dominance" in the face of modern challenges to male privilege and confining gender roles (Butler, 1998). For example, in Islamic fundamentalism, it is seen as shameful and dishonourable for women to expose their bodies. Under the Pushtunwali (customary law), Afghan women are regarded as the property of men and the practice of Purdah (seclusion within the home and veiling when in public) is required to protect the honour of the male lineage

(Moghadam, 1992). In both Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism, women's equality rights are stripped from them through laws and regulation. For example, in 1986, the Indian parliament passed a bill that would disallow women to file for divorce . There have also been many significant instances of violence against women (physical and sexual) perpetrated by men in order to maintain their social dominance and control (Chhachhi, 1989). In Saudi Arabia, rape can only be proven in court if the perpetrator confesses or four witnesses provide testimony (Doumato, 2010). Christian fundamentalists in the United States have pressed for decades for the reversal of the 1973 Wade-vs.-Roe decision that guaranteed women's reproductive rights and were partially successful in achieving their goal with George Bush's signing of the "partial-birth abortion" law in 2003 (Kaplan, 2005).

One purpose of fundamentalist movements therefore is to advantage men and reinforce ideals of patriarchal power in a modern context in which women have successfully struggled to gain political, economic and legal powers historically denied them. The movements' efforts to shape gender relations through enacting new social and political limitations on women leads Riesebrodt (1993) to define fundamentalism as a "patriarchal protest movement." What is necessary to keep in mind however, especially with respect to the controversies of fundamentalist Islamic or Hindu religions, is that it can also become an oppressive act for Westerners to attempt to speak on behalf of non-Western women. The role of women in Muslim or Hindu traditions is so different from that in Western religions and culture that characterizing it as inferior or subservient in Western terms risks distorting the actual experience or the nature of the role within the actual fabric of life in these traditions (Moaddel, 1998). In order to properly study women in Fundamentalist movements, it is imperative to gather the perspectives and ideas of the women in the movements themselves in order to eradicate the Orientalist stigma and bias towards non-Western religions and cultures.

Figure 10.19. *Women protesting during Iranian Revolution in 1979. (Iranian Revolution Women by Khabar is in the Public Domain.)*

After the 1979 Revolution in Iran, the law making veiling mandatory for all women emerged as one of the most important symbols of the new, collective Iranian national and religious identity. It was a means of demonstrating resistance against Western values and served symbolically to mark a difference from the pre-revolutionary program of modernization that had been instituted by the deposed Shah. Many women demonstrated against this law and against other legal discrimination against women in the new post-revolutionary juridical system. However, this dissent did not last long. As Patricia Higgins (1985) stresses, these demonstrations were not supported by the majority of Iranian women. The number of supporters of the demonstrations also decreased when Ayatollah Khomeini–the religious leader of Islamic revolution — mentioned his support of compulsory veiling for women. So it appears that the majority of Iranian women accepted the new rules or at least did not oppose them.

In order to explain the main reasons why the majority of Iranian women accepted compulsory veiling after the revolution, it is

important to distinguish between women's "rights and duties" and their actual behaviour patterns (Higgins, 1985). In the prerevolutionary regime of the Shah, there had been a state-lead attempt to change the juridical system and the public sphere to promote the rights of Iranian women in a manner similar to their western peers. Nevertheless, the majority of Iranian women, especially in the rural areas and margins of the cities, still wore their traditional and religious clothing. Veiling was part of the traditional or customary dress of Iranian women. It was only when the veil was used as a *political* symbol that it was transformed from a traditional element of women's fashion into a political sign of resistance against western values, emblematic of the ideology of the main Islamic parties.

However, an equally important fact, which is always less stressed in the dominant narrative about the Iranian revolution is that this transformation of veiling from traditional custom to political symbol first occurred in 1930s, when King Reza Pahlavi banned veiling for all women in the public sphere. To be clear, veiling was a custom or fashion in clothing for women, but not mandatory in law. Nevertheless, 40 years before the 1979 revolution, King Reza Pahlavi made *unveiling mandatory in law for all women in Iran.* What were the main reasons beneath this radical change which was imposed on Iranian society by the King Reza government?

Reza Pahlavi can be recognized as the founder of new modern state in Iran. Just as his peer in Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he wished to rapidly transform Iranian society from a traditional, religious society into a modern, coherent nation state. To a certain extent he was successful, especially in building the main transportation and new economic and bureaucratic structure. In this vein, the veiling of women was recognized as one of the most important symbols of Iranian traditional culture which needed to be removed, even violently, if modernization was to succeed. But did the significance of veiling arise from its place in religious texts and the strict customs of traditional ways of life or did it arise only as

the outcome of the *modern reading* of these religious and traditional rules?

It has been argued that fundamentalist movements represent a claim for recognition by beleaguered religious communities. They are a means by which traditional ways of life become aware of themselves as "different" and therefore threatened (Ruthven, 2005). However, in the case of the Hijab or veiling in contemporary Iran, the irony is that from the beginning it was not the religious scholars, traditional leaders or Olama who emphasized veiling as central to the distinction between traditional, religious Iranian culture and western culture. Rather, the equation of traditional Iranian religious society and veiling originated with secular intellectuals and politicians. As Chehabi (1993) states, "When upper-class Iranian men began traveling to Europe in larger numbers in the nineteenth century, they felt self-conscious about their looks and gradually adopted European clothing. Upon their return to Iran, many maintained their European habits, which had come to *symbolize progress*" (italics added). Reza Shah, the modern leader who identified these symbolic qualities of religious identity, could never be regarded as a religious fundamentalist. However, he was the first head of state to recognize and highlight veiling as an important symbol of the traditional religious way of life, albeit in a negative way. It was Reza Shah who initiated the project to rid Iranian society of fanaticism and 'backward' cultural traditions by banning veiling for women.

The second irony is that, apart from upper middle class urban women who embraced the active role of unveiled women in the public sphere, this process of cultural modernization and unveiling was not noticeably successful. The majority of Iranian women were subject to traditional and religious restrictions whose authority rested with the family and religious leaders, not state laws (Higgins, 1985: 490). However, during the Iranian revolution, the political process of *Islamization* was not monolithically conservative or fundamentalist. At the moment of revolution the dominant Islamic discourse included accepting and internalizing some parts of

modern and western identity, while criticizing other parts. It was argued that veiled woman should participate in society *equally*, even if motherhood should be their priority. At this point in time, veiling was not seen so much as a return to traditional conservative gender roles, but as a means of neutralizing sexual differences in the public sphere. If they complied with wearing the veil, (as noted above, most Iranian women already did wear veils voluntarily), women could leave their confinement within the patriarchal family and participate in public social activities, even without permission of their father or husband. Veiling was ironically a means of women's liberation.

In this context, during and after the revolution, the leader Ayatollah Khomeini frequently asked women to participate in demonstrations against the Shah's monarchy even without the permission of their family. At this specific historical moment, the religious authorities treated women as free, independent individuals, whereas previously they had been under the strict authority of their families. Veiling, within the political narrative of the revolution, was seen as the feminine expression of the resurgence of pure Islam, a flag of the critique of western values by Iranian society. After the revolution consolidated into the Iranian Islamic state, this modern, leftist version of Islam was displaced by a more fundamentalist conservative narrative. Even so, at its inception the *meaning* of compulsory veiling, as a symbol of traditional religious values, was not the product of the traditional values of religious society itself but a product of the way religious society was represented by *secular* scholars and politicians. Modern secularization was the process that established the symbolic significance of the veil for fundamentalism in Iran.

Figure 10.20. *The Sati of Ramabai, Wife of Madhavrao Peshwa. (The Sati of Ramabai is in the Public Domain).*

One of the most internationally publicized and controversial instances of sati was that of Roop Kanwar on September 4, 1987. It occurred in the small town of Deorala in the state of Rajasthan. Roop Kanwar was a well-educated eighteen year old Rajput woman who had married twenty-four year old Mal Singh just eight months before. Her husband died unexpectedly of gastroenteritis, although some speculate it was actually a suicide by poisoning (Hawley, 1994a). The next day, Roop Kanwar stepped onto the funeral pyre with her deceased husband, put his head in her hands as is the custom, and burned alive with his body. This illegal event was witnessed by a few hundred people but there were conflicting reports as to what had actually happened. Pro-sati supporters said that Roop Kanwar had voluntarily decided to become sati and underwent the process with purpose and calm. Those who opposed sati argued that she had not acted of her own free will and was instead drugged into submission by her in-laws who had economic

motives for her death. Some reported that she had tried to jump off the pyre, but was pushed back onto it (Hawley, 1994b).

The practice of Sati offers another look at the complicated relationship between fundamentalism and women. Sati is a Hindu ritual in which a widow sacrifices herself by being burned alive on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. It is a religious funeral rite practiced or endorsed primarily by Hindu groups rooted in the aristocratic Rajput caste in the Rajasthan state of India. Sati is therefore not central to Hinduism, but is practiced by a portion of the population, both men and women, who can be seen as Hindu fundamentalists.

While the Western and English understanding of the word sati is as the practice of widow burning, in the Hindi language it refers to the woman herself. A woman who is sati is a good, virtuous woman who is devoted to her husband (Hawley, 1994a). The Rajput belief is that a woman who freely chooses to become sati is protecting her husband in his journey after death. The power of her self-sacrifice cancels out any bad karma that he may have accrued during his lifetime. She also provides blessings to all those who witness the event (Hawley, 1994b).

The term "sati" comes from the Hindu myth of the goddess Sati who was the wife of the deity Shiva. After her father humiliates Shiva by excluding him from a sacrifice, Sati kills herself in front of him as an act loyalty to her husband. Supporters see the modern version of sati as a manifestation of this same sacrificial power used by the goddess Sati (Hawley, 1994a). However, while sati is seen as a traditional practice, most of the early Hindu religious texts do not recognize sati at all, and it is only mentioned occasionally in later texts. In a manner consistent with other forms of fundamentalism, certain verses have been cited as scriptural justification of the practice by supporters, but their interpretation and translation have been contested by scholars and there is no definitive, unambiguous endorsement of sati (Yang, 1989).

Although this Hindu practice has never been widespread, it happened with enough frequency to catch the attention and

revulsion of the British in the nineteenth century while India was under British rule. In 1829 British officials made the practice illegal and a punishable offence for anyone involved (Yang, 1989). The practice has continued to occur very infrequently since then, but the worship and glorification of sati is still a major aspect of the religious belief system of some Rajput Hindus (Harlan, 1994). The criminalization of sati has also become a rallying point for Hindu fundamentalists in their larger battle against the secular state. Its persecution is seen as an infringement by the state into the domain of religion causing the fight for sati to become a fight for religious freedom (Hawley, 1994a).

While previous instances of sati went relatively unnoticed outside the local area, the rise of women's rights activism by feminists and other liberals caused the story of Roop Kanwar to gain major attention. Twelve days after her death by immolation, a chunari celebration was held at the funeral site to honor and praise her sacrifice. Although the Rajasthan High Court legally prohibited this gathering and any other "glorification of sati" after pressure from women's rights groups, between 200,000 to 300,000 people from throughout the province attended (Hawley, 1994a). Further gatherings and sati endorsement by both religious and political organizations continued in the months that followed and eclipsed smaller protests held by opponents of sati.

The sati of Roop Kanwar triggered a number of larger social debates regarding the intertwining threads of religion, gender, and the state. Some Indian feminists saw sati as a "ritualized instance of violence against women" and paralleled it with female infanticides and dowry deaths also practiced in India (Hawley, 1994b). For them, the religious significance given to sati is nothing more than a guise to aid the oppression of women. Meanwhile supporters said that sati is a deeply spiritual event where the power of a women's self-sacrifice and devotion to her husband causes the woman to become "a manifestation of divinity" (Hawley, 1994b). Roop Kanwar's case questioned whether sati is truly a voluntary undertaking, or if it is decided by family members for religious or economic motives. Sati

also became a battleground in the struggle between the religious freedom of Hindus and the secular Indian State. Conservative Hindu organizations said that the state had "no business interfering in matters of religion" (Hawley, 1994b) and that by criminalizing sati their religion was being unfairly targeted.

The pro-sati movement that followed Roop Kanwar's sati has a number of features which are characteristic of fundamentalism and it is this event that first led to wide usage of the term "Hindu fundamentalism" (Hawley, 1994b). First is the reactionary nature of this Hindu movement against the perceived threat to traditional religious beliefs and values. Demonstrations by sati supporters signified a resistance to the modernization, secularization, and liberalization of India, particularly in regards to the place of women. The sati debate manifested into a war between traditional, patriarchal beliefs and liberal feminist ideas about women's rights. The denouncement of sati was seen by fundamentalists as a "condemnation of chastity and virtue" and feminists were portrayed as modern, westernized women condoning loose morality (Narasimhan, 1992). Sati also reinforces another commonality among fundamentalist religions: the notion that a woman's principle place and religious duty is to serve her husband and her family. By becoming sati, a woman is performing the ultimate act of devotion to her husband and is sacrificing herself for the betterment of her family and the wider community. In other words, a woman's power is gained through her service to others, and more specifically to men. (Hawley, 1994b). While sati has become a very rare occurrence in modern times, the debate it has caused between conservative Hindu beliefs and liberal or secular thoughts on women's rights is representative of the larger picture of religion in India, and arguably of the relationship between fundamentalism and women in all societies.

10.5 Science and Faith

For most of history every aspect of life in society revolved around some form of religious practice. In many cultures, prior to contact with the Western world, religion was so ingrained into every part of life that there was no specific word for it. Religion in ancient times can be thought of as having a similar role to that of contemporary laws (Müller, 1873). It was the means by which life was regulated and made purposeful. The modern shift towards secularization and the scientific worldview is a recent phenomenon.

As we saw earlier in the module, Weber (1919/1958) characterized the transition to a secular, rationalized, scientific worldview as the **disenchantment of the world**. Explanations for events of everyday life were no longer based on the notion of mysterious or supernatural powers. Everything, in principle, could be reduced to calculation. However, the transition from a world based on religion to one that gives the ultimate authority to scientific discovery has not been without its issues. Contemporary creationists reject Darwinian evolutionary theory because they believe everything came into being as a result of divine creation, as described by religious texts such as the Bible. Similarly, many Christian fundamentalists continue to deny that climate change is a real threat to our planet, because recognizing climate change as a problem, and taking preventative action, would be to question God's plan and ultimate authority.

Figure 10.21. *Portrait of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) by Ottavio Leoni. (Galileo by leoni is in the Public Domain.)*

One historic example of such a conflict is that between the astronomer Copernicus and the Catholic Church (Russel, 1989). When Copernicus proposed a heliocentric model of the solar system based on his empirical astronomic observations, (i.e. in which the sun is the immobile center), he opposed the Earth-centric model of Ptolemy endorsed by the Church. This claim, originally made in 1543, did not immediately attract the attention of the Church. However, almost a century later, in 1610, when Galileo confirmed its validity based on evidence he had collected using a telescope, he was tried for heresy. Because his model was in direct contradiction with Holy Scripture he was forced to denounce his support of heliocentric theory. He lived out the rest of his life under house arrest, although the ideas he championed were later proven to be scientifically correct.

What is the underlying source of the conflict between science and religion and what are the implications? Berman (1981) argues that the Scientific Revolution created a division between the worlds of fact and the worlds of value. This was the basis for a profound shift in worldview. Humans went from being part of a rich and meaningful natural order to being the alienated observers of a mechanistic and empty object-world. Questions concerning the value of things or why things were, which had been addressed by religion, were replaced with questions about what things are and how things work. Modes of knowledge that had been relied on to produce a sense of purpose and meaning for people for centuries were incapable of producing the new knowledge needed to effectively manipulate nature to satisfy human material needs (for food, shelter, health, profit, etc.) (Holtzman, 2003).

This shift to an empirical, objective, evidence based knowledge was democratic or "communalistic", in the sense that science is freely available, shared knowledge, open to public discussion and debate . It was a threat to the hierarchical power of religion whose authority was based on its claim to have unique access to sacred truths. However, at the same time, Weber (1919(1958)) also argued that "science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: 'What shall we do and how shall we live?'" In fact, Weber predicted that the outcome of the disenchantment of the world and the dominance of the scientific worldview would be a condition of "ethical anarchy." Science could answer practical questions of how to do things effectively or efficiently, but could not answer the "ultimate" human questions of value, purpose, and goals. These questions would be answered by other sources, but without any authoritative means of distinguishing which was correct. In particular, it is unlikely that those who practice different religions will come to answer the ultimate questions in the same way. To the question, "which of the warring gods should we serve?" Weber argued there could be no definitive or unifying answer. The different sets of values of modern

society cannot be reconciled into a singular, cohesive system to guide society.

Nevertheless, while science and religion may differ at the most fundamental level, disagreement between the two is not as common as many may think. A recent study found that there was no difference in the likelihood of religious or non-religious people to seek out scientific knowledge, even though many Protestants and conservative Catholics will side with religious explanations when there is a conflict. The debates over evolution and the history of the universe are a case in point (Evans, 2011). What this suggests firstly is that conflicts do not arise because religion completely rejects everything scientific (or vice versa), but that conflict arises only if competing claims are made, (as seen in the case of Galileo above). It was not that the Church completely rejected everything scientific, but that Galileo's claims were in direct contradiction of what was stated in the Holy Scripture. Secondly, conflicts arise when the morality of science is being questioned by religion. For example embryonic stem cell research is rejected by some religious leaders for moral reasons. For the most part, science is broadly accepted, as many religions adapt to the challenges of modernity. It is only in a few cases that there are major disputes between religion and science.

Creationism versus Darwin's Evolutionary Theory remains one of the most hotly contested debates in the field of academia and religious studies. This debate pits American Protestant fundamentalists against the field of natural science (McCalla, 2007, p. 547). Specifically, this debate has caused extensive issues when it comes to education in the middle school and high school years, as creationists lobby for an education that does not acknowledge evolutionary theory (Bleifeld, 1983). After many decades of education taught from the perspective of the field of objective natural sciences, the recent rise of Protestant fundamentalism has lead to conflict over the lack of emphasis in schools on creationist theory. The debate however involves people from both sides arguing at cross-purposes over very different things. It is therefore

necessary to clarify the beliefs and arguments stemming from both creationists and evolutionary theorists.

The debate between creationism and Darwin's evolutionary theory can be explained simply. Charles Darwin proposed that the complex nature of life on earth could be explained by genetic mutations and small changes that over time, due to their effect on the capacities of species survive and compete for limited resources, resulted in a process of "natural selection." On this basis, Darwin proposed that humans were also essentially biological animals who had formed through an evolutionary process over millennia from primitive primate ancestors to contemporary Homo sapiens. This is **Darwinian evolutionary theory**. Scientists and advocates of Darwin's evolutionary theory posit, based on evidence of fossil morphology, carbon dating and genetics, that the world as we know it today and the inhabitants of earth have come to be as they are through a long history of evolution, forming from primitive beings, into more complex organisms through a mechanism of survival of the fittest (Wilson, 2002).

This presented a cosmology that certain Christian sects found to be fundamentally at odds with the notion of human divinity found in the bible. The idea that humans were "apes" seemed to directly contradict the idea that they were created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). As a result **creationism** began to gain momentum in the 19th century as a struggle against new science-based evidence of evolutionary theories. It found its support in the turn to literal or inerrant readings of the bible. The Protestant fundamentalists argued that to be Christian, everything in the Bible had to be held as completely true in a factual sense. Evolutionary theory therefore caused problems for many Christians because in the Bible the narratives in Genesis highlighted that God created the universe in 6 days and that later the Great Flood destroyed all life except for the occupants of the Ark (McCalla, 2007, p.548). Evolution contradicted the creation story, "the notion that the world was created by God ex nihilo, from nothing" (Ayala, 2006, p. 71). The earth and everything in it was created by God as is, not through a process of evolution,

and to dispute this goes against everything the Bible stands for (Ayala, 2006). This fundamental difference in cosmology has pitted creationists and evolutionists against one another.

The context of the turn to biblical inerrancy was not evolutionary theory however, but the challenge of the "higher criticism" of the Bible developed by German theologians and scholars in the early 19th century. Biblical criticism recognized that the Bible was not a suprahuman text that transcends history. Using contemporary techniques of textual analysis, they demonstrated that the bible was a historical document composed by multiple human beings at different times and various places (McCalla, 2007, p. 548). Liberal-minded Christians and Biblical theologians were able to except the higher criticism while continuing to hold the Bible as a source of moral and spiritual guidance. Therefore, both naturalists and educated Christians largely were able to accept the evidence for biological evolution in the years following the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (1859). Liberal Christians were able to assimilate the findings of natural science into their religious practice because they had already accepted that Genesis was a mythic story with symbolic truth, not literal truth. Fundamentalist Protestants had a harder time agreeing to any of this (McCalla, 2007, p. 549).

The first fundamentalist leader to link biological evolution with the higher criticism was the Baptist William Bell Riley who denounced "theories of organic evolution as unsubstantiated speculations that assert hypothetical historical reconstructions of the Bible and of life in place of God's plain word" (McCalla, 2007, p. 549). Ultimately this led into the field of creation science. Creation science is defined by the attempt to discredit the evolution model and to support the creation model by asserting "that the evolution model is riddled with guesses, errors, and inconsistencies" (McCalla, 2007. p. 550). Creationists base this argument on four basic claims: "the radiometric and other dating techniques that give an immense age to the universe, the Earth, and life are mere guesses as nobody was around to confirm that the assumptions on which they are

built held true in the prehistoric past; the basic laws of physics, and particularly the first and second laws of thermodynamics, flatly contradict the evolution model; the principles of mathematical probability demonstrate its extreme unlikeliness; and evolutionists frequently disagree among themselves, thereby proving that what they have to offer is not science but opinion" (McCalla, 2007. p. 551).

The creation-evolution controversy has led to many disagreements on what should and should not be allowed in required educational curriculum (Allgaier, 2010). Specifically, where this debate and controversy takes place heavily is in the more southern regions of the United States. In the 1980s states such as Arkansas and Louisiana passed legislation mandating that the biblical account of creation be taught in science classes in conjunction with the teaching of evolution (Bleifeld, 1983, p. 111). Christian fundamentalists continue to lobby to reintroduce creationism into the education system and where they fail they often set up parallel private school systems or home schooling networks. Opponents argue that a common educational basis is an essential component to democratic society because it lays the foundation for evidence based decision making and rational debate. From a scientific point of view, Creationism has no scientific validity (Allgaier, 2010). That being said the creationist/evolutionary theory debate is an issue that must be handled delicately in order to respect peoples' deeply held beliefs.

Key Takeaways

animism: The religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world.

assimilation: A response to religious diversity that welcomes people of different faiths into the majority culture on the condition that they leave their beliefs behind and adopt the majority's faith as their own.

atheism: Belief in no deities.

church: A large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society.

collective consciousness: The combined mental contents of a society that manifests itself through a religious framework.

collective effervescence: A feeling experienced by individuals when they come together to express beliefs and perform rituals together as a group.

compensator: A promise of a reward at a later, unspecified date.

creationism: The religious belief that the Universe and life originated "from specific acts of divine creation." For young Earth creationists, this includes a biblical literalist

interpretation of the Genesis creation narrative and the rejection of the scientific theory of evolution.

cult or **New Religious Movement:** A small religious organization that is at great odds with the norms and values of the larger society.

Darwinian evolutionary theory: A theory stating that all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase individual organism's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce.

deity: A god or a goddess.

denomination: A religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society but is not a formal part of the state.

disenchantment of the world: The process by which magical and superstitious understandings of the world are replaced by scientific calculation and technical control.

dualist theodicy: Suffering is explained as a consequence of the struggle between the dual powers of good and evil, gods and demons, in which evil occasionally wins out.

ecclesia: A church that has formal ties with the state.

exclusion: A response to religious diversity which denies new religions entry into society.

family resemblance definition: A type of definition that defines a phenomenon on the basis of a series commonly shared attributes or family resemblances — not all family members equally share these attributes or resemblances.

functional definition: A type of definition that defines a phenomenon by what it does or how it functions in society.

individual secularization: The decline in religious belief and practice of individuals.

karma: The accumulated effects of acts committed in former lives and their influence on fortunes and suffering in this life.

Mecca: The birthplace of Muhammad; a city located in Hejaz in the area of what is now known as South Arabia; the holiest city of the Islamic religion, and is the center of Islamic faith.

monotheism: A religion based on belief in a single deity.

misogyny: A hatred of women.

new religious movement (NRM): See "cult."

nomos: (In sociology) a stable, predictable, and normative order.

organizational secularization: The efforts made by religious organizations to update their beliefs and practices, to reflect changes in contemporary life.

phenomenology: A sociological perspective that argues that all phenomena appear spontaneously and immediately within the experience and awareness of individual subjects before they become the basis for subjective and objective reality.

pluralism: A response to religious diversity that welcomes every religious practice regardless of how divergent its beliefs or social norms.

polytheism: A religion based on belief in multiple deities.

post-Christian society: A previously Christian society in which Christianity becomes just one among many religious beliefs.

predestination: The belief that the gods predetermine the fate of individuals.

profane: Everyday objects, states of being or practices that do not hold any spiritual or religious significance.

Protestant ethic: The duty to "work hard in one's calling."

rational choice theory: A theory which states that human action is motivated by individual self-interest and that all social activities are a product of rational decision making that weighs costs against benefits.

religion: A system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds to be sacred or spiritually significant.

religious beliefs: Specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true.

religious diversity: A condition in which a multiplicity of religions and faiths co-exist in a given society.

religious experience: The conviction or sensation that one is connected to "the divine."

religious nones: Persons who choose the category "none" on surveys about religious affiliation.

religious rituals: Behaviours or practices that are either required for or expected of the members of a particular group.

sacred: Objects, states of being, or practices that are set apart and considered forbidden because of their connection to divine presence.

sacred canopy: A devinely grounded cultural system.

sati: The Hindu ritual in which a widow sacrifices herself

by burning alive on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband.

sect: A small religious body that forms after a group breaks away from a larger religious group like a church or denomination.

secularization: The process by which religion and the sacred gradually have less validity, influence, and significance in society and the lives of individuals.

societal secularization: The shrinking relevance of institutionalized religionfor the integration and legitimation of everyday life in modern society.

substantial definition: A type of definition that delineates the substantial or crucial characteristics that define what a phenomenon is and is not.

theocracy: A system of government in which ecclesiastical authorities rule on behalf of a divine authority.

theodicy: An explanation for why the Gods allow suffering, misfortune and injustice to occur.

totem: A plant, animal or object that serves as a symbolic, material expression of the sacred.

totemism: The most basic, ancient form of religion based on reverence for totemic animals or plants.

ultimate legitimation: An unquestionable foundation that establishes the legitimacy of a social order.

10.6 References

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Brother XII and the Aquarian Foundation–Robyn Erickson

15.2. Sociological Explanations of Religion

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Feminist Approaches to Religion–Mikaiya Austin

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Muslim Women:The Niqab, Hijab and Burka–Zubaida Khan
Is Rastafarianism a Religion?–Jeff Nishima Miller

15.4 Contemporary Fundamentalist Movements

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Fundamentalism and Women–Katrina Kelly

The Veil and the Iranian Revolution–Sara Nadiri

The Case of Sati–Allegra Wolansky

Science and Faith–Hannah Mitchell

Creationism and Darwinian Evolutionary Theory–Gary Brett Armbrust

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Long Descriptions

Figure 15.6 Long Description: A painting of God in the sky, surrounded by his angels, with his hand pointed down and beam of light shining from it. Below, people look panicked and stare up at the sky. Many have fallen and one man has fainted. [Return to Figure 15.6]

Figure 15.28 long description: A cartoon entitled, "The Descent of the Modernists." Three men walk down a staircase. Each stair represents a rejection of a fundamental christian belief. From top to bottom, the stairs read, "Christianity," "Bible not infallible," "Man not made in God's image," "No miracles," "No virgin birth," "No deity," "No atonement," "No resurrection," and "Agnosticism." The last stair is labeled "Atheism." [Return to Figure 15.28]

11. Module 11: Education

SUSAN ROBERTSON

Figure 16.1. Filmmaker Victor Masayesva teaches about Hopi Indian culture in an Indigenous studies class at Point Grey Secondary, Vancouver. Schools teach us far more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. They also socialize us to cultural norms and expectations. (Photo courtesy of Victor Masayesva/ flickr)

Learning Objectives

- Elaborate the meaning of education and describe the focus of the sociology of education.
- Identify major events and motivations for the development of mass education in Canada.
- Describe the structure of educational governance in Canada and explain why the structure of educational governance in Canada is decentralized.
- Discuss differences between mainstream and alternative schooling.
- Describe how the Canadian educational curriculum has been shaped by socio-historical, political and economic forces.
- Explain how the socio-economic status of family can impact on a student's educational outcomes.
- Describe how the global economic crisis is related to education in Canada.
- Identify the ways in which neoliberalism has influenced education in Canada at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels.

11.0 Introduction to Education

On any given day in Canada, there is likely to be a major news item that features the topic of education. Whether it is about the value of a university degree, the cost of education, the working conditions of teachers, or achievements of students, education is of great concern and interest to policy makers, politicians, and Canadians in general. There is a common belief in Canadian society (and beyond) that education is essential to ensure a good quality of life and that education holds the key to an individual's success. Parents who hope their children have a better standard of living than they did will more often than not point to education as being the major determining factor in this outcome. This is particularly true if the parents are recent immigrants (Krahn and Taylor 2005), because the parents very likely settled in Canada to improve the prospects of their children. Education, therefore, is regarded as something to be attained in order to ensure future economic security, social status, and perhaps even social and psychological well-being.

From the moment a child is born, his or her education begins. At first, education is an informal process in which an infant watches others and imitates them. As the infant grows into a young child, the process of education becomes more formal through play dates and preschool. Once in grade school, academic lessons become the focus of education as a child moves through the school system. But even then, education is about much more than the simple learning of facts.

Our education system also socializes us to our society. We learn cultural expectations and norms, which are reinforced by our teachers, our textbooks, and our classmates. (For students outside the dominant culture, this aspect of the education system can pose significant challenges.) You might remember learning your multiplication tables in grade 2 and also learning the social rules of taking turns on the swings at recess. You might recall learning

about the Canadian parliamentary process in a social studies course as well as learning when and how to speak up in class.

Schools can be agents of change or conformity, teaching individuals to think outside of the family and the local norms into which they were born, while at the same time acclimatizing them to their tacit place in society. They provide students with skills for communication, social interaction, and work discipline that can create pathways to both independence and obedience.

In terms of socialization, the modern system of mass education is second only to the family in importance. It promotes two main socializing tasks: homogenization and social sorting. Students from diverse backgrounds learn a standardized curriculum that effectively transforms diversity into homogeneity. Students learn a common knowledge base, a common culture, and a common sense of society's official priorities, and perhaps more importantly, they learn to locate their place within it. They are provided with a unifying framework for participation in institutional life and at the same time are sorted into different paths. Those who demonstrate facility within the standards established by curriculum or through the informal patterns of status differentiation in student social life are set on trajectories to high-status positions in society. Those who do less well are gradually confined to lower, subordinate positions in society. Within the norms established by school curriculum and teaching pedagogies, students learn from a very early age to identify their place as A, B, C, etc. level vis-à-vis their classmates. In this way, schools are profound agencies of normalization.

The sociology of education is a branch of sociology that studies how *social structures* affect education as well as the various *outcomes of education*. As discussed in earlier modules, social structures in general refer to enduring patterns of social arrangement. Sociologists see social structure in all aspects of society. For example, as discussed earlier in this course *social class* is a social structure that generally refers to the socioeconomic background of an individual and his or her family. Social class has been found to impact on many aspects of life that are related to

education, including educational achievement (i.e., grades), educational attainment (highest qualification), and future aspirations. Other examples of social structures are bureaucracy, legal systems, the family, religion, race, gender and sexuality. These are all enduring patterns of social relations that are observable in society—groupings that are entrenched in our collective minds and that guide our behaviours and shape our life outcomes.

The sociology of education is a way of examining education in order to understand how social structures shape various aspects of education. Indeed, these social structures shape not only how we understand education, but also how it has been designed over the years, how the structure of education systems exists today, and the various outcomes associated with educational credentials.

Prior to examining the history, structure and organization of education in Canada and elsewhere, it is useful to reflect on what it means to be 'educated'. Noam Chomsky's insights into being truly educated are provided as a point of departure for critically reflecting on your own views about what it means to be educated.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=951

11.1 Historical Overview of Education in Canada

Mass public schooling began in Canada in the mid-1850s. In the previous half of the nineteenth century, parents of the middle class were accustomed to paying for their children's education through private and voluntary sources (Gidney and Millar 1985). But what were the social conditions that led to its creation? Many accounts of the history of the education system in Canada, particularly accounts prior to the 1960s, represent it as the "triumph of great men" (Di Mascio 2010:36) who created an education system in an effort to overcome increasing class inequalities. Such a publicly funded education system would reduce the disadvantages faced by poor children.

Interpretations from the 1960s forward, however, have challenged the traditional readings of educational history (Di Mascio 2010:36). Newer interpretations understand early school advocates as elite "school promoters" who founded the public school system as a means of entrenching a certain type of values on the growing Canadian population: middle class, British, and Christian (usually Protestant). But the social processes behind the eventual acceptance of mass schooling are more complex than the visions of a few prominent men. Along with mass schooling came great political and cultural struggles. The marginalization of Catholics and francophones outside Quebec and attempts to "assimilate" them—as

well as all other non-British Protestants—can be argued to be the major underlying project of much controversial school legislation.

Di Mascio (2010) and Prentice and Houston (1975) argue that writings in the first Toronto newspaper, the *Upper Canada Gazette* in the early 1800s, provide considerable evidence that "education" was largely about training children into the correct values and morals, which were those that supported the monarchy and Christianity. While rearing children was traditionally the role of the family, an increasing discourse found in these early writings presents this as an important task for an expanding education system.

Houston (1972) details how the common social problems of the day were again thought to be cured by mass schooling. Social problems were blamed upon immigrant families from lower social classes (mostly Irish-famine settlers), who were accused by British elites of not raising their children properly. A prominent education reform advocate of the time, Charles Duncombe, commented in 1836:

> Every person that frequents the streets of this city [Toronto] must be forcibly struck with the ragged and uncleanly appearance, the vile language, and the idle and miserable habits of numbers of children, most of whom are of an age suitable for schools, or for some useful employment. The parents of these children are, in all probability, too poor, too degenerate to provide them with clothing for them to be seen in at school; and know not where to place them in order that they may find employment, or be better cared for.[13]

Schooling was touted as a means to reduce juvenile delinquency and adult criminality that was perceived to be inextricably linked to ignorance and poverty. Therefore, the relation of crime reduction to public schooling became increasingly used in debates around mass schooling, particularly when trying to convince the public that

any proposed tax levies would be for the good of all, not just the impoverished and immoral (Houston 1972).

In addition to fixing the ills of society, much discourse around public schooling in the 1840s by Ryerson and others relates to how mass schooling would be a "powerful instrument of British Constitution" (Houston 1972:263). To Ryerson, the content of schooling would not have any American or "anti-British" sentiment at all, and this is evidenced in his insistence that American textbooks not be used and his restriction of American teachers in the mid-1840s. Public schooling was seen as a way to maintain and foster a sense of Britishness in Upper Canada that may have been perceived to be under threat given large waves of immigration at the time. According to Houston (1972), the massive influx of famine Irish in 1847 gave much thrust to Ryerson's claims that if mass public schooling were not provided, the future of the new colony was at grave risk.

There are other social aspects to the general acceptance of the idea of mass schooling, apart from "proper socialization," that have been considered by historical researchers. Errington (1993), for example, found evidence that many families in Upper Canada were often in search of educational opportunities for their children, but could not afford to send their children due to economic constraints and the workloads associated with life at that time. Gaffield (1991) argues that as land inheritances dwindled for the offspring of Upper Canadian children, families were looking for other ways to ensure a future for their children, and education was seen as a way of substituting for land inheritance.

As schooling expanded, so too did the number of teachers. The number of teachers in Canada has "marched steadily forward" (Harrigan 1992), from 13 000 in 1870 to over 329 000 in 2006.[14]

The occupation of teaching was one of the only viable non-manual occupational choices for young, unmarried women in the early to mid portion of the twentieth century, although it did not pay any better than stenography or skilled factory work. Women have represented over half of all teachers in Canada since 1870, with

percentages above 80 from 1905–1930. This increase of women in teaching not only in Canada, but in the Western world in general, has been referred to as the **feminization of the teaching corps**. Harrigan (1992) estimates that between 1910 and 1930, one in six women between the ages of 20 and 40 was or had been a teacher. Similarly, in the period between the two World Wars and for the 20 years following the Second World War, one in six women would become teachers at the age of 20, with higher rates among the middle class. Various reasons for the feminization of the occupation have been offered, including the absence of other opportunities, the expansion of schooling, urbanization, and gender stereotypes (Harrigan 1992).

While women comprised the majority of teachers, they often worked for less pay—less than half in the nineteenth century—than their male counterparts. Women often were allocated to teaching elementary grades due to the perception that they could not control older children and that they were more suited to providing the nurturing required by younger students (Prentice 1977). Male teachers, in contrast, often became school administrators (Prentice 1977). And in the nineteenth century, women who married could no longer remain teachers because being married made them ineligible to be considered "professional." Prentice (1977) argues that expansion of elementary schooling at the beginnings of Canadian educational history was largely attributable to the "cheap" labour of female teachers. The pay gap between male and female teachers has closed in recent decades, however, in no small part due to the role of teachers' unions and federations.

Confederation occurred in 1867, which introduced the British North America Act. This Constitution contained an important clause, Section 93, which made matters of education a jurisdictional (rather than federal) matter. It also allowed for the protection of denominational schools where they legally existed beforehand. As other provinces and territories joined Confederation, the adaptation of Section 93 determined if and how separate schools would be accommodated. Provincial "schools questions" arose, often

transforming into significant divisive federal political issues when the rights of francophone and Catholic minorities in the provinces were eroded by the prevailing wishes of the Protestant and English-speaking majorities.

Public schooling developed at different times and at different paces in various parts of the country, depending upon the settlement patterns of the area. In addition to the creation of mass public schooling, many Indigenous children were subjected to the residential schooling system in Canada, which began in 1880 and carried on for nearly 100 years. Other forms of racial segregation also occurred within the public schooling system in various parts of the country. Black students attended segregated schools in many parts of Ontario and Nova Scotia, while Japanese and Chinese students faced segregation in British Columbia.

11.2 The Structure of Education in Canada

11.2.1 Pre-elementary, Elementary and Secondary Programs

Uniquely, Canada is the only country in the world with no federal education department (OECD 2011). Instead, the 13 jurisdictions (10 provinces and 3 territories) are responsible for the delivery, organization, and evaluation of education. This decentralization of decision making to individual jurisdictions was determined in 1867 and is explicitly declared in Canada's Constitution Act. One reason for this decentralization was to protect the interests of the different populations who inhabited the particular parts of the country, as strong ethnic and religious differences existed by region.

The structure of education is, however, very similar across the country, although there are notable differences between

jurisdictions, which are due to the unique historical, cultural, geographical, and political circumstances upon which they were developed. Each jurisdiction is guided by its own *Education Act*, which is a detailed legal document that outlines how education will be organized and delivered, along with student eligibility criteria, duties of employees (teachers, principals, superintendents, and support staff), accountability measures, and different types of programs available.

There are many costs associated with education, including the staffing of institutions at various levels and the cost of the land and buildings (and their maintenance) in which they are housed. In 2006, Canada spent 6.1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010).

Education spending in relation to GDP is often used in international comparisons because the amount of money a country spends on education is regarded as a measure by which to evaluate the relative importance that a country places on the education and training of its citizens. Such investments are known to improve the economic productivity of a country and promote economic growth. The average amount spent by the OECD countries was 5.7 percent. In Canada, around 40 percent of the 6.1 percent was invested in tertiary education, which places Canada (along with the United States) as the largest spender on this segment of the educational sector. The amount of money spent on education from all three levels of government each year is about $80 billion and represents around a quarter of total public expenditures.

In general, education in Canada can be split into four distinct sets of programs: pre-elementary, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary.

In Canada, public education is free to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents. All jurisdictions require mandatory attendance for children and youth between certain ages, although this varies by area. The age at which schooling becomes compulsory is generally around 6 or 7 (as of a certain date determined by the jurisdiction). Compulsory education ages are obviously lower for

jurisdictions where pre-elementary is also mandatory, like New Brunswick. The minimum age at which youth may terminate their school attendance also varies by jurisdiction. In most jurisdictions, the age is 16. In recent years, attention has been paid to increasing the age at which youth can leave school. The rationale for such an age increase is that in order for young adults to have the necessary skills to compete in the labour market, they will require the basic skills of education that is provided up to the age of 18. Much research also points to the poor employment prospects for high school dropouts. New Brunswick increased its age of compulsory education from 16 to 18 in 1999, as did Ontario in 2007.[1] At the time of writing, the government of Alberta was currently moving toward increasing the school-leaving age from 16 to 17.

In Canada, public education from kindergarten to the end of secondary education is provided free of charge to Canadian citizens and residents if they complete their secondary education by a certain age maximum (often 19). Expenditure on public education comes from municipal, provincial, federal, and private sources. Schools receive a per-pupil amount, which is a fixed amount of money for each student enrolled in the school (or in secondary school may be associated with number of credit hours in which the student is enrolled). In some jurisdictions, *private schools* also receive funding. Private schools, or independent schools, are different from public schools in that they do not receive (complete) funding from any government sources and can select their own students and charge tuition. In general, private schools that receive no government funding are not required to follow the provincial or territorial curriculum. Six jurisdictions provide partial funding for private schools (a percentage of the provincial per pupil amount) if they meet certain criteria, such as following the provincial/territorial curriculum and employing provincially certified teachers.

Public and separate school systems that are publicly funded serve about 93 percent of all students in Canada. Jurisdictions west of (and including) Quebec provide partial funding for private schools if certain criteria, which vary among jurisdictions, are met. No funding

for private schools is provided in the other jurisdictions, although they still may be regulated.

The term **school governance** refers to the way that a school system is governed, or run. At the provincial and territorial levels, each province/territory has at least one department or ministry that is responsible for education, which is headed by a publicly elected minister who is appointed to this position by the party leader of the province/territory. At the provincial/territorial government level, these ministries and departments define the policy and legislative frameworks to guide practice and also function to provide administrative and financial management.[8]

At a local level, the governance of education lies in the hands of smaller units. These units vary in what they are called and how individuals acquire positions in such organizations. These local units of governance are called school boards, school divisions, school districts, or district education councils. Their powers and tasks vary according to provincial and territorial jurisdiction, but usually include the administration of a group of schools (including the financial aspects), setting of school policies, hiring of teachers, curriculum implementation, and decisions surrounding new major expenditures. All provinces and territories have public school boards, which represent the local governance of public education for K–12 education in a particular geographic region. Historically, school boards have been regarded as democratically elected organizations which give the public a say in elementary and secondary education (Howell 2005). In addition to public school boards, separate school boards also exist in some provinces.

In all provinces and territories, the local governance of education is staffed with locally elected officials, who run during municipal elections. Often these officials are called *school trustees*. Depending on the province or territory, school trustee positions are often voluntary or associated with a small stipend rather than being a full-time paid position. School boards meet regularly throughout the school year and the public are often invited to attend meetings. School trustees will have different jobs depending on the particular

jurisdiction in which they are working. In some jurisdictions, school boards have the authority to levy a local tax on property to supplement local education. In such jurisdictions, such school boards have more control over the budgets of their district.

In addition to school boards and trustees, school boards are usually responsible for hiring a board superintendent, who serves as the chief executive officer for that school board. The superintendent is not a member of the school board but oversees the general supervision of the school system and implements policies that the board recommends.

School councils are also an important part of the structure of education in Canada. They usually are made up of parent volunteers, teachers, non-teaching staff, community members, and sometimes students who provide recommendations to the school principal and, in some cases, the school board. Many school councils are also active in organizing social events and fundraising. School councils have become required in many jurisdictions, which is one way the government has created parental involvement in education (Brien and Stelmach 2009), although critics may see it as a way of *regulating* parental involvement in education.

In Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, *separate school boards* operate along with public school boards. Separate school boards are denominationally based and generally represent schools that are associated with the Catholic faith, although a handful of Protestant school boards do exist. Separate school boards have their roots in the British North America (Constitution) Act of 1867, which provided some protection for denominational schools that existed prior to Confederation. The purpose of the act was to protect and prevent provincial governments from tampering with denominational schools that existed in Upper and Lower Canada prior to Confederation (at the time, entirely Protestant and Catholic, representing the English and French) and to protect minorities living in each part of Canada (Protestants in Lower Canada, Catholics in Upper Canada). The Protestant school boards in English Canada largely moved into the secular school system.

The term alternative school very broadly refers to a school that differs somehow in its delivery of education from mainstream public schools. In many provinces, alternative schools exist within the public school system. In general, alternative schools emphasize particular languages, cultures (e.g., Indigenous), or subject matter (e.g., arts), or they use a specific teaching philosophy. Often, alternative schools at the high school level are geared specifically toward children and youth who are deemed to be at a high risk of dropping out of school. For example, the alternative school programs in British Columbia and Quebec are mostly dedicated to this population and often have classroom setups, schedules, and curricula that are modified to accommodate this particular group of young people. Many alternative schools also emphasize small class sizes and year-round programming.

In Alberta, for example, publicly funded and administered alternative programs specialize in fine arts, French immersion, German, hockey, science, and Montessori. Montessori is a teaching philosophy developed by Italian educator Maria Montessori in the late nineteenth century that focuses on learning through child-centred and child-led experiential learning and by the natural development of children's learning through pursuing their interests, rather than formal teaching practices. Montessori schools are generally oriented toward young children. In Ontario, a wide variety of alternative schools are offered by the district school boards, particularly in urban centres like Ottawa and Toronto.

Charter schools are special types of alternative schools that are semi-autonomous, tuition-free public education institutions that are unique in that they organize the delivery of education in a specialized way that is thought to enhance student learning. Currently in Canada, charter schools exist only in Alberta, and have been part of that province's education system since 1994. Charter schools deliver the provincially mandated curriculum in a unique way that is spelled out in its *charter*, which is a formal agreement between the administration of the charter school and the minister of learning.

Charter schools provide basic education in a unique, different, or "enhanced" manner that characterizes the charter school in its own unique way. One major difference between charter schools and other alternative schools is that the governance of charter schools is undertaken by members of the charter board instead of the local school authority or district. The charter board typically comprises parents, teachers, and community members, unlike the governance of other public schools, which is undertaken by officials elected by public ballot.

In general, private schools are schools that are owned and operated outside of the public authority (Magnuson 1993). In Canada, private schools often do not receive any government funding and instead charge tuition fees. Because education is a provincial matter, however, the funding of private schools varies across Canada. In British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec, some funding is given to private schools, provided they meet a variety of conditions, such as employing accredited teachers and teaching the provincial curriculum. Alberta provides the largest funding of private schools in Canada, funding up to 70 percent of the per student amount.

The regulation of private schools varies greatly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Those that partially fund students require that students meet a number of conditions, while those that do not receive funding are not subject to monitoring. In Ontario, the private schools are neither funded nor monitored, except at the secondary level in the case where the school is offering credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Around 7 percent of all school-aged children in Canada attend private schools, which has grown slightly from 1994 when the figure was around 4.5 percent (Lefebvre, Merrigan, and Verstraete 2011). The numbers, however, vary considerably among the jurisdictions. Around 10 percent of all school-aged children in Quebec are in subsidized private education. In British Columbia, the total percentage of school-aged children in subsidized private education is around 9 percent, compared to just under 5 percent in Alberta

and around one percent in Saskatchewan (Lefebvre, Merrigan, and Verstraete 2011, citing Marois 2005).

In Canada, the best-known private school is Upper Canada College, which is a boys' school located in Toronto that has been in operation since 1829. Upper Canada College has among its alumni several lieutenants governor, premiers, and mayors. The school has a reputation for being the school of choice for wealthy and influential Canadians, having tuition fees of around $30 000 per year.

In Canada, home-based learning, or home schooling, is permitted in all provinces and territories. In such arrangements, children do not attend school, but are educated at home, usually by a parent. Because each province and territory has its own Education Act, the regulations around home schooling vary by jurisdiction. In the majority of jurisdictions home schooled students must be registered with the department of education. In Saskatchewan, parents must apply to the local school authority for permission to home school their children.

Funding for home schooled children also varies considerably by jurisdiction, with the majority offering no funding to parents who home school. Notable exceptions are British Columbia, which funds $250 per home schooled child if that child is registered with the public school district, and Alberta, which gives 16 percent of the basic per-pupil amount directly to the parent. In some jurisdictions, home schooled students registered with the local school district have access to textbooks, learning materials, and equipment.

While home schooled children typically follow provincial curricula, an alternative approach to home schooling is called ***unschooling***, a term coined by home schooling advocate John Holt (Holt 1981). Holt believed that the schools system was fundamentally flawed, and therefore heavily endorsed home schooling. He believed, however, that to replicate a classroom experience in the home would be to replicate the flaws in the present system. He believed that children are natural students possessing great

curiosity and are eager to learn when they are free to pursue their own interests.

Unschooling is home-based education without curriculum, schedules, tests, or grades. The approach is entirely child-led. Topics are pursued as children show interest in them. It is not known how many children are "unschooled" in Canada as they would usually be classified as home schooled.

Listen to CBC Radio One, "Unschooling: Part Two"

The Canadian Charter guarantees parents the right to educate their children in their first language if it is English or French. French-language schools are present in every province and territory, and in order to attend a child must have at least one parent who is a native French speaker.

French immersion programs are for students whose first language is not French and is available in all jurisdictions, except New Brunswick. All classes are taught in French except for English. The goal of French immersion education is to develop linguistic excellence in the French language. In New Brunswick, changes in 2008 resulted in the termination of French immersion programs, which were replaced by intensive French instruction for all anglophone students beginning in Grade 5.

French immersion is widely supported because it promotes bilingualism. Some critics, however, have argued that French immersion actually promotes *streaming* of children. Willms (2008) found that French immersion students differ from English instruction students in a variety of important ways. French immersion students tend to be from significantly higher socioeconomic backgrounds, less likely to be male, less likely to have a learning disability (or be in special education), and have better performance on standardized tests. These differences are not the outcome of French immersion per se, but rather factor

into the selection of students into such programs. Because French immersion programs are academically challenging, higher-ability children are more likely to be enrolled in such programs, while children who struggle in school would be discouraged from enrolling. Children in French immersion also come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and are more likely to have parents with university degrees, indicating that economic factors also play a role in who attends French immersion (Worswick 2003).

About two-thirds of First Nations peoples live off reserve and their children attend provincially run schools. The Constitution Act of 1867 (and later the consolidation of many Aboriginal-related laws into the Indian Act of 1876) stated that the Crown is responsible for the education for First Nations people who live on reserves. Inuits do not live on reserves but typically in municipal areas which would have territorially funded education, while Métis children living on Métis settlements would attend provincially run on-settlement schools. Specifically, it is the federal government's responsibility to provide and fund primary and secondary education on First Nations reserves. About one in five First Nations children are educated on reserve, with the remaining attending schools under provincial jurisdiction (Richards 2009).

Elementary and secondary on-reserve education is managed by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), which runs programs that oversee the instruction of on-reserve schools and reimburses the tuition costs for students who attend off-reserve schools (which are under provincial jurisdiction). It should be noted that AANDC has undergone a name change in 2011 and previously was known as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development since the mid-1950s. Federal policy indicates that on-reserve educational services are to be comparable to those provided by the province in off-reserve public schools.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (now known as the Assembly of First Nations) presented the federal government with a written policy on First Nations education entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*. As indicated by its title, this document outlined

the importance of local control, parental involvement, and culturally relevant curriculum. The DIAND was quick to respond to the position paper, handing over administrative control of on-reserve schools to the bands in the same year. There are over 500 band-operated schools on First Nations reserves in Canada, with only a few being managed by DIAND (Simeone 2011). Approximately $1.8 billion will be spent in 2012–2013 to fund the on-reserve education of around 120 000 First Nations primary and secondary school students. Most, but not all, on-reserve schools are at the kindergarten and primary level, however. Around 40 percent of normally on-reserve students attend school off-reserve in provincially run and private schools because of the absence of secondary schools on many reserves. Children of secondary-school age must often commute long distances or move off reserve in order to attend secondary school.

An important exception to federal control over First Nations education occurred in 1975, when the Cree community of James Bay, located in Northern Quebec, established its own school board. Prior to this, children were being sent off reserve to be educated in residential schools. The establishment of the Cree School Board signalled protection of Cree culture and the education of their children in their own language and traditions.[16] The school board function is recognized within Quebec's Education Act and is funded by both the federal and Quebec governments (Mendelson 2008).

In 2008, the Canadian government committed $70 million over two years to improving and reforming First Nations K–12 education.[17] There is considerable evidence to indicate that on-reserve schools are not comparable to provincial schools in many aspects, given that the educational outcomes of First Nations students lag so far behind those of other Canadians. First Nations community leaders, policy-makers, and politicians have repeatedly called for overhauls to the First Nations education system with the aim of improving outcomes for First Nations students. The specific reforms that have been suggested vary by province, but include partnerships between provincially run schools and First Nations

groups, and agreements that give First Nations groups more control over the education of their children and allow them to deliver an education program that is more culturally relevant.

More recent similar agreements have been reached by other First Nations groups, provincial education authorities, and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In 1997, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs approached the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with the idea of making a Mi'kmaq Education Authority to service the 13 different Mi'kmaq communities in the province with culturally relevant and self-governed education. In 1999, after much debate, the Mi'kmaq Education Act was incorporated into federal law and the jurisdiction of the education in these areas was transferred to the Mi'kmaq Nation (Mendelson 2009).

More recently, the B.C. First Nations have been working together with provincial and federal authorities to make amendments to First Nations education laws in their province. In 2007, the First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act was passed which created a new First Nations Education Authority in British Columbia. The resulting education authority will be run by First Nations and responsible for the K–12 program in participating First Nations, including curriculum and teacher training (Mendelson 2009).

Not all Canadian elementary and secondary schools are physically located in Canada. There are schools in Antilles, China, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Singapore, St. Lucia, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and United Arab Emirates that use the curriculum of one of the provinces in Canada. Provincial ministries inspect the schools, which offer credits toward Canadian secondary diplomas. These schools are not publicly funded. Such schools are English speaking and often cater to globally mobile professional families (Hayden and Thompson 2008).

11.2.2 Post-Secondary Education

In Canada, post-secondary education is available at a range of government-supported and private institutions across the country. Such public institutions receive a substantial amount (50 percent or more) of their operating capital from the government and do not operate for a profit. Such institutions provide various credentials after completion of a program of study, such as degrees, diplomas, certificates, and attestations (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2008). While the ability to grant degrees has traditionally been solely the domain of universities, recent changes in some jurisdictions now allow colleges and private universities to award some types of degrees. According to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, a "*recognized postsecondary institution* is a private or public institution that has been given full authority to grant degrees, diplomas, and other credentials by a public or private act of the provincial or territorial legislature or through a government-mandated quality assurance mechanism."[18]

There are 163 universities (public and private) in Canada, as well as 183 public colleges and institutes (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2011). Other institutions at the university (almost 70) and college (about 50) level have selected programs that meet the requirements of quality assurance at the level of the jurisdiction.

Post-secondary education in Canada is funded through a combination of municipal, provincial, federal, and private funds, which vary considerably by province and territory. Student tuition fees make up around 20 percent of the funding of post-secondary education.

Canadian public universities grant undergraduate degrees that range from three to four years, depending on the program of study, as well as some types of specialized diplomas. The word "university" is a legally protected term that can be applied only to institutions that meet the requirements outlined in the province or territorial University Act and which have been given such recognition by the

regulatory body. Universities exist for the primary purposes of granting degrees and conducting research. The mission statements of universities emphasize non-economic objectives (Orton 2009) and the importance of the pursuit of knowledge.

As a major expectation of universities is the active research program of its academic community, an important element of academic life on university campuses is the principle of academic freedom. **Academic freedom** refers to the ability of researchers to teach, conduct research, publish, and communicate their academic findings and ideas without being at risk of losing their jobs or being otherwise penalized if their results are deemed controversial. In universities, *tenure* is a mechanism that ensures academic freedom for faculty members. Tenure refers to the process by which junior professors are found to meet the rigorous requirements of a given institution in the fields of teaching, research, and university service, and are granted permanent status wherein they cannot be dismissed without just cause. It has been argued that without this type of job security, academics may not pursue difficult or controversial topics and only research "safe" topics so as to not risk losing their jobs.

In addition to undergraduate degrees, many universities offer post-graduate study at the master's and doctoral level. Master's programs usually last one or two years, while doctoral programs are three years or longer. Universities can be divided into four general types: primarily undergraduate, comprehensive, medical doctoral, and special purpose (Orton 2009). Primarily undergraduate universities are those that focus on undergraduate degrees (mostly bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees) and have few or no graduate program offerings. Comprehensive universities are those that are characterized by a wide range of programs at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels, and also have a high degree of research activity. Medical doctoral universities are those that have a wide offering of PhD programs in addition to medical schools. And are those that specialize in a particular field of study, awarding most degrees in a specific field.

Canadian universities are considered autonomous, non-profit corporations (Jones, Shanahan, and Goyan 2001), which were created in jurisdiction-specific acts or charters. Public universities have much freedom in their governance as they are permitted to set their own admission requirements and program offerings. Interventions by the government are limited to concerns around fee increases and student funding (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2011). In terms of governance, public universities usually have two tiers of structure: a board of governors and a senate. The characteristic of having these two legislative bodies for the purpose of university governance is known as bicameralism (Jones, Shanahan, and Goyan 2001). The vast majority of Canadian universities have adopted bicameralism since the 1960s, although the composition of the board of governors and senate can vary considerably between institutions.

Governing boards at a university tend to comprise persons of various backgrounds, including alumni (Jones 2002), although typically about two-thirds of the board are from outside the university. Faculty, students, and senior university administration (such as deans and the president) also typically sit on the board. The tasks of the board of governors are typically focused on issues related to policy and finances. In contrast, the major tasks associated with the university senate tend to be focused on academic matters, such as programs of study, admission requirements, appeals, and program planning. University senates are typically comprised of faculty, students, and senior university administrators. The rationale behind having a bicameralist system is historically rooted in the attempts to balance both academic and public interests within the formal organizational governance structure of the university (Jones 2002).

While the senate may be responsible for academic matters, and governing boards for administrative matters, a third source of decision making is found in the administrative structure of the university itself (Jones 2002). A university has a president who is appointed by the governing board. The job of the president is to

attend to the day-to-day affairs of the institution and delegate authority within a structure of central administrative structure. In addition to the president, there are also at least two vice-presidents, deans of faculties, and heads of individual university departments. While there are many specific differences in the roles of each administrative position according to particular universities, one common role that the university president plays is serving as the official linkage between the university and the provincial government (Jones 2002). Also, the selection of higher-level administrative roles including the president and deans employs a participatory process, which includes a *search committee* comprised of various members of the university community, often including students (Jones 2002).

Faculty associations have also played an important role in university administration in the last few decades, with unonized and non-unionized faculty associations in place at most Canadian universities (Jones 2002). Such associations, particularly those that are unionized, have significant influence in the area of faculty salaries, workload, tenure, and promotion and academic freedom. Often, faculty associations include members other than full-time professors, including part-time faculty and librarians.

Student participation in the governance of universities increased in the 1960s and 1970s (Jones 2002), with *student associations* existing on all campuses. Usually university students are mandatory fee-paying members of at least one student association. The services that are offered by student associations vary according to campus, but can range from running businesses like campus pubs and restaurants, to printing a student paper, organizing student social activities and campus events, and monitoring institutional policies and practices (Jones 2002).

There are literally thousands of colleges (sometimes called *institutes*) in Canada, ranging from those that grant degrees to those which provide specialized training in specific job-related skills, such as agriculture, arts, or paramedical training. Many private colleges that offer specific job skill training are called *career colleges*. Of all

colleges in Canada, about 150 are recognized public institutions, with this figure including CEGEPS in Quebec (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2011). Colleges and institutes are legislated under provincial College Acts (or their equivalent, depending on the jurisdiction) and have a primary purpose of education (rather than research and education, as in universities). Mission statements of colleges usually emphasize economic objectives (Orton 2009).

While Indigenous students attend various post-secondary institutions across Canada, there are over 20 First Nations community colleges located throughout Canada as well as one university. Some of the First Nations colleges are in association with provincial universities and colleges.

Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) was the first Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary education institution in Canada that granted degrees. It was established in 1976 and is associated with the University of Regina. The mission of the university is

> to enhance the quality of life, and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of First Nations. The First Nations University of Canada will acquire and expand its base of knowledge and understanding in the best interests of First Nations and for the benefit of society by providing opportunities of quality bi-lingual and bi-cultural education under the mandate and control of the First Nations of Saskatchewan. The First Nations University of Canada is a First Nations' controlled university which provides educational opportunities to both First Nations and non-First Nations university students selected from a provincial, national and international base.[20] (First Nations University of Canada website http://www.fnuniv. ca/index.php/mission. Used with permission.)

This is the only Aboriginal-controlled university in Canada. There are three regional campuses in Saskatchewan and they are located

in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Starting out with only nine students in 1976, the First Nations University of Canada now has a steady enrolment of about 1200 students per year, mostly at the undergraduate level, although some master's programs have recently started to be offered. Students are attracted from all the provinces and territories.

Vocational training generally refers to a multi-year program of study that provides instruction in a skill or trade that leads a student to a job in that particular skill or trade. Such training can be acquired in secondary schools as well as at the post-secondary level. Public colleges and institutes as well as private colleges offer many programs that lead to vocational credentials. In addition to post-secondary institutions, workplace-based apprenticeship programs also exist. There are two ways that a person can enter an apprenticeship program: (1) by completing a pre-apprenticeship program through a college or vocational school, and then securing work with an employer to whom the apprentice is contracted to work for a fixed period of time, or (2) by securing work and then being sponsored by an employer into an apprenticeship program (Schuetze 2003).

The training of an apprentice combines work supervised by a qualified journey-person combined with in-class learning. Traditional trades training has been comprised of around 80 percent on-the-job training with 20 percent classroom teaching (often referred to as *block release* wherein apprentices are in school full-time for a period of four to six weeks). Apprenticeship training spans between 6000 and 8000 hours, which can take about three to five years to complete (seasonal work will take longer as the training can take place for only a limited time each year). After successful training, the apprentice takes an exam to become a certified journeyperson (Scheutze 2003).

Apprenticeships are a relatively small part of the workforce in Canada, comprising only about one percent of the total labour force. The average age of a person in apprentice training is significantly higher than those in other post-secondary pathways—28 years of

age (Scheutze 2003). There are around 150 registered trades in Canada, the majority of which serve the manufacturing, resource, and construction sectors of the economy. Trades and their requirements vary by province, although an interprovincial list of "Red Seal" trades has been established to allow for the competencies of a person's trade to be tested so that they can practise their trade across Canada and are not limited to the jurisdiction in which their training occurred. There are currently 52 trades that are Red Seal, including baker, ironworker, machinist, hairstylist, cook, plumber, powerline technician, roofer, tilesetter, welder, and pipefitter.

The term **adult education** (or adult learning) refers to participation in education by the adult population aged between 25 and 64. The definition refers to people who are not in the *initial cycle* of their education (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010; Kerr 2011). The initial cycle of education refers to education pursued in primary and secondary institutions and often includes post-secondary education when completed in young adulthood. Adult learners comprise the segment of the population who often have come back to education after a period (sometimes a lengthy period) in the workforce or out of the labour force completely. The changing nature of work and the rapid development of technology mean that education is often not confined to the initial cycle of life any longer. There is an increased requirement for individuals to learn throughout the lifespan for various reasons, including keeping on top of the most recent changes in technology in the knowledge economy (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010).

Adult education can generally be broken into two broad types: *formal* and *non-formal* (Rubenson, Kjell, Desjardins, and Yoon 2007). Formal adult education occurs in a structured manner and leads to formal credentials, like degrees, certificates, or diplomas. In contrast, non-formal adult education consists of organized learning activities that do not result in formal credentials, such as workshops and seminars (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010). In 2008, just over 40 percent of adults aged 25 to 64 had participated in

some form of formal or non-formal education (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010).

Adult learning is often referred to as continuing education. Indeed, many post-secondary institutions have established their own faculties of continuing education, offering credited programs within their colleges and universities. Seen as an increasingly necessary part of life, continued learning exists for employees in all types of sectors, from government employees at all levels, to workers in health-related professions, to members of trade unions. Adult education takes place in a variety of settings including churches, offices, libraries, and lecture halls.

11.3 The Role of Curriculum in Education

Curriculum is the content of schooling. It is that which is learned in the schooling environment. This is not limited simply to familiar subjects like mathematics, science, or reading. The curriculum is significantly more far-reaching. It also prepares students to become future workers and citizens. And it is because of this socializing nature of the curriculum that it is a topic of enormous sociological interest.

The curriculum is a social construction with many embedded and taken-for-granted assumptions about what knowledge should be transmitted to young people. Who decides what goes into the curriculum? What assumptions about knowledge are engrained in Canadian curricular practices?

Because education is under provincial and territorial jurisdiction in Canada, each province and territory has its own ministry of education that has an official curriculum guide for teachers to follow. These are official documents and the following of the curricular guides is mandatory for teachers. Curriculum guides tell teachers what should be taught and when (i.e., in what order and how much time to allocate to specific topics). The detail of the

curricular documents, however, varies greatly from province to province. The method by which the teacher chooses to teach the topic is entirely up to them. Teachers learn about ways of teaching specific topics as part of their teacher training (which also follows curricular guidelines, but at a post-secondary level).

Developments in curriculum cannot be completely understood if the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they occurred are not taken into account. The content of what is taught at school has been an ideological battleground, with various religious, economic, cultural, and political advocacy groups playing major roles at different points in history. A thorough overview is well beyond the scope of this module, but a brief summary (drawn primarily from the much more thorough overview given by Tomkins 2008) will help contextualize major curricular shifts that have happened across this vast country.

Until the 1840s, education was largely in the hands of the family and the church. Prior to this time, Canada was a pre-industrial society which was mostly based upon agriculture. In New France and English Canada, a systematic curriculum for the education of young people was not established until the 1840s. The 1600s, however, marked the creation of the *Jesuit Ratio Studiorum* in New France, which was a plan of studies for males who wanted to enter the priesthood. In 1635, the Jesuit College was founded in Quebec, which provided training of priests, as well as males of the upper classes pursuing esteemed vocations. Formal schooling at this point in time was largely limited to the social elite. Similarly, the education of girls in Quebec coincided with the arrival of the Ursulines (a Catholic order of nuns) in 1639. Their school, opened in 1657, focused on teaching the doctrine of the Catholic church, but also the "three Rs" (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Domestic skills were also included in the curriculum. Education in Upper Canada and the remainder of what is now known as Canada was not established until later in the nineteenth century due to lack of settlement.

Canada's population dramatically increased between 1892 and

1920 due to mass immigration. During this time, about four million new inhabitants arrived in Canada. The Yukon (1898), Alberta, and Saskatchewan (both in 1905) also joined Confederation between these years, adding to Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba, which had joined earlier. Canada at this time was engaged in country-building and the "Canadianization" of new immigrants, which continued to be an overarching curricular objective. Growth of Canadian schools at this time is also greatly attributable to laws instituted around compulsory attendance. All provinces except Quebec had mandatory attendance laws by 1920. Increased enrolments and population growth meant the massive expansion of the Canadian education system.

In the early 1900s, *New Education* was introduced in English Canada, which incorporated less traditional topics of study into the classroom. Traditionally, the subjects covered in formal schooling focused mainly on English (literature and grammar), mathematics, learning Latin, and the rote learning of historical dates and geography. New Education introduced the subjects of home economics ("domestic science"), agricultural studies, and physical education to the curriculum, but not with uniform success. Kindergarten was also introduced as a New Education reform. At this point in history, the major purpose of public education in English Canada was to assimilate the large numbers of new immigrants at the time to dominant Anglo-Saxon values and to keep the Canadian curriculum free of American influence.

In the 1920s, New Education and similar reform efforts continued to gain popularity as British educators (influenced by progressive movements in the United States) continued to argue that education should be more encompassing than just the three Rs. Learning purely through memorization was also regarded as a less acceptable pedagogical practice than it had been in the past, with more attention being shifted to the possibilities of students engaging in experiential learning. The late 1930s and early 1940s saw the

beginnings of the progressive education movement, which is a pedagogical approach that prioritizes experiential learning (i.e., learning through doing and experiencing) over the amassing and memorization of facts. Reforms of this era were characterized as being more child-centred, activity-based, integrating various subjects where possible (Lemisko and Clausen 2006). For example, social studies emerged as a subject, which was the result of combining geography, civic education, and history. The content of this course, offered across grade levels, was based upon developing democratic and cooperative behaviour through experiential learning. Alberta led all provinces in adopting major revisions to the curriculum in the late 1930s that promoted progressive education, with other provinces following in the 1940s.

Although a mandate of Ryerson and many other education advocates of his time (and later) across Canada was to avoid American influences in curriculum, many American ideas found their way into Canadian curriculum in the post-war years, including the idea of scientific testing. The cultural content of the English Canadian curriculum, however, remained British. In fact, throughout curriculum development in Canada, there have often been marked efforts to keep the curriculum "Canadian" and culturally distinct from that used in the United States (Sumara, Davis, and Laidlaw 2001). Topics of study were British, although education influences were recommendations that had been adapted from prominent British educators through the influence of American education advocates.[2]

The Cold War era, or the years following the Second World War, was associated with competition and political tension between the Soviet Union and its communist allies and the Western world—primarily the United States. Competition between the opposing sides manifested itself in two important ways. The first was the "Space Race"—which referred to a rivalry between sides as to which nation could lead in technological space exploration. The second area of major competition was the more ominous Nuclear Arms Race, in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged in the

stockpiling of nuclear arsenals. In these years the English Canadian curriculum followed the American lead and added more curricular emphasis on science and mathematics to reflect public opinion that remaining competitive with the Russians (who were thought to excel in these areas) was paramount.

The mid-1960s is associated with another major shift in curriculum across Canada. In English Canada, much pressure was put on the educational system to change in order to respond to the newer values and worldviews emerging at the time. In addition to less centralized control of schools and an increase in the regional specificities of courses of study, schools had to respond to demands from students and members of the public who had various concerns. Students wanted more "practical" knowledge that also reflected a more diverse (non-British) population. Advocacy groups cropped up in the form of federal agencies, consumer organizations, organized labour, and human rights organizations. These groups viewed classrooms as an ideal place to cultivate their desired social changes. Many rights movements also occurred in the 1960s—Aboriginal Civil Rights activism (as well as the Civil Rights movement in the United States) and the second wave of feminism across Canada, the UK, and the United States drew attention to racial and gender inequalities. During this period, advocacy groups representing Indigenous and various minority groups moved to press for multicultural, non-sexist, and non-racist treatments of subject matter.

At the same time that pressures were being made to make the English Canadian curriculum more progressive, the Quiet Revolution was occurring in Quebec. Up to this point, the schools in Quebec were run by the Catholic Church. In the early 1960s, Quebec completely overhauled its education system, replacing Catholic Church leadership with government administration. The reasons for this change were manifold, but at the core was the desire of the leaders in French Canada to achieve a workforce that had the essential qualifications to modernize Quebec both economically and culturally. In the 1970s, Quebec introduced controversial legislation

that required all new immigrant children (which included children from other Canadian provinces) to be educated in French rather than English. These school reforms were all considered essential by leaders who sought to overturn what they believed to be a francophone disadvantage resulting from of hundreds of years of marginalization under Church and British domination.

Since the 1970s, additional shifts have occurred in curriculum across Canada. The 1980s was marked by an increase in centralization (after decentralization in the 1960s) to create more accountability. Standardized testing was re-introduced (after having previously been abandoned) and more focus was again placed on skill performance in reading, writing, and mathematics. Teachers resisted these top-down demands and insisted on being included in decisions around curriculum reform. The inclusion of teachers in curriculum reform became accepted practice in the 1980s.

The 1990s were again characterized by large reforms in several provinces that were in response to various factors including the perceived poor performance of Canadian students in international rankings as well as high dropout rates. Inclusiveness was also emphasized in the reforms, with efforts to engage and represent a wider diversity of perspectives. A basic core academic curriculum, to be completed by all, was supplemented with alternative subjects within which a student could pursue his or her own interests. This new curriculum was adopted with the mandate of responding to the diversity of the population and better preparing young people for the labour force. New high school curriculum emphasized career-related skills (e.g., skills in technology and communication) in addition to academic study, with the intention of preparing students to be productive future citizens with a variety of skill sets. An anticipated outcome of accommodating a more diverse student population was the retention of students who would otherwise be at high risk for dropping out.

While curriculum has historically been provincially specific to fit the needs of a diverse population, the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) was established in 1967 in order for provinces

to collaborate on common curricular goals. The CMEC has, for example, coordinated a number of student assessments that are administered across the country. The first development of CMEC was the Pan-Canadian Science Project (PCSP), which was aimed at producing a science curriculum with the same learning outcomes across all provinces and territories for kindergarten through to Grade 12. Science was chosen as the first area of cooperation due to the perceived importance of scientific literacy in the wider scope of the economy, and in order to keep up with the American science curriculum reforms that had been underway since the early 1990s (Percy 1998). The materials on this project are available for individual provincial and territorial jurisdictions to incorporate into their science curricula (Dodd 2002). Many provinces have implemented the PCSP.

In 1995, a Pan-Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in School Curriculum was adopted in order to improve the overall education quality across provinces and territories and also to foster cooperation between the jurisdictions. In 1993, education ministers in the western provinces and the Yukon and Northwest Territories signed the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (K–12), with Nunavut joining in 2000. A similar alliance was created among the Atlantic provinces in 1995 with the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. The mandate of the Western Canadian Protocol and the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation is to create common curriculum outcomes and methods of assessment between the jurisdictions (Dodd 2002).

11.3.1 Influences on Curriculum

While there is general consensus that it is of fundamental importance to educate children and young people, the specific content of that education is subject to debate. Parents are a major

source of influence on the curriculum, as are political/cultural organizations and corporations.

While subjects like reading are regarded as essential skills, what children are permitted to read in class continues to be a topic that can create much debate. The Freedom of Expression Committee (www.freedomtoread.ca) monitors censorship issues in Canada, including books that parents have made cases for removing from school curricula and libraries. Jenkinson (1986) indicates that most advocates of banning particular books in schools are individual parents. The annual lists compiled by the Freedom of Expression Committee reveal that in 2009 at least 74 "challenges" were received by the Canadian Library Association about library holdings that at least one person wished to have removed. In the previous year, this number was 139. For example, in 2008, a parental complaint in Toronto argued for the removal of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* from a Grade 12 English class on the grounds that it used profanity and described violent scenes involving sexual degradation. The school board retained the novel in the curriculum. In 2002, Black parents and teachers in Yarmouth, Digby, and Shelburne, Nova Scotia, challenged Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* on the grounds that they contained language that was derogatory to Black people. Parents expressed concern that it could lead to racial stereotyping and to their own children being mocked. Ultimately, these books were not removed from the school library.

Often, the challenges that parents have are rooted in religious beliefs that they feel are being undermined by curricular content. For example, in 2000, the Durham, Ontario, school board received many complaints that the popular *Harry Potter* books by J. K. Rowling were being read in schools. An official from the school board said that the complaints were coming from fundamentalist Christian parents who were concerned that the wizardry and witchcraft that the main character practised was inappropriate for adolescents. In other jurisdictions across Canada, some teachers have been asked not to use these books in the classroom, and

similar issues have arisen in 19 U.S. states. This is just one of many examples of parents and members of the public "challenging" books in schools.[3]

With regard to science, Darwin's theory of evolution and the Big Bang theory can be viewed as problematic by certain religious groups who believe that the universe and humankind was created by a supreme being. Many fundamentalist groups have opposed the teaching of these topics in the classroom, as they run counter to their own beliefs. They have also suggested that perspectives such as creationism and intelligent design, which support their views, also be taught alongside Darwinism and the Big Bang theory as legitimate alternatives. Many religious groups also oppose the exposure of their children to many topics including sexual health education and climate change. The curriculum varies widely by province, as does teachers' knowledge of the topic (as well as their personal beliefs).

It is not exclusively individual parents who challenge curricular content; sometimes organizations representing political, religious, or cultural viewpoints also oppose curricular materials. In 2006, for example, the Canadian Jewish Congress challenged *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*, by Deborah Ellis.[4] They argued that this book should not be accessible to elementary school children because it presented a flawed and one-sided view of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. While the book was not removed from schools, five school boards in Canada set restrictions on its access (e.g., limiting its access to higher grade levels and requiring that the title be removed from shelves and available only by request).

In 2007, the Council of Turkish Canadians challenged *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide* by Barbara Coloroso on the grounds that the deaths of millions of Armenians during the Ottoman Empire was described as genocide. (The Turkish government disagrees that this was genocide.[5]) This book was to be used in Toronto in a Grade 11 history class on genocide. A committee of the Toronto District School Board deemed the material to be an inappropriate depiction of factual history and it was removed from

the reading list. This decision was met with much protest by writers, Canadian publishers, and the Book and Periodical Council, which led to it being put back on the reading list, but as a social psychological resource on genocide rather than a historical text. This reversal of the decision led the Turkish Embassy to complain to Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The book remains on the reading list at the time of writing.

Many corporations have free resources available for teachers that help with teaching specific topics (Robertson 2005). The corporations provide materials freely to teachers who can easily request them online. A few examples include the Canadian Nuclear Association, which provides "secondary school teachers with access to lesson plans about concepts, issues and people related to the nuclear industry."[6] The resources that are provided are vast and include full lesson plans, downloadable PowerPoint slides, and student assessment materials, all of which are customized to the curriculum requirements of particular jurisdictions. Kellogg's also has nutrition-related educational resources on a special website called missionnutrition.ca, which includes lesson plans and materials for children from kindergarten to Grade 8. Dove Canada offers a "Real Beauty School Program" for teachers that is aimed at improving children's self-esteem. Kraft Canada and Sobeys are major sponsors of Prince Edward Island's Healthy Eating Alliance, which provides several nutrition resources for teachers to use in the classroom.[7] Procter & Gamble has partnered with government health agencies at the provincial and federal level to create a "user-friendly, state of the art, puberty education program" which they call the Always Changing and Vibrant Faces program. Procter & Gamble also offers teaching materials for nutrition education aimed at Grade 4 students and "nose-care" instructional materials geared toward Grade 1 students.

Canada is a country with a diverse population. The official policy of multiculturalism was introduced in 1971 by the Trudeau government and the Multicultural Act, passed in 1988, further guaranteed cultural diversity to Canadians, allowing them to

preserve and share their unique cultural heritages. While the founding immigrant groups of Canada were British and French, immigration to Canada after the World Wars resulted in a population that was much more diverse than simply English, French, and Indigenous. The purpose of the multiculturalism policy was to legitimize the place of the various ethno-cultural groups in Canada. One of the objectives of this policy was to celebrate this diversity of ethno-cultural groups and their contributions to Canadian society. Another was to promote healthy relationships between and among these groups (Ghosh 2004).

Ghosh (2004) identifies five stages of the development of multicultural education in a Canadian context. The first is the *assimilation stage*. Until the adoption of the official policy of multiculturalism, assimilation into an Anglo-dominated culture was expected in English Canada. Differences from the dominant culture were seen as deficiencies that needed to be remedied. The next stage is referred to as the *adaptation stage*, which characterized the practices in education observed shortly after multiculturalism policy was introduced in Canada in the 1970s. Ghosh notes that in this stage, cultural differences were regarded as "exotic." Attention to multicultural topics and cultural diversity was approached with a "museum view": practices specific to particular ethnicities were regarded as romantic cultural artifacts. Sometimes known as the "saris, samosas and steel drums" approach, these first attempts at introducing multiculturalism into education largely failed at fostering integration and tolerance because non-dominant cultures were regarded as strange and exotic and associated only with specific foods, dances, and music.

The third stage of multicultural education in Canada is known as the *accommodation stage*. In this stage, attention shifted to promoting equality of opportunity. This was represented in education by the introduction of topics like ethnic studies, heritage language programs, and the inclusion of gender and ethnic representation in curricula. According to Ghosh (2004), this was realized through a variety of techniques, including removing ethnic

and racial stereotypes from curriculum material, hiring minority teachers, and offering heritage-language courses in schools. Ghosh argues, however, that despite these efforts, the overall Eurocentric content of the curriculum and culture of the education system continued to marginalize ethnic minority students and discriminate against them in both overt and covert ways.

The fourth stage of multicultural education is called *incorporation*. In this stage, attention has shifted to promoting intergroup relations. Within education, this has meant the hiring of more teachers from ethno-cultural groups and the implementation of prejudice-reduction strategies. In this stage, attempts are made at creating alliances between different groups.

The fifth stage is referred to as the *integration stage*, which Ghosh notes is a "radical departure" from the previous stages. In this stage, world views are altogether different. Instead of a Eurocentric White cultural framework as the dominant world view, the orientation at this stage is much more global. Teachers using a *critical race pedagogy* focused on anti-racist education are characteristic of multicultural education in Canada at this stage. This approach to pedagogy in Canada, however, has been used in only a handful of cities and provinces, and usually on an experimental basis (Ghosh 2004).

St. Denis (2007) has argued that Indigenous students have been subjected to processes of racialization that have "historically, legally and politically" divided Indigenous communities. Many critics such as Aikenhead (2006) have argued that school curriculum in Canada has prioritized a Western European scientific way of knowing. This way of knowing is so engrained and taken-for-granted in Western culture that it can be difficult to promote alternative viewpoints. This Western way of knowing tends to emphasize *positivism* and an *ontology* of objective reality, particularly when it comes to science. However, there are other ways of knowing that do not value these particular orientations. As argued by Aikenhead, the Indigenous way of knowing includes an "alternative notion of knowledge as action and wisdom, which combines the ontology of spirituality with

holistic, relational, empirical practices in order to celebrate an ideology of harmony with nature for survival" (p. 387).

Teaching styles in the Canadian classroom are typically task-focused and rely on linear thinking and passive learning. Teaching is based on conveying small units of information rather than on aiming for an understanding of the whole (Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir 2010; Ghosh 2002). These practices are at odds with the Indigenous way of knowing. Critics argue that the Canadian school system has not nurtured Indigenous students' identities by recognizing their ways of knowing, which alienates students and makes them less inclined to want to participate in learning (Aikenhead 2006; Canadian Council on Learning 2007a; Carr 2008; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir 2010). Aikenhead (2006) calls this forcing of Eurocentric views on Indigenous students, and the resulting delegitimization of their ways of knowing, *cognitive imperialism*. Many teachers, however, are not trained to deal with Indigenous ways of knowing, as it is largely absent from teacher training practices across Canada—with some notable exceptions, such as Brock University's specialized degree in Aboriginal Education (Redwing and Hill 2007).

Many scholars, including Schick and St. Denis (2005), have argued that the current approaches to multicultural education have originated from a problematic starting point that views Canadian culture as "raceless, benevolent, and innocent" (p. 296). The authors argue that the common ways of talking about multiculturalism fail to acknowledge that privilege—particularly White privilege—vastly improves the likelihood of individuals overcoming disadvantage. In Canadian popular discourse, racism is thought of as something that occurred in the past—or that happens in the United States—and discussions of racism are considered taboo or ill-mannered. Schick and St. Denis argue that it is imperative for teachers to recognize that White-skin privilege serves to advantage White students and teachers by allowing them to move with ease in a Eurocentric Western environment. For example, the racism that Indigenous peoples faced limited their access to and success in education, but

these same mechanisms served to assist White students. While such students may regard their success as solely the result of hard work, critical race theorists argue that it is necessary to recognize that the system is not as meritocratic as we might believe.

This *myth of meritocracy*—or the present-day belief that White success is due to hard work alone—is a subtle way that White domination is secured in today's society. Critics argue that White student success has been—and continues to be—at the cost of racism against Indigenous and ethno-cultural minorities. The myth of meritocracy secures that belief by perpetuating the notion that people earn their place in society solely based upon how hard they work, regardless of their ascribed characteristics. There is, however, much evidence to the contrary suggesting that systematic racism exists in our society and that it makes it considerably more difficult for non-Whites to achieve to the same level as Whites.

Critical race theorists recognize that teachers may find it offensive to suggest that they may act in (unintentionally) racist ways that are driven by White privilege. They argue that the curriculum and teaching practices are inherently biased insofar as they hold "Whiteness" as the invisible norm against which ethnic and cultural minorities are compared. For example, the achievements of Indigenous and minority students are compared to the achievements of White students—who have had access to and enjoyed the privileges associated with being members of the dominant culture—which Schick and St. Denis argue is an unfair benchmark from which to begin evaluations. According to Schick and St. Denis (2005), anti-racist pedagogy is a teaching approach that better promotes an effective multicultural curriculum because it requires that teachers and students recognize how White privilege has increased their life chances. Students and teachers are made aware of how one's life chances are not solely determined by meritocracy and that there is evidence that subtle forms of racism have secured the benefits of White privilege (e.g., living in a "good neighbourhood" and attending a well-resourced school), although

such conversations will naturally make them feel uncomfortable (and often defensive).

There have been some promising starts in fostering a truly multicultural curriculum that recognizes *alternative ways of knowing*. **Alternative ways of knowing** refers to worldviews that are different than the dominant Western scientific manner in which knowledge in acquired in Canada (and elsewhere). Indigenous communities have argued that the contemporary classroom in Canada favours a Eurocentric view of the world that is strongly tied to the scientific method. Aboriginal ways of knowing are based often on oral history, tradition, and practical application. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education has started to include Indigenous knowledge in the kindergarten to Grade 12 science curricula. A guide for helping teachers bring Indigenous knowledge into the classroom has also been developed in consultation with Indigenous educators. In Saskatchewan, Indigenous elders and other cultural advisers are brought into schools for the purpose of linking students to this knowledge. In consultation with Elders, researchers have developed teaching materials for science education for Grades 6 through 12 (Canadian Council on Learning 2007a).

Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir (2010) have noted that part of the problem of addressing White privilege in the classroom has been the unpreparedness of teachers who have not had exposure and education in Indigenous ways of knowing. They suggest that all pre-service teachers be familiar with Indigenous education and have opportunities to participate in courses and activities that give them adequate exposure to these issues. They note that innovative programming in teacher education is occurring in Canada at some teacher training programs. One such program at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, partners with Indigenous groups in an attempt to expand the number of Indigenous educators who work within the community. Recently Brock entered an agreement with the Northern Nishnawbe

Education Council to train and educate 100 new Nishnawbe teachers who will be qualified to teach both on- and off-reserve.

Another attempt to address problems perceived to be the outcome of White privilege is illustrated in the recent opening of Toronto's first Africentric school. The school, which is part of Toronto's public school system, has a Black-focused curriculum, but is not limited to Black students. It opened in 2009, amid considerable controversy, with critics arguing that such a school advocated racial segregation. Advocates of the school pointed to the fact that Black students in Toronto had a dropout rate of around 40 percent—substantially higher than for Whites and other racial minority students. They argued that the dropout rate was in part attributable to the inability of Black students to relate to the subject matter being taught in schools—and that mainstream curriculum viewed the world through European eyes. In the Africentric school, instead of learning about history from a European point of view, for example, the role that African history played in the creation of European history is covered. In literature, Black writers are studied, and in mathematics, pedagogical practices are used to make the subject matter more relevant to Black students, such as showing how African textile patterns exhibit key principles of geometry.[18] The first three years of Toronto's Africentric school (which can accommodate students up to Grade 7) have been considered so successful in improving Black student achievement and retention that plans are underway to begin Africentric education at the secondary level starting in September of 2012.

11.3.2 The Hidden Curriculum

Socialization refers to the ongoing process of learning the expected behaviours, values, norms, and social skills of individuals who occupy particular roles in society. *Agents of socialization* are the social structures in which socialization occurs. Major agents of

socialization include the family and school, but also the media, peer groups, and other major social institutions such as religion and the legal system. Furthermore, socialization can be divided into two types: *primary socialization* and *secondary socialization*. Primary socialization occurs within the family and is where children first learn their own individual identity, acquire language, and develop cognitive skills. Within the family, children are socialized into particular ways of thinking about morals, cultural values, and social roles. Of course, the socialization that results from primary socialization rests heavily upon the social class, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and attitudes of the family.

Secondary socialization refers to the social learning that children undergo when they enter other social institutions, like school. Characteristics of the school, teachers, and the peer group all influence the socialization of children within school settings. The family still remains an important part of children's socialization, even when they enter into school. Children, however, will now have other significant people in their lives from whom they will learn the skills of social interaction.

A major objective of socialization in the school setting is to make a child *socially competent*. A child must develop skills that allow him or her to function socially, emotionally, and intellectually within the school environment and beyond. Within the school setting, social competence is achieved when students embrace and achieve socially sanctioned goals. These goals (e.g., learning to share, participating in lessons, working in groups), when embraced, also serve to integrate the child into social groups at school. Social approval is obtained when children accept the sanctioned goals of the school setting and they are rewarded and reinforced on a consistent basis through social acceptance by teachers and other students (Wentzel and Looney 2006).

Brint (1998) identifies three major dimensions of socialization as it pertains to schooling. All three dimensions refer to a type of *conformity* that identifies an ideal that students are expected to emulate. These ideals are normatively approved and accepted

models of what a student should be like to fit into schooling contexts, not only in North America but in virtually all places where formal schooling occurs. The ideals also instill students with a body of knowledge of what it means to be a productive citizen and a desirable member of the public.

The first of these dimensions is *behavioural conformity*. Behavioural conformity refers to the types of self-regulations of the body that a student must control in order to fit into the school environment. He or she may have to raise a hand to ask questions. Students will be required to sit still during lessons. Students may not touch other students. Students may have to stand in orderly lines in order to have a drink of water. All of these examples require the student to self-regulate his or her body's physical actions in ways that the child may not have had to do in a family setting.

The second dimension of socialization is moral conformity, which refers to the process of a student internalizing the preferred understanding of what is right and wrong. This type of socialization is accomplished through teachers emphasizing the desirability of certain virtues, such as hard work, equity, being "nice," and so on. Brint (1998) notes that young children, for example, may be assigned reading material that warns of the consequences of not having such virtues.

The third dimension of socialization is *cultural conformity*. During the process of cultural conformity, children learn about accepted perspectives and "styles" of expression. These preferred styles reflect normative cultural values about what is valued cultural knowledge. Bourdieu's theory of *cultural capital* addresses this type of acculturation, stating that teachers regard certain types of outlooks and student styles as more desirable than others and for students to succeed they need to conform to the cultural practices of the dominant social and cultural class.

Brint (1998) identifies three major zones of socialization and associated techniques that are used within classrooms to socialize children into being desirable students, workers and citizens. The first zone is called *the core*. The school rules, which must be

followed by students, exist at the core. School rules and school codes of conduct are essential features of schools that frame behaviours in a manner such that they produce obedience to authority. The core also consists of *embedded practices*, which are manners of behaving that are not explicit rules but routine practices within schools that appear to be very natural and taken for granted. Such embedded practices are lining up, doing homework, taking tests, and being evaluated. Many of these features of the core can be understood as not only socializing children into being students, but also preparing them for life as adults within bureaucracies.

Outside of the core are two rings of moral instruction. The *inner ring* is characterized by explicit moral instruction. In this instruction, children are taught desirable and undesirable virtues. Explicit moral instruction occurs in the elementary grades, when children are socialized to aspire to virtues such as kindness, generosity, courage, and hard work. The *outer ring* consists of implicit moral instruction, where students are provided with moral exemplars in more sophisticated ways, such as through the curriculum of history and literature. Within the outer ring, teachers and administrators are also included as exemplars of moral behaviour.

11.4 Structural and Social Inequalities in Schooling

There are many characteristics of children and their families that have been found to be strongly associated with children's *educational achievement* and, eventually, *educational attainment*. **Educational achievement** refers to how well a student does in school and is often assessed in terms of grades or scores on standardized tests, while **educational attainment** refers to the highest level of education an individual acquires, and is often

assessed in terms of whether or not a person goes on to post-secondary education.

In terms of educational attainment, in 2010, 71 percent of all women aged 25 to 44 had post-secondary education, compared to 64 percent of males in the same age range. Gender is not a barrier to access to post-secondary education in Canada. Women, however, are sharply underrepresented in the natural sciences, applied sciences, engineering, and mathematics (Canadian Council on Learning 2007b). In contrast, women are over-represented in education, health sciences, and social sciences. Women have entered the workforce in increasing numbers over the last several decades, and the vast majority of this increase has been in the "caring professions" such as nursing and teaching. The relative proportion of women in the scientific and technical occupations has declined in relation to the number of women who have entered the workforce.

Male-dominated professions in disciplines such as mathematics and engineering enjoy higher wages than the disciplines that females are more likely to choose. This difference contributes to the persistent wage gap that exists between men and women. Women earn about 68 percent of similarly qualified males. The wage growth of female-dominated professions is also remarkably slower than those dominated by males (Canadian Council on Learning 2007b).

Why don't women pursue careers in the sciences? Standardized testing results do not reveal great differences between males and females in terms of their abilities in mathematics and science. Simpkins, Davis-Deane, and Eccles (2006), however, have found evidence of girls being less confident in their *perceived* ability in math and science skills than boys. Such findings suggest that environmental factors perpetuating gender stereotyping are more likely to be the causes behind career choices rather than innate biological and cognitive reasons.

The socio-economic status of a child's family has been shown repeatedly to be one of the strongest indicators of a child's educational outcomes (Gorard, Fitz, and Taylor 2001; Ma and

Klinger 2000). Indeed, low socioeconomic status not only is associated with poor grades, but also is a strong predictor of dropping out of school and skipping school. Research has shown that an achievement gap exists between children from low-income families and other families. In other words, children from poor families tend to do less well at school. Theories of social mobility suggest various class-based reasons why such effects may occur. Statistics Canada data show that about 31 percent of youth from families in the lowest 25 percent of household income attended university, compared to just over 50 percent of youth from the highest 25 percent of household income (Frenette 2007). Other studies have found that socioeconomic status of families impacts the likelihood of youth going on to any form of post-secondary education (Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman 2005). It is possible that such youth, lacking the financial resources to pay for post-secondary education, find it difficult to secure loans to be able to attend, or find the negative aspects of carrying a large debt load to outweigh the potential benefits of going on with their education. Many may also have not had the influence in the home environment (i.e., emphasizing the benefits of further education) or have school performance (i.e., good enough grades) to make such choices possible (Usher 2005).

Family structure is often examined in terms of the "two-parent biological parent" or "intact" model versus all others. Much research from Canada and elsewhere has shown that compared to "intact" family structures, children from other family forms tend to do less well at school and to have lower educational outcomes. These research findings suggest that such family forms may have fewer resources available for children (social, cultural, and economic) and have fewer role models, and may also be characterized by higher levels of stress, all of which can adversely affect educational outcomes (Frederick and Boyd 1998; Garasky 1995; Hango and de Broucker 2007).

The handful of studies that have examined children in care and educational outcomes have found that these children face

significantly more challenges in achieving basic literacy than other children. A review by Snow (2009), examining the educational supports and educational attainments of children in care in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, found that there are numerous barriers facing these children. Children in care often suffered from poverty, abuse, neglect, and malnutrition before "detection" by the state. Malnutrition affects developmental progress in children and can hamper proper growth of the brain. Abuse and maltreatment can also compromise a child's emotional and cognitive development. Such children are at a higher risk of conduct disorders and are more likely to have to repeat grades. Numerous studies have also found that children in care are many times more likely to be in need of special education, compared to the general population (Flynn and Biro 1998; Janus and Offord 2007; Scherr 2007; Turpel-Laford and Kendall 2007).

Closely linked to socioeconomic status and social class are neighbourhood characteristics. Families with low socioeconomic status tend to live in areas with lower-cost housing. Sociologists and education researchers have recently become interested in how *neighbourhood effects* impact on school achievement and attainment. Living in areas with high concentrations of poverty is thought to negatively impact on children's academic achievement, acting to keep children in cycles of poverty. Children in such neighbourhoods are more likely to have unemployed parents, low-quality schools staffed by discouraged teachers, and constrained social networks that do not give them much access to social contacts who reinforce the value of education. In other words, children living in such neighbourhoods may experience a lack of positive role models. Much research on neighbourhood effects has been based in the United States, however, where neighbourhoods characterized by high poverty are more numerous and have greater levels of crime and racial segregation (Oreopoulos 2008). Many low-income neighbourhoods in Canada are occupied temporarily by new immigrants who leave within five years. An overview of the research on neighbourhood effects on child outcomes in Canada suggests

they may have somewhat of an effect on child educational attainment, but that the characteristics of the immediate family are likely to be of greater importance (Oreopoulous 2008).

Differences in standardized test scores by province suggest that educational resources vary by what have come to be known as the "have" and "have not" provinces. For post-secondary education, the federal government does provide federal transfers to ensure high-quality education across the country. But because education from kindergarten to secondary school is under provincial jurisdiction, federal fiscal transfers are not received. Traditional "have" provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario have larger budgets to spend on education. This money does not itself ensure better performance by students, but financial resources allow better funding to create educational environments that are more conducive to student learning and success (Davies 1999). PISA results consistently show students from British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario to be at the top of the league tables for Canada (Knighton, Brochu, and Gluszynski 2010).

Additional research has shown that along with regional disparities, there are also marked differences between levels of educational outcomes between urban and rural areas (Desjardins 2011). In rural areas, compared to urban areas, high school dropout rates are significantly higher and PISA scores are significantly lower (Canadian Council on Learning 2006). Reasons for this disparity have been suggested to lie with the difficulty in attracting teachers to rural schools. While rural schools tend to be small and to offer more personalized attention to students, many are faced with staffing problems. Often, they can only attract younger, less experienced teachers who may be burdened with heavy workloads and teaching courses outside their area of expertise (Canadian Council on Learning 2006). Rural schools are also more likely to face difficulties attracting teachers who can teach specialty science courses, many of which are required for admission to post-secondary programs. Also, because economic conditions are often more difficult in rural areas, students (particularly males) are

frequently forced to leave school to pursue employment to make up for deficits in their families' incomes (Looker 2002).

Canada has the highest immigration rate in the world and this is expected to continue partly due to the low fertility rates in Canada. The main reasons that people immigrate to Canada are to be reunited with family members who already live here, humanitarian reasons (i.e., refugees fleeing dangerous situations in their countries of origin), and economic migration (highly skilled immigrants that are deemed to contribute to Canada's workforce and economy).

There are several reasons why immigrant children may face disadvantages related to their education. Rousseau and Drapeau (2000) found that traumas experienced in the country of origin (due to war) before immigration, combined with cultural uprooting, can lead to emotional problems among refugees, which can in turn hinder educational achievement in refugee children. Their study involved looking at the scholastic achievement of immigrants from Cambodia and Central America who were attending six Montreal-area schools.

Many immigrants, however, do not arrive in Canada as refugees, and therefore other explanations for potential differences in their educational performance compared to native-borns must be examined. The role of socioeconomic status and social mobility were described above. These factors apply to immigrants as well—and many new immigrants live in impoverished communities and have below-average household incomes. Thiessen (2009) has shown that when socioeconomic characteristics of the family are taken into consideration, the gap between students of African and Latin American origin and native-born European Canadians narrows considerably. These findings suggest that much of the disadvantage experienced by some immigrant and Canadian-born ethnic groups is largely attributable to economic factors.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds and racial minority students are more likely to be "streamed" into low-ability tracks or streams. While existing literature has found streaming had tended

to place immigrants and visible minorities in higher ability streams (Krahn and Taylor 2007), many differences by origin group were noted. Specifically, those who had arrived to Canada during adolescence and those with poor official-language proficiency were more likely to be streamed into the lower ability groups.

Socio-cultural context must also be taken into consideration, such as the cultural definitions of success that characterize an ethnic group (Leung 2001). Some researchers argue that part of the answer to why different immigrant groups perform differently in school outcomes lies in the culturally specific expectations that exist within ethnic groups. Borjas (1992) refers to the overall educational and income levels of particular ethnic groups, which are thought to be able to enhance life outcomes of children of immigrants. For example, Chinese immigrants have very high levels of educational attainment, and this group characteristic may contribute to the performance of individual second-generation Chinese immigrants. Borjas (2000) argues that growing up in a culture in which high achievement is displayed as the norm of those in close social proximity makes individuals internalize such goals for themselves. In a study of the educational attainments of children of immigrants, Abada, Hou, and Ram (2008) found that children of Chinese, Indian, African, and West/Asian and Middle Eastern parents had higher ethnic capital. Differences in ethnic capital, however, explain only a part of the gap between the outcomes of different second generation ethnic groups.

Much Canadian research has shown that educational outcomes for Indigenous youth are poor (Aman and Ungerleider 2008; Aydemir, Chen, and Corak 2008; Brunnen 2003; Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman 2005; Krahn and Hudson 2006; Thiessen 2009). Researchers have suggested that the poor educational performance of Indigenous students can be traced to several other root causes. Many curricular practices are based on Western European models of learning, which do not take Indigenous knowledge and "ways of knowing" into account (Aikenhead 2006). There is often a large divide between what Indigenous children have been taught about

their culture and traditions in the home and the content of curriculum that is taught in schools. Failure to integrate curricular materials that are relevant to Indigenous cultures is argued to be symptomatic of persistent colonial educational practices (Pirbhai-Illich 2010) that perpetuate an internalized colonial ideology of Indigenous cultural inferiority. The absence of culturally relevant curriculum, combined with the low expectations that teachers tend to have for Indigenous students (Riley and Ungerleider 2008), have been argued as two significant disadvantages that Indigenous children face before they even begin school. The relatively low educational attainment of Indigenous students has far-reaching effects. Because educational attainment is strongly linked to economic outcomes, such as how much someone is able to earn in the labour market, failure to obtain even the most basic credentials such as a high school diploma puts many Indigenous persons at a severe disadvantage in the workforce.

Research on sexual minority youth indicates that LGBT adolescents are more likely to drop out and less likely to have post-secondary aspirations, however, Canadian research has found that gay men and lesbian women typically have higher educational attainment than heterosexuals (Carpenter 2008). Almost 25 percent of gay males in Carpenter's study had completed bachelor's degrees, compared to 15 percent of heterosexual males. For women, the corresponding figures were 21 percent of lesbians and 17 percent of heterosexual females. The higher educational attainment of gays and lesbians has also been documented in the US population (Black et al. 2000). The disconnect between the low aspirations of sexual minority youth and later-life educational outcomes is difficult to reconcile, although it may be partially due to many young adults experiencing colleges and universities as more LGBT-friendly environments than high schools.

Canadian research has shown that there are many differences in educational outcomes for special needs children that have much to do with the type of disability with which they are faced (Lloyd et al. 2009). Outcomes are also largely contingent on how well

the students' needs are met while in the education system, with those who report unmet needs performing not only much more poorly than those children without disabilities, but also significantly worse than students with disabilities who did not require special education. Children with learning disabilities in particular tend to take fewer classes, take longer to achieve their age-appropriate educational level, and perform less well in school (Hanes, Schwartz, and Werk 2011) than those without learning disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are at a further disadvantage as they are more likely to have unmet special education needs (Ministry of Industry 2008).

11.5 School to Work Transitions

The purpose of education is not only to socialize students and make them into knowledgeable and productive citizens, but also to prepare them for the labour market. In the past, a high school education has been the gateway to many desirable jobs, but this is less true in today's economy. Vocational training, college, and university pathways are increasingly being chosen by youths after high school graduation due to the shifting demands of today's job markets.

A major reason why people pursue post-secondary education is so that they will attain marketable skills that will result in increased employment opportunities. The numbers of Canadians with post-secondary education have been increasing. For example, according to the Canadian census, about 13 percent of Canadians had university degrees in 1981, which more than doubled to around 28 percent in 2006. Similar increases in other forms of post-secondary education have occurred as well.

There are several reasons for the increase in post-secondary credentials. Since the 1950s, there has been an expansion of "white-collar" positions that target educated semi-professionals in

administrative or office positions, for example (Owram 1996). The rise in white-collar positions coincided with a decrease in "blue-collar" work, which is characterized by manual labour in the service sector. The middle-class population began to view post-secondary education as a necessary stage for personal economic success. Recently, discussions about the *knowledge economy* have become commonplace in education policy and research. The **knowledge economy** refers to a continuously adapting society characterized by a large proportion of jobs based upon the skills of highly educated and technically proficient employees. Many Western governments use the term to talk about education, life-long learning, and employment and skills training programs (Gibb and Walker 2011). A key feature of such economies is that the workers must be able to continuously adapt to and learn new technologies. Workers in the knowledge economy are in the situation of having to update their skills in order to keep up with the changing demands of their jobs. Gibb and Walker (2011) point out that although many governments, including Canada's, discuss Canada as being a knowledge economy, "knowledge workers" actually make up only a relatively small proportion of jobs in Canada.

Post-secondary education is costly in that it requires not only government expenditure, but also personal investments. In terms of government expenditure, in 2006 Canada devoted 6.1 percent of the GDP (gross domestic product) to educational institutions, and 2.6 percent of this to post-secondary institutions. Among the OECD countries,[1] Canada and the USA allocate the largest share of education spending on post-secondary (Canadian Education Statistics Council 2010).

Most students must pay tuition fees in order to attend a post-secondary institution. The tuition fees of post-secondary institutions have been steadily rising over the years. In terms of tuition, the national average university tuition was around $5100 a year in 2010/2011, although this varies considerably by program of study and region. In the same year, tuition fees at Ontario universities were the highest at $6307, followed by fees in New

Brunswick, which were just over $5500. The lowest tuition fees in Canada were found in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, which had average fees of around $2500. Nearly all provinces experienced an increase except for Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick. Nova Scotia, in contrast, experienced an average decrease of around 4.5 percent. Unlike the situation in the United States, education is heavily funded by the territorial and provincial governments; tuition fees obtained from students account for around 20 percent of the total costs of education, while federal funding accounts for under 10 percent.

Tuition has been steadily rising over the years and there are stark differences in tuition rates based on program of study. For example, in 2010–2011, one year of dentistry tuition was $14 701, compared to $3859 for tuition in education fields. In fact, dentistry students pay the highest tuition across Canada, followed by students in medicine and pharmacy at the undergraduate level. At the post-graduate level, however, the most expensive programs in Canada are the master of business (MBA) programs. The "executive" MBA had an average tuition of nearly $29 000 in 2010–2011, while the regular MBA had an average tuition of just over $21 000.[2] In contrast, graduate tuitions for most other disciplines such as agriculture, education, engineering, nursing, pharmacy, and the social sciences are around $4500 to $5500 per year. The average student finances his or her education through a combination of means, including employment, government loans, savings, family support, private loans, and grants (Berger, Motte and Parkin 2007).

In terms of personal costs, the pursuit of post-secondary education requires not only a tuition cost, but also the time devoted to studying, and potential forgone wages that could have been accrued had a person not been in education. Individuals making the choice to pursue post-secondary education must weigh the potential *opportunity cost* against the perceived benefits of the educational credential. An opportunity cost is a term borrowed from economists and refers to the benefits that have to be forgone in order to pursue the activity of choice. In the case of education,

there is the opportunity cost of forgoing potential earnings from full-time work while pursuing educational credentials. It is anticipated that there will be future (often economic) benefits to pursuing the education in the long run that would make up for (and exceed) any lost earnings from a low-skilled and poorly paid job.

Related to the idea of opportunity costs is the theory of *economic capital*. This consists of skills that individuals acquire that are quickly converted into money. Skills acquired through education are a typical example of this type of capital. A related theoretical perspective that is also borrowed from economists is the *human capital* argument. *Human capital* refers to personal characteristics that are possessed by the individuals that are transferable into economic reward (Becker 1964), such as education and work experience.

Common to both the idea of the opportunity cost and human capital theory is that individuals make a rational choice when they enter education and training. The choices they make are linked to future perceived economic benefits. Students are students because they hope that upon completion of their degrees, diplomas, or certificates they will enter the workforce into an occupation that economically rewards them more favourably than if they had not pursued the credential.

Upon completion of education, most young adults transition into the labour market, seeking part-time or full-time employment. Unemployment rates among young adults, however, are much higher than in the average adult workforce—often double or even higher. Young adults may face difficulty finding a suitable job or even a job at all. The rate of unemployment among young people varies considerably according to level of education completed. Bayard and Greenlee (2009) demonstrated that the unemployment rates of young adults who hold bachelor's degrees is lower than the rates of those who have post-secondary diplomas or certificates. Individuals whose highest level of completed education is high school face the highest unemployment rates. These differences by educational attainment have remained rather steady over the years,

even in times of economic downturn, such as the early 1990s and the period starting in late 2008.

There are many strategies that young adults use to find a job. The *National Graduates Survey* of 1995 revealed the many challenges that young adults faced when trying to find employment related to their education, indicating that finding a job with acceptable pay was a major difficulty (28 percent) followed by finding a job that was related to their education (25 percent) (Clark 1999). Nearly one-third of graduates found their job through "networking" through their contacts with family and friends, while a smaller number got jobs through former employers and by making "cold calls" to prospective employers. Individuals who had experience, such as through volunteer work or through co-operative education placements, had an easier time finding career-related work. These findings suggest that social capital was an important factor in finding a job.

Just as more young adults of recent generations are pursuing post-secondary education, so too are more graduates pursuing additional degrees and diplomas. Instead of going directly into the workforce, around one-third of graduates go on to further education (Bayard and Greenlee 2009) and this figure has increased gradually over recent years. Many graduates from undergraduate degrees go on to master's degrees, which are typically one- or two-year programs. Graduates of master's degrees may also continue on to doctoral studies, which can take an additional four to seven years of study. Occasionally, doctoral graduates pursue an additional doctoral degree, although this is relatively rare.

The proportion of graduates who pursued further education varies by field of study. College graduates in the humanities were found to be the most likely to pursue additional education, while at the bachelor and master's levels, natural sciences and technologies graduates were most likely to continue. College graduates in health sciences as well as education degree holders at the undergraduate and master levels were the least likely to pursue additional qualifications.

In terms of employment prospects after pursuing additional

qualifications, the highest proportions of graduates working were those who had recently completed a master's program. In fact, the percentage of master's degree holders who were in employment (about 97 percent) was higher than for college, bachelor, or doctoral graduates. Of particular note is that the employment gap between males and females at the master's level has almost disappeared (Bayard and Greenlee 2009).

11.6 Trends in Educational Institutions and Practices

In this section, the focus is on how educational practices in Canada are linked to larger global trends—particularly to the trend of *neoliberalism* (discussed more fully in Modules Five and Six). The section examines how economic markets are linked to educational trends and changes over time. Attitudinal shifts that are influenced by the close relationship between such economic approaches and related orientations toward education and job training will also be considered.

The term *global education* is one that is cropping up more and more in education-oriented literature. There is not a single definition of global education that is agreed upon by all users of the term, however. In general, **global education** refers to the delivery of education in a way that recognizes the context of subjects in a broader geographical framework than simply the one in which the students and teachers live. It is the recognition that topics should be taught from a perspective that acknowledges alternative approaches and promotes intercultural understandings.

While the goals of global education may be viewed as admirable, they are indeed difficult to put into practice and evaluate. This is due to many factors, not least because of the vagueness of the goals themselves and the uncertainty of how to put goals of global

education into any meaningful sort of practice (Pike 2000). The idea of what global education entails differs between countries as well. For example, Canadian and British teachers are more likely to regard it as meaning the understanding of how people are connected to the global system, while American teachers are more likely to state that global education refers to learning about different countries and cultures (Pike 2000).

One strategy of promoting global education is to augment civic education, social studies, and/or history (depending on the jurisdiction) with aspects of *global citizenship education* in the Grades 1 to 12 curricula. As noted by Richardson and Abbott (2009), it is more difficult to talk about global education in Canada than in countries like France and the UK, where national curricula exist. Curricula across Canada vary considerably. We can, however, examine how the different curricula respond to concerns over global citizenship.

Richardson and Abbott (2009) remind us that global citizenship is not a concept that is new to Canadian curricula and that the preferred relationship between students and the larger outside world is one that has changed over time due to various shifts in political outlooks of wider society. Richardson and Abbott (2009) identify five different major *imaginaries* in the approach of global citizenship education in Canada over time. **Imaginaries** are ways of understanding the nature of global citizenship and provide a rationale for promoting such a world view. Imaginaries do not necessarily follow a linear sequence, and elements of more than one may be found overlapping within the same curriculum in a province at any given time.

The first major imaginary is *imperialism*. In much of the twentieth century, emphasis was placed on teaching children about how to be proper moral citizens and to uphold allegiance to the British Empire. National identity as Canadians was largely framed in terms of imperialist connections to Britain. The world was essentially divided into recognized colonies of the Crown and "other"

(Richardson and Abbott 2009), Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth, or "West" and non-West.

The next major imaginary was the *Cold War*, which refers to the period immediately following the Second World War (1945). Global citizenship education then focused on a different kind of "other." The world was no longer perceived to be divided into Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth, but was split into communist and non-communist. Much social studies curricula was focused on understanding the differences between the two worlds.

After the focus on the Cold War came the *multipolar* imaginary, which began in the 1960s. This understanding of the world was framed by the creation of the United Nations and the shift of Canada as a "rising middle power." The multipolar phase switched the international discourse in curricula to one that focused on international co-operation and interdependence. These changing world views were also embedded in a changed technological landscape in which air travel and advances in telecommunication were contributing to a new "world culture" (Richardson and Abbott 2009:383). The view is also characterized as the "global village" understanding of the world, wherein the mandate of global civic education was to enlighten students as to the interdependent nature of global politics and the great inequalities that existed between nations, with the underlying objective to raise the standard of living in developing countries. While perhaps a noble ambition on the surface, critics (see Merryfield 2001) argue that such a world view is fundamentally the same as that found during the imperialism phase, when it was assumed that the West was a model for all others to follow, ignoring important cultural and historical differences.

The late 1980s saw the emergence of the *ecological* imaginary, which emphasized environmental concerns about the survival of the planet along with an understanding of cultural diversity and a respect for a variety of world views. Educational approaches focused on getting the student to see the world through the eyes of those from other cultures and nations. The ecological phase was a *transformative* approach to global citizenship education

(Richardson and Abbott 2009) because its focus was on changing the world views of students and getting them to reexamine their own biases and beliefs, rather than changing other cultures.

The most current imaginary of global citizenship education is one that is characterized as *monopolar*. The prevailing approach that is taught is one rooted in *economic neoliberalism*, which emphasizes the understanding of the world as a vast market. The emphasis has shifted to the international competitiveness of markets, with consumerism as the core organizing principle. This imaginary, according to Richardson and Abbott (2009), is largely a step backwards in the evolution of such approaches to global citizenship education because it somewhat resembles the previous phases, which stress individualism and competitiveness rather that interdependence and empathy.

Richardson and Abbott (2009) argue that Canadian curriculum currently tends to exhibit characteristics of both the ecological and monopolar imaginaries, which is inherently problematic because of the opposing world views that they occupy. The ecological imaginary emphasizes an empathetic world view, while the monopolar focuses on competitiveness.

11.6.1 Economic Crises and Neoliberal Social Policy

Markets that are linked across borders are a key feature of the current world in which we live. The economic situation of a country determines many practices of its government and market behaviours of its citizens. The recent *global economic crisis* was a major event that had numerous knock-on effects in various aspects of social life, including work and education. The global economic crisis is directly connected to the current state of education in Canada and around the world particularly when governments

declare *austerity measures* in which public spending is severely cut in order to pay back federal debt.

Davidson-Harden et al. (2009) argue that neoliberal social policy in Canada coincided with massive cuts in federal transfers to the provinces by the federal Liberal Party, rationalized as part of a larger-scale deficit reduction program. These budget cuts affected many social welfare programs across the country and were framed as an attempt to "trim" the welfare state. These cuts in federal transfers resulted in reduced funding to all levels of education.

In terms of K–12 education in Canada, some notable markers of neoliberalism have already been discussed. For example, the creation of "charter" schools in Alberta under the fiscally conservative Ralph Klein government of the 1990s was rationalized as a way to provide "choice" and "alternatives" to parents in terms of public education. It was also suggested that such alternatives put pressure on public schools to perform better so that they can still be seen as attractive to prospective students' parents. The public funding of private education, which varies from province to province, is also indicative of this understanding of education as a product that can be subject to comparison shopping.

In addition, many provinces are relying on standardized testing of children. Rezai-Rashti (2009) notes that standardized testing and evaluation systems were brought into Ontario during the Premier Mike Harris years, which were characterized by massive structural changes in governance, curriculum, and evaluation procedures. The structural changes were argued to reduce "waste," while the evaluation and curriculum changes were adopted to increase accountability of teachers and to have precise records of students' achievement.

Weiner (2003) indicates that public schools are increasingly relying on fundraising in order to meet the gaps left by provincial funding cuts. In affluent neighbourhoods, fundraising by students and parents can be quite successful and garner substantial donations, but schools in economically disadvantaged areas do not have this kind of success in fundraising initiatives. Davidson-Harden

et al. (2009) suggest that this increased reliance on fundraising in K–12 is indicative of privatization in public schooling. People for Education (2011), an advocacy group for Ontario public schooling, found in a recent survey of parents of students in public schools and their principals that nearly all public schools in Ontario were involved in some form of fundraising that, per school, funds raised by such efforts varied from zero dollars to $275 000. Additionally, over two-thirds of secondary schools were found to charge fees for courses. New guidelines from the Ontario Ministry of Education are expanding allowable fundraising efforts to enable outdoor structures, renovations to auditoriums and science labs, upgrades to sports facilities, and investments in technology (Ontario Ministry of Education 2011). Such additional allowances on the spectrum of targets for fundraising suggest that the gap between the richer and poorer schools will expand further (People for Education 2011).

For-profit offshore schools can be conceptualized as another attempt to "sell" education. Offshore schools are, at the time of writing, an educational product that is permitted only by the Government of British Columbia in the form of "School District Business Companies" since 2002—when the idea was marketed to school boards as an entrepreneurial opportunity to make money abroad.[3] Fifteen school boards acted on this opportunity, resulting in offshore schools around the world, but mostly in Asia.

Another example of the private market creeping into K–12 public education is illustrated in the creation of **public-private partnerships,** also known as P3s. P3s refer to contracts between the public and private sectors in which skills or investments are made by the private sector into a good that will be offered to the public. The private sector will recoup its investment through various means. For example, a private company may build a structure to be used by a school and then rent that property to the school. Perhaps the most "infamous" case of P3 schools occurred in the 1990s in Nova Scotia, when the Liberal government declared in 1997 that all new schools would be P3 schools—in other words, private companies would be used to build the schools and private

companies would retain ownership over the buildings and the province would lease the buildings. A new Conservative government took office in 1999 and investigated the premises behind the new P3 decision. An auditor found that the proposed 38 schools that had been built the P3 way actually ended up costing the province $32 million more than if they had been built by the province. Additionally, the costs of repairs and upgrades to the leased buildings are often the responsibility of the public partner—not the private partner. After a lease of the property expires (typically 25–30 years), the province has the option to buy the building back from the private holder, thus assuming ownership of a 25- to 30-year-old building. P3s have been experimented with in many provinces, with varying degrees of success.

The final, and perhaps most obvious, example of neoliberal practices in K–12 education is advertising in schools. Like fundraising efforts, schools and school boards are frequently seeking additional ways to increase revenue to support programs and equipment that government funding does not cover. In a study of commercialism in Canadian public schools, the Canadian Federation of Teachers (Froese-Germain 2005) found that 28 percent of elementary schools reported advertising for corporations or businesses in or on the school. The respective figure for secondary schools was nearly doubled at 54 percent. According to results, "[m]ost advertising in elementary schools was found on school supplies (11.4%) and in hallways, cafeterias and other school areas (11.1%). In secondary schools, most advertising was found in school areas such as halls and cafeterias (31.5%) and to a lesser extent on school supplies (12.2%) and team uniforms (8.1%)" (Froese-Germain 2005:5). The most frequent corporate advertisers were identified as Coca-Cola and PepsiCo. In addition to advertising, many schools were reported to have "exclusive contracts" with either Coke or Pepsi such that only one of these brands would be sold on school property. Advertising in schools is a particularly contentious issue because while it may be a source of much-needed funding, critics argue that it is inappropriate to

advertise products to children who are a captive audience inside an institution of learning. Froese-Germain (2005) states that there are at least three concerns that they have about advertising in schools. The first is that supporting unhealthy choices like sugary soft drinks may have health impacts on students, such as putting them at a higher risk of diabetes and promoting childhood obesity. The second reason is about equity—not all schools will be able to attract the same calibre and number of corporate sponsors, giving those schools that are already desirable to advertisers an even greater advantage. The final concern is one that questions the ethics of allowing corporate advertising in schools in the respect that the lessons that they learn in schools about good health and citizenship may be compromised by the very presence of corporate messages in the school corridors.

In terms of post-secondary education, there are also many indicators of neoliberal policy implicit in new trends on campuses. The most obvious shift in recent years is the decrease of government funding to post-secondary education and the increased reliance on tuition fees as a source of revenue. Another effect of neoliberalism, however, is the movement of provinces to approve the development of private, for-profit universities. The law permitting the establishment of private universities was passed in Ontario in 2002 (Postsecondary Student Opportunity Act), in British Columbia in 1985 (first the Trinity Western University Act in 1985, then the Sea to Sky University Act for Quest University in 2002),[4] in New Brunswick in 2001 (Degree Granting Act), and most recently in Saskatchewan in 2012 (Saskatchewan's Degree Authorization Act).[5]

Metcalfe (2010) argues that although Canadian governments have traditionally distanced themselves from outrightly favouring high-technology programs and promoting partnerships with industry (at least more so than their counterparts in other English-speaking countries), this is becoming more favoured as a source of revenue. The term **academic capitalism** has been used to describe national-level policies that favour industrial research collaborations, while often undertaken at the cost of revenues directed toward

undergraduate education (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). Such targeted partnerships with industry are regarded by some Canadian professors as a threat to academic autonomy (Newson and Polster 2008) because the implications of such alliances will require researchers to pursue topics that are of interest only to businesses, marginalizing many of the research topics that are of interest (and concern) to faculty members. As pointed out by Metcalfe (2010), however, other researchers such as Pries and Guild (2007) are far more enthusiastic about the increasing role of commercialization within the university, understanding them as economically viable opportunities for learning. In addition to industry-funded research in the university, there has also been a noticeable increase in the presence of corporate members on university governance boards.

For example, the board of governors at the University of Calgary in the academic year 2011–2012 included the vice-president and chief financial officer of Shaw Communications and the former vice chair of Enbridge,[6] while the board of governors in the same academic year at University of New Brunswick included the chair of BMO Asset Management and the former vice-president of finance for NB Power.[7] Research by Carroll and Beaton (2000) has found that members of boards of governors at Canadian universities are increasingly from high-tech industry, signalling more reliance on technology-intensive production in global markets and neoliberal approaches to higher education that value such linkages between industry and universities.

Education researchers and commentators have also argued that another outcome of neoliberalism is that the fundamental purpose of higher education has also undergone an important (and undesirable) shift from *education* to *training* (Côté and Allahar 2011; Keeney 2007). The objective of education, as understood from a traditional "liberal education" perspective, is to cultivate the mind of individuals. The neoliberal agenda, however, has shifted this orientation of creating well-informed citizens to a framework of training students for jobs, which focuses on developing a narrow range of skills or specialization in particular tasks. Côté and Allahar

explain that "one can only be *educated* in the liberal arts and sciences: education and training are not inimical to one another; they merely speak to different moments in the complex process of teaching, learning, and sharing information" (2011:15). This shift from universities providing a liberal education to a focus on marketable skills and training is referred to as **vocationalism**.

Evidence of vocationalism can be observed in the increased offering of diplomas and certificates (rather than degrees) in various fields that presumably signal training in a particular set of skills. Applied degrees are also fairly new arrivals to the university scene, with an "explosion of activity" around the creation of such degrees in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta (Dunlop 2004). Such degrees are different from the baccalaureate degrees traditionally awarded at universities and are similar in training to what used to be only conventionally available at community colleges (Dunlop 2004)—specific training in skills that are meant to lead directly to jobs. Community colleges in the same provinces also were given the authority to award baccalaureate degrees between the early 1990s and 2000, with New Brunswick and Manitoba following suit in 2008 and 2009, respectively (Jones 2009). Such changes in provincial legislation were often rationalized by provincial leaders as a way of making post-secondary education more market driven by increasing post-secondary competition and emphasizing individual choice (Skolnik 2008). It is also interesting to note that vocationalism of universities is also highly associated with the lessening prestige and emphasis placed on actual vocational training in the skilled trades at the secondary level (Taylor 2005, 2010).

There is a great deal of controversy around the place of applied degrees, certificates, and diplomas within the university system. Traditionally, universities were places of "higher learning" and sites of liberal education, while colleges were places where students went for job training. Increasingly, however, this distinction is being blurred. Dunlop (2004) suggests that because many university graduates went on to "top up" their degrees with training at colleges

after graduation, the university has found an opportunity to fulfill a market need. Others, such as Côté and Allahar (2011), find fundamental intellectual flaws in confusing the original mandates of universities and colleges:

> . . . to dismiss this distinction and embrace the confusion between education and training is analogous to confusing an apple with an orange. Both apples and oranges are good in their right. But to shift a liberal education system to a vocational one, and then claim the benefits of the liberal education for pseudo-vocational training is not only mistaken, it is dishonest. If we continue to delude ourselves about this, not only will the system degrade further, but also the mixed system we are developing will diminish further the overall legitimacy of the system in the eyes of stakeholders who count on the quality of liberal arts and sciences graduates and the roles for which they are ostensibly certified. (Cote and Allahar 2011:103)

Under neoliberalism, education is seen as a means toward getting a job at an increasing rate of tuition. Education then becomes reframed as a product that is purchased rather than a public good to which all citizens should have access. This has led to a view that students are "consumers" in post-secondary institutions, trying to get undergraduate degrees that are increasingly regarded as the minimum education required to enter the corporate world. As argued by Côté and Allahar (2007), the university in particular has shifted from a place of "elite education" to that of mass education. Participation rates in post-secondary education have increased greatly over the past 20 years, as discussed above. The decreasing per-student amount that is government-funded and the increased number of students has forced post-secondary institutions to find other sources of revenue, including increased tuition fees. Students are more likely now than in the past to perceive a university degree as the necessary minimum credential for getting a good job—a credential that comes with an increasingly hefty price tag.

This view of students as consumers who must be satisfied with the product they have purchased stands in stark contrast to traditional models where teachers and professors are the authority figures in charge of the learning. Such orientations can (and do) result in a clash between teaching staff and students. Newson (2004:231), for example, argues that students who view themselves as consumers may argue that they should not have to participate in class (showing up should be enough) and that their tuition entitles them to a "decent" grade. Wellen (2005) argues that the frustrated responses of teaching staff can play themselves out in the form of "arrogance and condescension," or professors may instead change the course style and delivery to one that is more entertaining and practical, thereby marginalizing academic values while prioritizing ones that will appease students. This is particularly poignant given that student evaluations of teaching are often used as part of the tenure and promotion process of professors (Lindahl and Unger 2010). Junior faculty members are more likely to feel pressured to please their students, even at the cost of their course content.

The discourse of globalization favours the view that knowledge and knowledge workers will make positive contributions to the economy and that education is the vehicle by which such gains will be made. Education, however, is also becoming a lucrative business opportunity for many countries. The growth of private education, offshore education, and other for-profit education services has been noted by scholars of global education (Heyneman 2001).

In the past few decades, trade agreements have been signed between countries that actively promote this notion of globalization, encouraging (even *requiring*) trade between countries with fewer barriers. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is a multilateral trade agreement pertaining to "trade in services" and was created to "liberalize" such trade in services around the world. The agreement specifically defines restrictions on government measures that may impact on the international trading of services and are legally enforceable through trade sanctions if deemed necessary. The development of the agreement

continued in the early 2000s, and only explicitly eliminates government/public services from the process of liberalization.

GATS has caused considerable unease among education researchers worldwide because it is understood as much more than just a trade agreement, but covers every possible manner in which services are provided internationally. Because the agreement openly advocates privatization and deregulation, many critics argue that there are potential risks to higher education (Robertson 2005). If higher education is deemed to be a liberalizable service or commodity that is subject to GATS, there are possible implications for future restrictions and regulations regarding the presence of foreign institutions, tax rules, and restrictions of research grants to domestic universities (CAUT 2012). The GATS does indicate that "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority" are exempt from GATS, which should cover public higher education in Canada. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (2012), however, argues that the extent to which higher education is public (i.e., subject to governmental authority) varies considerably among countries, with private and public systems existing in many nations. Critics argue that many clauses in this agreement need to be clarified so that the position of higher education in this trade agreement is explicit. Drakich, Grant, and Stewart (2002) suggest that the presence of the private American university, the University of Phoenix, in Canada indicates the liberalization has already begun, despite the Canadian government's assurance that public education was not subject to such bargaining. The private American post-secondary provider the DeVry Institute of Technology has also made recent inroads into Canada, with its most recent campus established in Calgary.

Many Canadian post-secondary institutions are involved in an ongoing strategy of promoting *internationalization*. Internationalization in general refers to the process of creating co-operation and activities across national borders (van der Wende 2001). The *internationalization of education* is the process of creating linkages between educational institutions and people that

span across borders. While *internationalization* and *globalization* are often used interchangeably, there are important differences between them. One key difference is that internationalization can be seen as an expression of national self-interest where the nation is a dominant feature. While there may be benefits to individuals from other countries, the basic unit of interest in internationalization is always the individual country. Globalization, in contrast, is oriented toward replacement of national economies with a single global economy characterized by free movement of individuals and capital. The two terms *globalization* and *internationalization* are most certainly linked in meaning, but the latter is ostensibly rooted in very specific interests of the state.

Farquhar (2001) has identified four rationale-types for the internationalization of Canadian universities (see also Cudmore 2005a for further discussion). The first is a *culturally based rationale*, which argues that internationalization will permit Canada's culture to be more widely (in a global sense) understood. With this understanding will come a higher respect for Canada's values, which will lead to Canada having more global influence. The second is a *politically based rationale*,which is concerned with issues such as national security and strategic alliances. International students in Canada can be regarded as potential future citizens who may become part of Canada's highly skilled workforce. The third is an *academically based rationale* in which it is surmised that internationalization necessarily adds international elements to the curricular activities, which in turn enhance the academic experiences of both foreign and domestic students. The final rationale is *economically based* and argues that internationalization is associated with the greater economic performance of a country.

The widespread availability of online technologies and *distance learning* opportunities offered by increasing numbers of post-secondary institutions around the world means that it is often possible for students who reside in one country to obtain credentials (including degrees) from institutions in different

countries without leaving their original country of residence. The term **transnational education** is often used to describe the educational arrangement where students are physically located in a different country than the credential-awarding institution (van der Wende 2001). Anglo-Saxon countries are the main deliverers of transnational education, with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia being the world's dominant providers (van der Wende 2001).

n contrast to transnational education, *cross-border education* occurs when the host institution essentially becomes mobile (instead of the student). Cross-border education can take several forms. Sometimes post-secondary institutions open *branch* or *satellite campuses* in foreign countries where they deliver the same (or similar) degree programs that are offered at the home or main campus (Marginson and McBurnie 2004). For example, the Schulich School of Business at York University is building a campus in Hyerabad, India, scheduled to open in 2013. Although the York business school has been offering its curriculum and degrees to students in India for the past three years through a partnership with the SP Jain Institutive of Management and Research, they believed demand was high enough to necessitate the creation of an entire branch campus in India.[12]

In addition to branch campuses, other universities are in formal *partnerships* with post-secondary institutions in other countries. Partnerships are different from branch campuses because the university does not commit to building a physical location on foreign soil. For example, University of British Columbia has a partnership with Mexico's Tecnologico de Monterrey in 1997 (Bates 2001). Staff at UBC developed five online courses which were then developed in the curriculum at Tec de Monterrey, with the costs of development shared equally by both institutions. Tec de Monterrey was allowed to use these courses anywhere in Latin America, and UBC could also use these course materials elsewhere in the world. After five years, the two institutions decided to enter into a formal partnership, in which both institutions offer a master's degree in

Educational Technology that is available in both English and Spanish, with faculty at both institutions working together on courses.[14]

Another revenue-creating technique being used by many universities is the recruitment of international students, who are usually required to pay a fee differential, or a rate of tuition that is higher than (sometimes double) that of domestic students. These differentials were brought in by various host countries due to the perception that there were substantial costs associated with subsidizing students from other countries (Woodhall 1987). Introduced in Canada in the 1970s, individual jurisdictions all have different fee structures for international students. In Quebec, however, international students are often not subject to fee differentials due to the province's official policy of recruiting francophone students from other parts of the world (Eastman 2003, cited in Siddiq, Baroni, Lye, and Nethercote 2010).

Differential fees are a substantial source of revenue for universities, and international students are aggressively recruited due to the high profits they afford many post-secondary institutions—not only in terms of the higher tuitions they pay, but also due to the relatively low cost of hiring these students as research and teaching assistants (Altbach and Knight 2007). For example, universities in Nova Scotia collected almost $19 million in such fees during the 2008/2009 academic year (Siddiq et al. 2010). The charging of differential fees to international students is a practice that currently occurs only in Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Australia. On post-secondary campuses across Canada, there are over 90 000 full-time and 13 000 part-time international students, representing nearly 10 percent of the undergraduate student body and around 20 percent of post-graduate students. International students contribute about $6.5 billion annually to the Canadian economy.[16]

Critics of fee differentials argue that universities use international students as a source of revenue while ostensibly hiding behind an official ideology of cultural enhancement in which the recruitment

of international students is promoted as fostering a multicultural environment that will augment the educational experiences of both foreign and domestic students. The Canadian Federation of Students (2008) is highly critical of fee differentials, arguing that such practices limit education-based emigration to students from wealthy families.

While some approaches to global education at the primary and secondary levels of education were discussed above, the mandate of attracting international students from abroad is often couched in the rationale of adding diversity to university campuses. Inherent in such discussions is the desire to add a global dimension to the education experienced by post-secondary students, both foreign and domestic. But how successful are Canadian post-secondary institutions at increasing not only the composition of their student bodies, but also the international and intercultural dimensions of their courses and programs? In 2000, 60 percent of post-secondary institutions in Canada that were surveyed in an Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada report (AUCC) indicated they did not have any way of monitoring or assessing the international dimensions of the programs or courses offered at their institutions, with only a quarter of universities indicating that a review process was being developed and just 15 percent stating that a process was already in place (Weber 2007). Such results suggest that a low priority has been given to some of the purported benefits of internationalization (Knight 2000). An update of the survey in 2006 (AUCC 2007b) provides little comparative data. Between the two years, universities that offer programs with an international focus grew from 53 to 61, and the overall number of academic programs with an international focus climbed from 267 to 356. However, university programs requiring graduates to have knowledge of a second language decreased from 16 percent to 9 percent.

There exists scant research on the internationalization efforts on Canadian campuses with regard to how successful they have been at incorporating intercultural and international perspectives. A handful of case studies appear in the literature, however. Hanson

(2010), for example, describes an internationalization attempt at a global health program at University of Saskatchewan, citing evidence of "global citizenship" and "personal transformation" in students who had taken the courses. An additional issue in internationalization also relates to individual disciplines and how much internationalization is indeed possible in their fields. Some programs may lend themselves more readily to internationalization of the curriculum (e.g., cultural studies, sociology) than others (e.g., mathematics, biology). Indeed, the AUCC (2007a) found that the five most popular disciplines reporting successful internationalization of their curricula were global studies, European studies, international business, development studies, and Asian studies—disciplines that by their very nature are rooted in global conceptualizations of their subject matter.

In terms of the reported strategies that are most frequently employed in university efforts to internationalize the curriculum, the use of international scholars and visiting experts, the use of international or intercultural case studies, organizing international field/study tours, and encouraging students to work or study abroad were the techniques most frequently identified by Canadian university administrators (AUCC 2007a).[17]

While most Canadian universities offer some online courses, a few offer entire degrees that can be completed online. Indeed, student services such as advising and library services can also be done entirely online without the need for students to ever physically visit the degree-granting campus. There are two universities in Canada that are devoted entirely to online delivery: Athabasca University (in Alberta) and TÉLUQ (attached to l'Université du Québec à Montréal). Royal Roads in British Columbia also has a high proportion of its course delivery online, but brief periods of residency are required.

Canadian Virtual Universities is a consortium of English and French universities in Canada that came together to share resources and facilitate credit transfer across jurisdictions (CVU 2012). Students may be wary of acquiring online credentials because

of the negative association such degrees have with US-based for-profit online universities (such as the University of Phoenix). CVU (2012) argues that Canadian universities would benefit from promoting the fact that quality assurance, transferability, and course comparability are ensured through member universities of CVU.

Most CVU students are domestic, with only a very small percentage (one to three percent) taking the courses and degrees from a different country. In contrast, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia take a much greater global share of international students who reside outside of the country's borders (CVU 2012). There are many potential reasons for the relatively low uptake of Canadian online degrees by non-resident international students compared to other countries, including the prestige associated with particular institutions in the United States, UK, and Australia, legal and financial restrictions, and differences in professional accreditation (CVU 2012).

As described above, changes in government policies and funding have meant that tuition fees have been rising for students, as the portion of governmental funding to post-secondary educational institutions has slowly shrunk over the past few decades. Still, however, Canadian university tuition fees are substantially lower than those found in other English-speaking countries, apart from New Zealand (OECD 2011), as shown in Figure 9.1. Recent fee restructuring changes in the United Kingdom that will be implemented in the academic year 2012–2013 will also substantially increase the distance between the tuition charged to UK-based students and those in Canada, as the Conservative government in the UK voted to remove tuition caps, which allow universities to charge a maximum of £9000 per year (approximately $14 000 CND). The maximum fee that UK universities were allowed to charge in 2010–2011 was just over £3000. Of the 123 universities in the UK, over half have announced that they will charge the maximum fee, while none have indicated they will charge less than £6000 per year.[18]

The OECD (2011) has identified four models of how countries approach funding tertiary education. Countries are divided into the four models according to how much of the cost of tertiary education is derived from tuition, how much student aid is available, the rates at which young people participate in tertiary education, and the overall public expenditure (as measured by GDP spending on tertiary education). Models 1 and 4 are similar in the respect that they charge very low (or no) tuition fees. Model 1 is comprised of the Nordic countries, which are often characterized by their deeply rooted social values that emphasize equality of opportunity, framing access to tertiary education as a right rather than a privilege. These countries often offer high student aid (to support students through their studies). Public expenditure on tertiary education is high, and is obtained through the higher taxation systems in these countries. To contrast, the various countries in Model 4 have low tuition, but also traditionally low levels of student aid. The participation rates in tertiary education are also much lower than in other models—less than 50 percent. Clearly there are factors other than tuition fees that influence students in these countries to go on to tertiary education.

Countries in Model 2 are the English-speaking nations and the Netherlands (which only recently joined this group). Students in Model 2 pay high tuition fees and have high access to student aid. There is also high uptake of tertiary education and relatively low to moderate public expenditure on funding for post-secondary education. In contrast, students in Model 3 in Japan and Korea pay high tuition fees and have little access to student aid. The participation rates in Japan and Korea also vary significantly, and recent reforms in 2009 to the student support system suggest that Japan may soon be more like a Model 2 country.

Model 2 countries' increased reliance on funding tertiary education by private tuition has led to an increased financial burden carried by students. Essentially, education is something that is becoming expensive to purchase. And there is an increasing perception that an undergraduate degree is an essential educational

credential that is required for entry to the labour market, resulting in the steady increases in tertiary enrolment that are observed in the last 20 years—22 percent of adults aged 20 to 29 in 1995 to 26 percent in 2008 (OECD 2011). These increased enrolments, along with the cultural belief that having a degree is essential for getting any kind of "good" job later on, have been referred to as the **massification of education** (Mount and Bélanger 2004). As noted earlier in this chapter with regard to the discussion on neoliberalism, critics have argued that this focus on the cost of education is changing the expectations that students have about their post-secondary experiences, transforming them from students into consumers. Many post-secondary institution administrators are even referring to students as clients, reflecting a general shift toward reconceptualizing the role of students in institutions of higher learning. The shifting role of student from "empty vessel to be filled with knowledge" to a demanding consumer is resisted by many faculty members, however. For example, Newson (2004) argues that it is fundamentally erroneous to consider students as consumers or clients because they are simply not free to choose what they learn and how they learn it (this is still the domain of the teaching faculty). Additionally, the "product" of an education is not something tangible, but is the ongoing transformation of the student through learning, not simply the degree that she or he has paid for.

In a survey of faculty and librarians conducted by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) in 2009, nearly 62 percent of respondents indicated that their class sizes had increased compared to just three years ago. Additionally, 40 percent indicated that they believed students were receiving less educational quality than just three years ago, pointing to oversubscribed courses where there were more students than available seats, large lecture-style courses replacing small-group seminars in upper year courses, and more reliance on multiple-choice style testing to ease workload. In addition to perceived deteriorating teaching conditions, 55 percent of respondents said

that current students were less prepared for university than students just three years ago. Signals of this unpreparedness included clear declines in writing and numeric skills, expectations of success without effort, and overdependence on online sources rather than proper library research.[19] Indeed, a literature is currently growing on the perceived *unreadiness* of new undergraduate students (see Côté and Allahar 2007, 2011), arguing that students are not being prepared in secondary school for the types of skills that have traditionally been assumed by university teachers in the past.

Professor Alan Slavin, a physics professor at Trent University, was interested in understanding the increased rate of dropouts from his introductory physics courses over recent years (Slavin 2008). He suggests that there are a few possible reasons for such increases. The first is *grade inflation* in high schools. Grade inflation refers to the increase in overall scores being given to work that in the past would have received lower grades. And, indeed, other authors (Côté and Allahar 2007, 2011) point to strong evidence of grade inflation over the past two decades: a grade of "A" meant "excellent" in previous generations, but is now considered "respectable."[20] And while there is widespread consensus that there has been grade inflation in the United States, Australia, the UK, and other countries, it appears that little is being done to stop it (Côté and Allahar 2011). Such critics argue that the result of grade inflation is that students are highly rewarded in secondary school for substandard work with minimal effort and experience a shock when these types of grading techniques are not carried over into university practices. Slavin (2008) also suggests that secondary schools have tended to rely on rote memorization of "facts" rather than developing critical reasoning skills due to the emphasis on performing well on standardized tests at the secondary level—a shift that occurred in Ontario in the 1990s during the first stages of neoliberal reforms.

Some Canadian universities have recognized that grade inflation is a problem and are changing the way that they assess undergraduate applications. The University of British Columbia is

now requiring students to submit a personal profile in addition to their high school marks. The profile consists of answers to five short answer questions in which an applicant's non-academic strengths may be evaluated. And because students' final grades in Alberta are heavily impacted, and generally reduced, by their performance on standardized diploma exams, the University of Saskatchewan is now looking at both the high school marks and diploma exam marks of applicants from Alberta so that they are not disadvantaged relative to students from other provinces where such diploma exams are not used or factored so heavily into final grades (Tamburri 2012).

Faculty members and students also differ on their understanding of what constitutes a good grade, likely due to a combination of the history of grade inflation and the increasing expense of tuition. The term has been used to describe "an attitude marked by students' beliefs that they are owed something in the educational experience apart from what they might earn from their effort" (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt 2010:343). In a focus group study of first-year students at the University of Windsor, Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) found considerable evidence of attitudes toward academic entitlement, often captured in the sentiment that students should at least be expected to pass given that they pay such high tuition fees. The responsibility for passing appeared to be transferred to the professor, who participants in the study thought should recognize their payment and grant them a pass—a great departure from the professorial perspective that students should be evaluated based on their performance of the course requirements. Despite this difference, however, Singleton et al. (2010) argue that it is likely that *the system* is the source of the entitled feelings among students because the institution treats students as customers, leading to customer-like expectations:

The idea of consumerism and these sentiments of academic entitlement are strongly linked to one another. Canadian researchers have called this phenomenon *degree purchasing*, wherein the credential of getting a degree is seen as a vehicle for employment opportunities rather than as an opportunity for

learning (Brotheridge and Lee 2005). Canadian research has found that students who had strong degree purchasing orientations also had poorer study habits, performed poorly in courses, and were more likely to challenge the authority of their teachers (Brotheridge and Lee 2005).

Another concern for post-secondary teachers is **student engagement**, which refers to the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies. Côté and Allahar (2011) demonstrate that the amount of time students spend on their studies outside class has dropped significantly since the 1960s, when it was around 40 hours, to now, when it is around 14 hours. The authors explore different arguments for this change in study time, including the possibility that students' time is now spent in paid employment or caring for dependants; however, their analyses of the National Survey of Student Engagement reveal that there is little association between time devoted to study and paid employment. If anything, their data indicate that those who work were *more engaged*. In contrast, time spent socializing was found to have a bigger effect on time displacement from studying. Most strikingly, however, was the finding that a great proportion of students who were disengaged reported receiving consistently high grades, suggesting that they were being highly rewarded for their marginal efforts. The authors suggest that such a finding points to fundamental flaws in the grading standards being used at Canadian universities today and in the expectations of professors.

One additional symptom of student disengagement is **academic dishonesty** , more commonly referred to as cheating. In a recent study by Christensen Hughes and McCabe (2006b) of university students across Canada, undergraduate students were asked about their current studies as well as their behaviours in high school. The researchers asked the students about various forms of cheating, ranging from "mild" (e.g., working on an assignment with others when the instructor had indicated individual work) to serious (e.g., copying on an exam). In terms of serious cheating on tests, 58 percent of students said they had engaged in a form of serious

cheating on test while in high school, while 18 percent of undergraduates and 9 percent of graduate students admitted to serious cheating on tests. With regard to serious cheating on written work, nearly three-quarters of students indicated that they had done so in high school, while over half of undergraduates admitted to serious cheating while in university. Over a third of graduate students indicated they had participated in serious cheating on written assignments. While the authors caution that the results are not generalizable to all students in Canada, they suggest that the findings point to potential areas of concern.

Which students cheat and why? Christensen Hughes and McCabe (2006b) found that cheating occurs more among students who are young, male, overworked, have a different first language from that of instruction, suffer from anxiety, or have high grade-point averages. The latter characteristic—having high grade point averages—might be regarded as counter-intuitive; however, students may use cheating as a technique to ensure that they receive an A, particularly during high-pressure times in the school year.

There is also some consensus that the most pervasive form of plagiarism is copying from online sources, which is likely due to the accessibility and structure of the internet itself, constituting a type of "electronic opportunism" that many students might not be able to resist (Rocco and Warglien 1995; Selwyn 2008). Indeed, many universities in Canada and beyond have reported marked increases in plagiarism in recent years since the accessibility and availability of online information has increased. For example, in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Toronto, cases of online plagiarism rose from 55 percent of academic misconduct offences to 99 percent between 2001 and 2002 (Wahl 2002). Other researchers have suggested that students regard online plagiarism as less wrong than offences using sources that are in print (Baruchson-Arbib and Yaari 2004). Other commentators on the issue argue that such pervasiveness in online cheating is a byproduct of university massification (Breen and Maassen 2005;

Underwood and Szabo 2004), whereby students feel increased pressure to get the highest grades possible. This may be compounded by perceived inadequate access to professors and libraries, reframing cheating as a required "survival strategy."

One additional explanation behind the alleged *culture of disengagement* of Millennials (or Generation Y) is that newer generations of students find traditional pedagogies unstimulating due to the students' greater "technological savviness." Proponents of such arguments often advocate the adoption of technology in the classroom to engage students. Indeed, more recent incoming cohorts of undergraduate students represent what Prensky (2001) called *digital natives*. **Digital natives** are individuals who grew up with high-tech devices and started interacting with such devices at an early age. The assumption is that such individuals are inherently comfortable with technology and even seek out ways to incorporate technology into their everyday lives.

There are various ways that technologies can be incorporated into teaching and a developing body of evidence as to their effectiveness. Laptop computers, once hailed as a tool to aid students in the classroom, are increasingly being banned in university classrooms.[26] Some professors perceive laptops to be distracting, with students looking at social media sites (e.g., Facebook), checking their email, or shopping online during class. Moreover, looking at distracting web content during a lecture distracts not only the student who is doing it but potentially those around him or her. Recent research by Fried (2008) has found evidence that in-class laptop use is actually detrimental to student learning; users reported decreased understanding of the course material and overall worse course performance.

Apart from technologies that students use on their own, most post-secondary institutions in Canada subscribe to web-enhanced course management systems, such as Moodle, WebCT, Blackboard or Canvas. These platforms allow instructors to post course materials such as the course syllabus, PowerPoint presentations, and lecture notes; conduct online quizzes; create discussion

forums; and manage student grades. Course instructors may also supplement their course materials with audio or video presentations of lectures. Despite the availability of course management systems and the enthusiasm with which post-secondary administrators encourage faculty to adapt such techniques, there is little evidence of how the effectiveness of the incorporation of technology into the classroom enhances the learning of this newest generation of students (Bennett, Maton, and Kervin 2008). Furthermore, there is also a lack of evidence that this generation has any particular learning style. In fact, Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) argue that it is difficult to imagine that generations themselves have learning styles, and just like other personal characteristics, preferences for learning vary from student to student. At the core of many suggested teaching strategies is the belief that such digital natives learn and process information differently and that in order to engage such students, teachers must change their teaching styles accordingly. However, Vaidhyanathan (2008) has gone so far as to argue that the Net Generation is a myth, noting that in actuality, very few of today's students (or young people in general) are "technology wizards" but that they are capable of basic use of gadgets and social networking websites because they are enjoyable to use. Rather than a technologically savvy generation, the actual technological aptitude of students—like anyone else—varies considerably.

One notable piece of Canadian research examined the opinions of nearly 1300 students on electronic resources and their use in teaching (Rogers, Usher, and Kaznowska 2011). The findings also supported previous research from Australia that did not find much evidence of the "digital native" and their supposedly voracious appetite for online learning and education-related technologies. The researchers actually found that an increase in e-learning resources was associated with a lessened degree of perceived comprehension. This is not to say that electronic resources decreased learning, but that students did not report learning more in courses using e-learning techniques than they did in courses that

used none. Interestingly, when students were asked about the types of e-resources that they would most like to see, the majority of them answered more in favour of "static" items such as courses readings than "active" elements such as online discussions.

11.7 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

In this module you have been introduced to the meaning and purpose of education, the history, structure, organization and delivery of education in Canada and a selection of trends within educational institutions and practice that have coincided with the rise to dominance of neoliberal social policy. While it is clear that education plays a central role in the lives of individuals as well as society, sociologists view that role from a variety of perspectives. For example, functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Critical sociologists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those affect everyday life. In this final section of Module Eleven, features of each of these different approaches are highlighted.

11.7.1 Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in a society. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent (or

secondary) functions, which are the hidden and unintended functions.

Manifest Functions

There are several major manifest functions associated with education. The first is socialization. Beginning in preschool and kindergarten, students are taught to practise various societal roles. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who established the academic discipline of sociology, characterized schools as "socialization agencies that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles" (Durkheim 1898).

This socialization also involves learning the rules and norms of the society as a whole. In the early days of compulsory education, students learned the dominant culture. Today, since the culture of Canada is increasingly diverse, students may learn a variety of cultural norms, not only that of the dominant culture.

School systems in Canada also transmit the core values of the nation through manifest functions like social control. One of the roles of schools is to teach students conformity to law and respect for authority. Obviously, such respect, given to teachers and administrators, will help a student navigate the school environment. This function also prepares students to enter the workplace and the world at large, where they will continue to be subject to people who have authority over them. Fulfillment of this function rests primarily with classroom teachers and instructors who are with students all day.

Figure 16.6. The teacher's authority in the classroom is a way in which education fulfills the manifest functions of social control. (Photo courtesy of Tulane Public Relations/flickr)

Education also provides one of the major methods used by people for upward social mobility. This function is referred to as **social placement**. University and graduate schools are viewed as vehicles for moving students closer to the careers that will give them the financial freedom and security they seek. As a result, university students are often more motivated to study areas that they believe will be advantageous on the social ladder. A student might value business courses over a class in Victorian poetry because he or she sees business class as a stronger vehicle for financial success.

Latent Functions

Education also fulfills latent functions. Much goes on in school that has little to do with formal education. For example, you might notice an attractive fellow student who gives a particularly interesting

answer in class — catching up with with that student and making a date speaks to the latent function of courtship fulfilled by exposure to a peer group in the educational setting.

The educational setting introduces students to social networks that might last for years and can help people find jobs after their schooling is complete. Of course, with social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, these networks are easier than ever to maintain. Another latent function is the ability to work with others in small groups, a skill that is transferable to a workplace and that might not be learned in a homeschool setting.

The educational system, especially as experienced on university campuses, has traditionally provided a place for students to learn about various social issues. There is ample opportunity for social and political advocacy, as well as the ability to develop tolerance to the many views represented on campus. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement swept across university campuses all over Canada, leading to demonstrations in which diverse groups of students were unified with the purpose of changing the political climate of the country.

Table 11.2. Manifest and Latent Functions of Education. According to functionalist theory, education contributes to both manifest and latent functions.

Manifest Functions: Openly stated functions with intended goals	Socialization	Transmission of culture	Social control	Social placement	Cultural innovation
Latent Functions: Hidden, unstated functions with sometimes unintended consequences	Courtship	Social networks	Working in groups	Creation of generation gap	Political and social integration

Functionalists recognize other ways that schools educate and

enculturate students. An important value students in Canada learn is that of individualism — the valuing of the individual over the value of groups or society as a whole. In countries such as Japan and China, where the good of the group is valued over the rights of the individual, students do not learn as they do in Canada that the highest rewards go to the "best" individual in academics as well as athletics. One of the roles of schools in Canada is fostering self-esteem; conversely, schools in Japan focus on fostering social esteem — the honouring of the group over the individual.

In Canada, schools also fill the role of preparing students for competition and cooperation in life. Obviously, athletics foster both a cooperative and competitive nature, but even in the classroom, students learn both how to work together and how to compete against one another academically. Schools also fill the role of teaching patriotism. Although Canadian students do not have to recite a pledge of allegiance each morning, like students in the United States, they do take social studies classes where they learn about common Canadian history and identity.

Figure 16.7. Starting each day with the Pledge of Allegiance is one way in which American students are taught patriotism. How do Canadian students learn patriotism? (Photo courtesy of Jeff Turner/flickr)

Another role of schools, according to functionalist theory, is that of **sorting**, or classifying students based on academic merit or potential. The most capable students are identified early in schools through testing and classroom achievements. Exceptional students are often placed in accelerated programs in anticipation of successful university attendance. Other students are guided into vocational training programs with emphasis on shop and home economics.

Functionalists also contend that school, particularly in recent years, is taking over some of the functions that were traditionally undertaken by family. Society relies on schools to teach about human sexuality as well as basic skills such as budgeting and job applications — topics that at one time were addressed by the family.

11.7.2 Critical Sociology

Critical sociologists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities arising from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, critical sociologists view it more critically. To them, it is important to examine how educational systems preserve the status quo and guide people of lower status into subordinate positions in society.

Figure 16.8. Critical sociologists see the education system as a means by which those in power stay in power. (Photo courtesy Thomas Ricker/ flickr)

The fulfillment of one's education is closely linked to social class. Students of low socioeconomic status are generally not afforded the same opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how great their academic ability or desire to learn. For example, 25 of every 100 low-income Canadian 19-year-olds attend university compared to 46 of every 100 high-income Canadian 19-year-olds (Berger, Motte, and Parkin 2009). Barriers like the cost of higher education, but also more subtle cultural cues, undermine the promise of education as a means of providing equality of opportunity.

Picture a student from a working-class home who wants to do well in school. On a Monday, he's assigned a paper that's due Friday. Monday evening, he has to babysit his younger sister while his divorced mother works. Tuesday and Wednesday he works stocking shelves after school until 10:00 p.m. By Thursday, the only day he might have available to work on that assignment, he is so exhausted he cannot bring himself to start the paper. His mother, though she

would like to help him, is so tired herself that she isn't able to give him the encouragement or support he needs. Since English is her second language, she has difficulty with some of his educational materials. They also lack a computer and printer at home, which most of his classmates have, so they have to rely on the public library or school system for access to technology. As this story shows, many students from working-class families have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, having poor study environments, and lacking material support from their families. This is a difficult match with education systems that adhere to a traditional curriculum that is more easily understood and completed by students of higher social classes.

Such a situation leads to social class reproduction, extensively studied by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He researched how, parallel to economic capital (as analyzed by Marx), **cultural capital**, or the accumulation of cultural knowledge that helps one navigate a culture, alters the experiences and opportunities available to French students from different social classes. Bourdieu emphasized that like economic capital, cultural capital in the form of cultural taste, knowledge, patterns of speech, clothing, proper etiquette, etc. is difficult and time consuming to acquire. Members of the upper and middle classes have more cultural capital than families of lower-class status, and they can pass it on to their children from the time that they are toddlers. As a result, the educational system maintains a cycle in which the dominant culture's values are rewarded. Instruction and tests cater to the dominant culture and leave others struggling to identify with values and competencies outside their social class. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion over what standardized tests such as the IQ test and aptitude tests truly measure. Many argue that the tests group students by cultural ability rather than by natural intelligence.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the **hidden curriculum** (discussed above), which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that one learns through informal learning

and cultural transmission. The hidden curriculum is never formally taught but it is implied in the expectation that those who accept the formal curriculum, institutional routines, and grading methods will be successful in school. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital, and serves to bestow status unequally.

Critical sociologists also point to **tracking**, a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced versus low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities. While educators may believe that students do better in tracked classes because they are with students of similar ability and may have access to more individual attention from teachers, critical sociologists feel that tracking leads to self-fulfilling prophecies in which students live up (or down) to teacher and societal expectations (Education Week 2004).

As noted above, IQ tests have been attacked for being biased — for testing cultural knowledge rather than actual intelligence. For example, a test item may ask students what instruments belong in an orchestra. To correctly answer this question requires certain cultural knowledge — knowledge most often held by more affluent people who typically have more exposure to orchestral music. On the basis of IQ and aptitude testing, students are frequently sorted into categories that place them in enriched program tracks, average program tracks, and special needs or remedial program tracks. Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that this is impossible. The tests are another way in which education does not provide equal opportunities, but instead maintains an established configuration of power.

11.7.3 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal

repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world's 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

In Canada women's educational attainments have slowly been increasing with respect to men's. Women now make up 56% of all post-secondary students and 58% of graduates from post-secondary institutions in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). Canadian women in fact have the highest percentage of higher educational attainment among all OECD countries at 55%. A university education is also more financially advantageous for women in Canada than men relatively speaking. Women with a higher education degree earn on average 50% more than they would without higher education compared to 39% more for men. However, men with higher education were more likely to have a job than women with higher education (84.7% to 78.5%), and women earned less than men in absolute terms with their education: 74 cents for each dollar earned by men for ages 24 to 64 (OECD, 2012).

A Statistics Canada study released in 2011 showed that, among full-time employed men and women aged 25 to 29 with a graduate or professional degree, women still earned only 96 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2005. (With a bachelor's degree they earned 89 cents for every dollar earned by men.) This trend was similar among all fields of study except for physical and life sciences, and technologies and health, parks, recreation and fitness where women actually earned more than men (Turcotte, 2011).

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to promote women's rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

11.7.4 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism sees education as one way that the labelling theory can be demonstrated in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labelling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are being labelled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student being labelled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to "shake off," which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

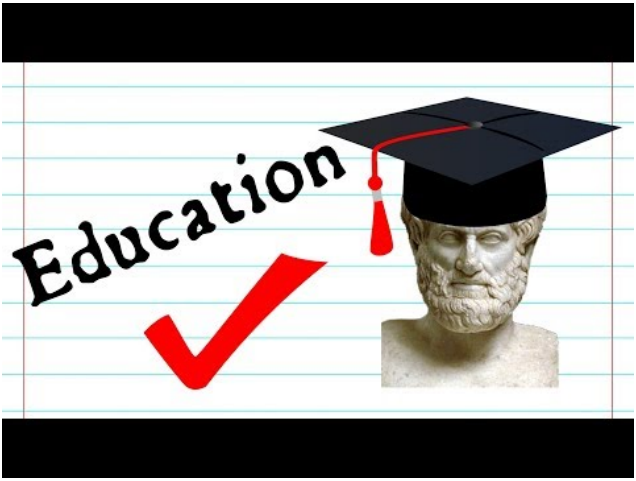
In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iverson details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iverson 2006). Iverson obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. However, when an actual 17-year-old student hears this from a person with authority, it is no wonder that the student might begin to "live down to" that label.

The labelling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that symbolize completion of education. **Credentialism** embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications. These certificates or degrees serve as a symbol of what a person has achieved, allowing the labelling of that individual.

Indeed, as these examples show, labelling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

To conclude this introduction to the sociology of education, a short video on the etymology of educational vocabulary

demonstrating why attention to language, its roots, history and meaning can be a tremendous asset in ones development of a sociological imagination.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=951

Key Terms and Concepts

credentialism: The emphasis on certificates or degrees

to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications.

cultural capital: Cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture.

cultural transmission: The way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture.

education: A social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms.

formal education: The learning of academic facts and concepts.

grade inflation: The idea that the achievement level associated with an A today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with A-level work a few decades ago.

hidden curriculum: The type of nonacademic knowledge that one learns through informal learning and cultural transmission.

informal education: Learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviours through participation in a society.

social placement: The use of education to improve one's social standing.

sorting: Classifying students based on academic merit or potential.

tracking: A formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities.

universal access: The equal ability of all people to participate in an education system.

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11.9 Attributions

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- *Chapter 16*. *Education*, in Introduction to Sociology – 2nd Canadian Edition by William Little, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
- Selections of chapters from, Sociology of Education in Canada by Dr. Karen L. Robson, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, including:
    - Introduction
    - A Historical View of Education in Canada
    - The Structure of Education in Canada
    - The Role of Curriculum
    - Structural and Social Inequalities
    - School-to-Work Transitions
    - Challenges to Educational Practice
    -

Figure 16.1 Living seasons in a Hopi village by U.S. Embassy Canada (https://www.flickr.com/photos/us_mission_canada/8197704623/in/set-72157632038837142) used under CC BY 2.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

12. Module 12: Population, Urbanization and Environment

Figure 12.1*. The Alberta tar sands has become increasingly controversial since Suncor's first extraction plant opened in 1967. Development of the tar sands is a classic issue that pits corporate interests against environmental sustainability. (tar sands, Alberta by Dru Oja Jay, Dominion under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

Learning Objectives

- Define the meaning of demographic measurements, such as fertility and mortality rates.
- Compare and contrast a variety of demographic theories, such as Malthusian, cornucopian, zero population growth, and demographic transition theories.
- Describe current population trends and patterns.
- Describe the process of urbanization in Canada.
- Explain the function of suburbs, exurbs, and concentric zones.
- Compare and contrast various sociological perspectives to urbanization.
- Apply the concept of carrying capacity to environmental concerns.
- Describe and discuss the challenges presented by pollution, garbage, e-waste, and toxic hazards.
- Describe climate change and its importance.

12.0 Introduction to Population, Urbanization, and the Environment

***Figure 12.2**. Fort McMurray, Alberta, is the hub that services the Athabasca Tar Sands. Its population grew by 29% between 2006 and 2011, and by 23% between 2001 and 2006. (Canadian Tarsands – Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada by Kris Krüg under a CC-BY-NC-ND License.)*

The Alberta tar sands (or bituminous sands) in the northeast of the province have been recognized as an important petroleum resource since the 19th century when the first extensive surveys were made. They cover about 140,000 square kilometres of boreal forest and muskeg, largely in the Athabasca River basin. The petroleum is in the form of crude bitumen, which is a dense, tar-like substance mixed with sand and clay. Extracting bitumen and heavy oils from the tar sands requires pit mining or surface mining; processing the ore with water, steam, and caustic soda; and storing the toxic by-products in tailings ponds. In 1967, when Suncor began the first intensive commercial development of the tar sands, oil was just over $3 a barrel and the high cost of production limited the rate at which the resource was developed. In 1967, Suncor was producing

15,000 barrels/day. When prices sometimes exceeded $100 a barrel, production was projected to increase from 2.3 million barrels/day in 2014 to in excess of 3.8 million barrels/day by 2023. Industry projected that eventually 9 million barrels of bitumen would be produced per day (Gosselin et al. 2010; Grant, Angen, and Dyer 2013). The collapse of global oil demand amidst the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the increased influence of a global environmental movement and alternative sources of energy has placed the future of the Alberta tar sands in jeopardy.

The controversy over developing the tar sands sets two competing logics against one another: environmental sustainability versus capital accumulation. **Environmental sustainability** is the degree to which a human activity can be sustained without damaging or undermining basic ecological support systems. Environmental critics of the tar sands development note that the process of bitumen extraction requires vast amounts of energy, fresh water, and land, while producing significant environmental impacts in the form of greenhouse gases, reduction in air quality, destruction of peat bogs and wetlands, and accumulation of toxic waste in tailings ponds (Grant, Angen, and Dyer 2013). There are also health impacts: local Indigenous groups have experienced a 30 percent greater risk of cancer over expected cancer rates since 1998 (Droitsch and Simieritsch 2010). These are factors in addition to the basic problem of sustainability—they involve human reliance on fossil fuels in the face of potentially catastrophic climate change.

On the other hand, Canada has a capitalist economy based on private investment and **capital accumulation** (although both the federal and provincial governments have invested in tar sands development at various times). Capital accumulation refers to the reinvestment of profit in order to increase capital assets (rather than for any specific social use). Since 1996 when capital investment exceeded $1 billion per year for the first time, investment has continued to increase reaching $4.2 billion/year in 2000 and $16 billion/year between 2006 and 2008. Net profits for the industry increased from $3.1 billion to $37.8 billion between 1998 and 2008.

Over the same period, the number of people directly employed in tar sands operations rose from 6,000 to 12,000, not including spin-off jobs in construction and maintenance of facilities and other services. Royalties and other land-related payments to the government of Alberta were $3.8 billion in 2008 (Gosselin et al. 2010).

During this period when the price of oil was high, the tar sands boomed economically. Industry representatives argued that building refineries in Alberta to refine the raw bitumen rather than piping it to distant refineries would "overheat" the economy (i.e., create too many jobs). Some pointed to the "Dutch disease" effect of this economic development (i.e., that the artificially high petro-dollar was responsible for undermining other important sectors of the economy, notably manufacturing in Ontario and Quebec) (Stanford 2012), and others pointed to the problem of foreign ownership of Canadian resources (two-thirds of tar sands production is owned by foreign corporations) (De Souza 2012). The overall argument from the point of view of capital accumulation is that the benefits to the Canadian economy outweigh the drawbacks. However, the precarious nature of the oil export economy was revealed when the collapse of oil prices in 2014, like in 1986, and more recently in 2020 lead to a massive flight of capital investment out of Alberta (along with tens of thousands of layoffs and loss of tax royalties to the province). As oil is an export commodity whose price depends on the logic of market values, it is a fundamentally unstable source of capital accumulation. Various aspects of the controversies that surround the development of the Alberta tar sands are outlined below in the YouTube video, "Alberta: The End of Dirty Oil?"

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12.0.1 How does sociological research help to understand and respond to these issues?

As the competing frameworks for understanding the Alberta tar sands illustrate, there are important societal issues connected to the environment and to how and where people live. Sociologists begin to examine these issues through demography, or the study of population dynamics, and urbanization, the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities. Environmental sociologists study how humans interact with their environments.

Today, as has been the case many times in history, we are at a point of conflict in a number of these areas. The world's population has recently reached 7 billion. A mid-range estimate suggests it

will reach 8 billion by 2025 (UN 2013). Can our planet sustain such a population? We generate more trash than ever, from Starbucks' coffee cups to obsolete cell phones with toxic chemicals to food waste that could be composted. Where is it all going? Until it developed the Green Lane landfill site, the city of Toronto was sending up to 140 garbage trucks a day to Michigan State. When the Green Lane site is full in 2027 it is not clear where the trash will go (Hasham 2013). Cities and city living create new challenges for both society and the environment. These kinds of interactions between people and places are of critical importance.

How do sociologists study these issues? Functionalists note that one of the primary functions that any society needs to perform to ensure its survival is to adapt to the environment. According to Talcott Parsons' AGIL schema, adaptation was the first of the primary "needs" that a society has to satisfy (1961). The economic system performs the function in human society of adapting to the natural environment to provide for human needs. In a functionalist analysis, when the norms of one system–like the economic system–become detached from or unresponsive to, the other systems (like the ecological system on which society depends), disequilibrium is felt throughout society. In the 1982 film *Koyaanisqatsi*, this point was illustrated by showing contrasting images of living in balance with nature with images of living out of balance with nature. The title *Koyaanisqatsi* is a Hopi Indian word meaning "life out of balance." In the scenes depicting the lifestyle of the fast-paced, urban, consumer society, people pass by in fast motion like sausages on an assembly line. Not only is the economy unhinged from nature in this film, but individual life is shown to have lost meaningful connection with nature. One type of question that can be asked from a functionalist perspective is therefore: How can society be organized in a manner that restores balance with nature?

A critical sociologist will note that disequilibrium in a society's relationship with the environment does not "just happen." There are vested interests that promote unrestricted exploitation of natural

resources for short-term private profit. Capitalism is a system in which non-economic values—community life, ecological values, long-term sustainability, etc.—have no role in economic calculations of returns on investment. From the critical sociology point of view, changes in the human/nature relationship have to be examined as outcomes of relations of power and patterns of capital investment. Environmental issues are therefore not distributed equally around the world. Changes in the global mode of production lead to the creation of unsustainable population increases, slum cities, and lax controls on toxic waste in some parts of the world, while in other parts of the world, people consume resources, throw away surplus, and contribute to the problem of global warming at rates that are equally unsustainable.

A symbolic interactionist interested in the day-to-day interaction of groups and individuals might research topics such as how attitudes toward the environment have changed, how individuals negotiate contradictory messages about industrial development and the environment, or how new practices in everyday life (e.g., recycling, smoking, bicycling, the "100-mile" diet, protest activities) emerge as a result of environmental concerns. One interesting question is how discredited theories that challenge research on global warming continue to circulate and produce doubt about the effects of greenhouse gases. Although the days are gone when a premier of Alberta can proclaim that climate science is a hoax, the divide between what is a publicly credible theory and what is not remains more a matter of symbolic interaction than pure science per se.

12.1 Demography and Population

We recently hit a population milestone of 7 billion humans on Earth's surface. It took approximately 12 years to grow from 6 billion to 7 billion people (United Nations Population Fund 2011). In short,

the planet is filling up. It is estimated we will we go from 7 billion to 8 billion by 2025. How will that population be distributed? Where is population the highest? Where is it slowing down? Where will people live? To explore these questions, we turn to **demography**, or the study of populations. Three of the most important components affecting the issues above are fertility, mortality, and migration.

The **fertility rate** of a society is a measure noting the number of children born. The fertility number is generally lower than the fecundity number, which measures the potential number of children that could be born to women of childbearing age. Sociologists measure fertility using the crude birthrate (the number of live births per 1,000 people per year); just as fertility measures childbearing, the **mortality rate** is a measure of the number of people who die. The crude death rate is a number derived from the number of deaths per 1,000 people per year. When analyzed together, fertility and mortality rates help researchers understand the overall growth occurring in a population.

Another key element in studying populations is the movement of people into and out of an area. This movement is called **migration**. Migration may take the form of immigration, which describes movement into an area to take up permanent residence, or emigration, which refers to movement out of an area to another place of permanent residence. Migration might be voluntary (as when university students study abroad), involuntary (as when Somalians left the drought and famine-stricken portion of their nation to stay in refugee camps), or forced (as when many First Nations were removed from the lands they had lived in for generations).

The **growth rate** of a population, or how much the population of defined area grows or shrinks in a specific time period, is therefore a function of the number of births and deaths as well as the number of people migrating to and from a country. It is calculated as the current population minus the initial population (at the beginning of the time period) divided by the initial population (then multiplied by 100).

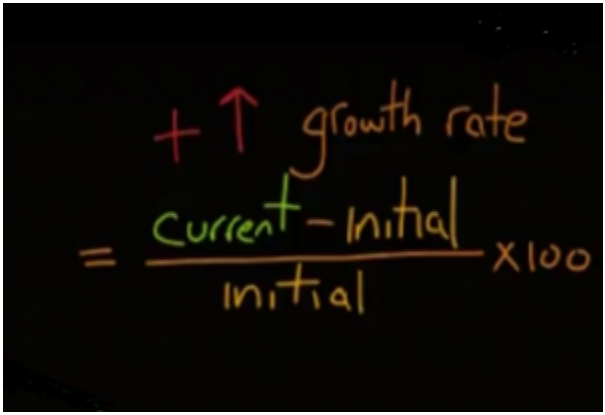


Figure 12.3. *Population growth rate (Image by [Khan Academy](#) under a CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0 United States License.)*

12.1.1 Population Growth

Changing fertility, mortality, and migration rates make up the total **population composition**, a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population. This number can be measured for societies, nations, world regions, or other groups. The population composition includes the **sex ratio** (the number of men for every hundred women) as well as the **population pyramid** (a picture of population distribution by sex and age).

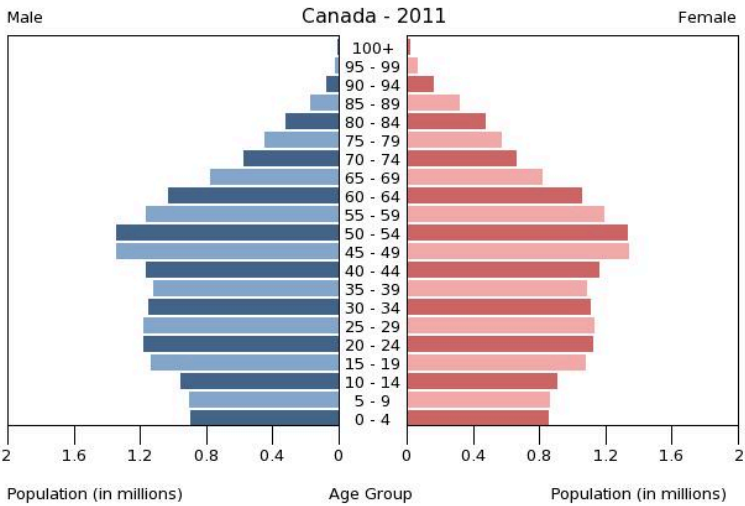


Figure 12.4*. This population pyramid shows the breakdown of the 2011 Canadian population according to age and sex. (Graph courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base)*

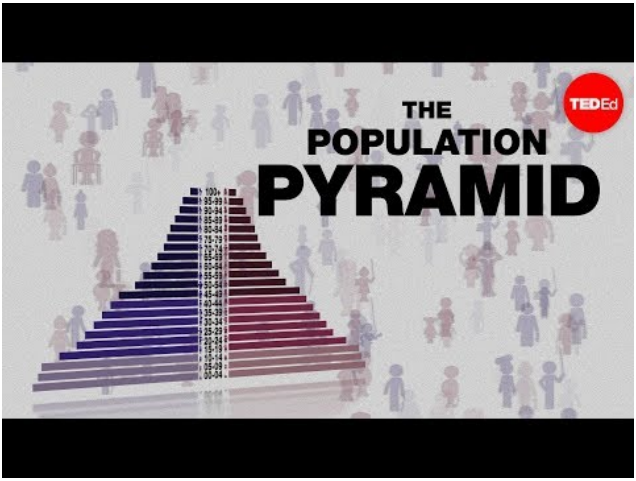
Table 12.1. Varying Fertility and Mortality Rated by Country. (Chart courtesy of CIA World Factbook 2014)

[Skip Table]

Country	Populations (in millions)	Fertility Rate	Mortality Rate	Sex Ration Male to Female
Afghanistan	29.8	5.4%	14.1%	1.03
Sweden	9.1	1.9%	9.5%	0.98
United States	313.2	2.0%	8.24%	0.97
Canada	34.8	1.6%	8.3%	0.99

As Table 12.1 illustrates, countries vary greatly in fertility rates and mortality rates—the components that make up a population composition. Comparing these four countries reveals that in Afghanistan, there are more men than there are women, whereas

the reverse is true in Canada, Sweden, and the United States. Afghanistan also has significantly higher fertility and mortality rates than any of the other three countries have. Do these statistics surprise you? How do you think the population makeup impacts the political climate and economics of the different countries? What factors lead to a sex ratio in which men outnumber women? The interaction between the demographic profile of a population and its internal dynamics is explored further in the TedEd YouTube video, "Population Pyramids: Powerful predictors of the future".



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12.1.2 Demographic Theories

Sociologists have long looked at population issues as central to

understanding human interactions. Below we will look at four theories about population that inform sociological thought: Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian, and demographic transition theories.

Malthusian Theory

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman who made dire predictions about Earth's ability to sustain its growing population. According to **Malthusian theory**, three factors would control human population that exceeded the earth's **carrying capacity**, or how many people can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources. He identified these factors as war, famine, and disease (Malthus 1798). He termed these "positive checks" because they increased mortality rates, thus keeping the population in check, so to speak. These are countered by "preventive checks," which also seek to control the population, but by reducing fertility rates; preventive checks include birth control and celibacy. Thinking practically, Malthus saw that people could only produce so much food in a given year, yet the population was increasing at an exponential rate. Eventually, he thought people would run out of food and begin to starve. They would go to war over the increasingly scarce resources, reduce the population to a manageable level, and the cycle would begin anew.

Of course, this has not exactly happened. The human population has continued to grow long past Malthus's predictions. So what happened? Why did we not die off? There are three reasons that sociologists suggest we continue to expand the population of our planet. First, technological increases in food production have increased both the amount and quality of calories we can produce per person. Second, human ingenuity has developed new medicine to curtail death through disease. Finally, the development and widespread use of contraception and other forms of family planning

have decreased the speed at which our population increases. But what about the future? Some still believe that Malthus was correct and that ample resources to support the Earth's population will soon run out.

Zero Population Growth

A neo-Malthusian researcher named Paul Ehrlich brought Malthus's predictions into the 20th century. However, according to Ehrlich, it is the environment, not specifically the food supply, that will play a crucial role in the continued health of planet's population (Ehrlich 1968). His ideas suggest that the human population is moving rapidly toward complete environmental collapse, as privileged people use up or pollute a number of environmental resources, such as water and air. He advocated for a goal of **zero population growth** (ZPG), in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration. While support for this concept is mixed, it is still considered a possible solution to global overpopulation.

Cornucopian Theory

Of course, some theories are less focused on the pessimistic hypothesis that the world's population will meet a detrimental challenge to sustaining itself. **Cornucopian theory** scoffs at the idea of humans wiping themselves out; it asserts that human ingenuity can resolve any environmental or social issues that develop. As an example, it points to the issue of food supply. If we need more food, the theory contends, agricultural scientists will figure out how to grow it, as they have already been doing for centuries. After all, in this perspective, human ingenuity has been up to the task for

thousands of years and there is no reason for that pattern not to continue (Simon 1981).

Demographic and Epidemiological Transition Theory

Whether you believe that we are headed for environmental disaster and the end of human existence as we know it, or you think people will always adapt to changing circumstances, some sociologists argue there are clear patterns that can be seen in population growth. Modernization theorists argue that societies develop along a predictable continuum as they evolve from unindustrialized to postindustrial. Following this model, **demographic transition theory** (Caldwell and Caldwell 2006) suggests that future population growth will develop along a predictable four-stage model.

In Stage 1, birth, death, and infant mortality rates are all high, while life expectancy is short. An example of this stage is 19th century North America. As countries begin to industrialize, they enter Stage 2, where birth rates are higher while infant mortality and the death rates drop. Life expectancy also increases. Afghanistan is currently in this stage. Stage 3 occurs once a society is thoroughly industrialized; birth rates decline, while life expectancy continues to increase. Death rates continue to decrease. Mexico's population is at this stage. In the final phase, Stage 4, we see the postindustrial era of a society. Birth and death rates are low, people are healthier and live longer, and society enters a phase of population stability. Overall population may even decline. Sweden and Canada are considered Stage 4. Details of the demographic and epidemiological transition theories are explore further in the following videos.

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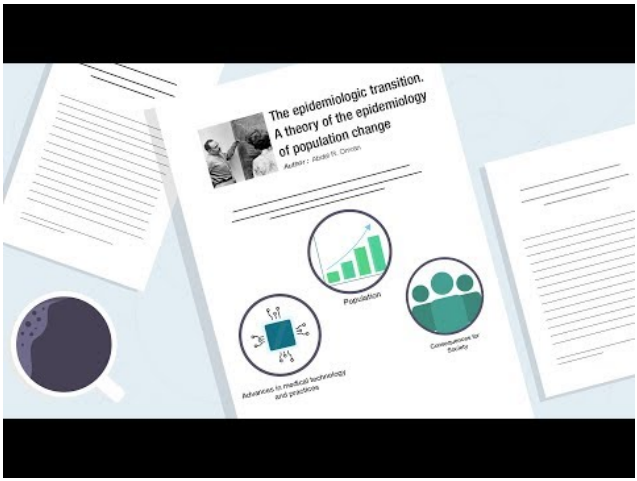

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12.1.3 Current Population Trends

As mentioned earlier, the Earth's population is 7 billion. That number might not seem particularly jarring on its own; after all, we all know there are lots of people around. But consider the fact that human population grew very slowly for most of our existence, then doubled in the span of half a century to reach 6 billion in 1999. And now, just over ten years later, we have added another billion. A look at the graph of projected population indicates that growth is not only going to continue, but it will continue at a rapid rate.

The United Nations Population Fund (2008) categorizes nations as

high fertility, intermediate fertility, or low fertility. It anticipates the population growth to triple between 2011 and 2100 in high-fertility countries, which are currently concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. For countries with intermediate fertility rates (the United States, India, and Mexico all fall into this category), growth is expected to be about 26 percent. And low-fertility countries like China, Australia, and most of those in Europe will actually see population declines of approximately 20 percent. Figures 20.5 and 20.6 illustrate this trend.

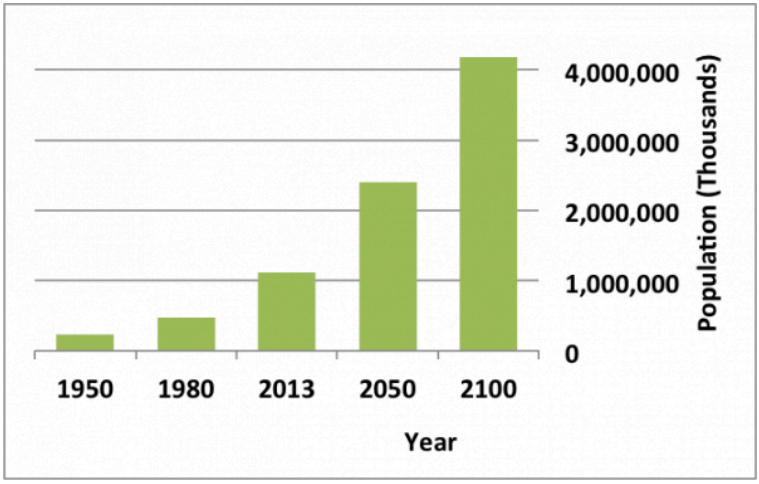

***Figure 12.5**. Projected Population in Africa. This graph shows the population growth of countries located on the African continent, many of which have high fertility rates. (Graph courtesy of USAID)*

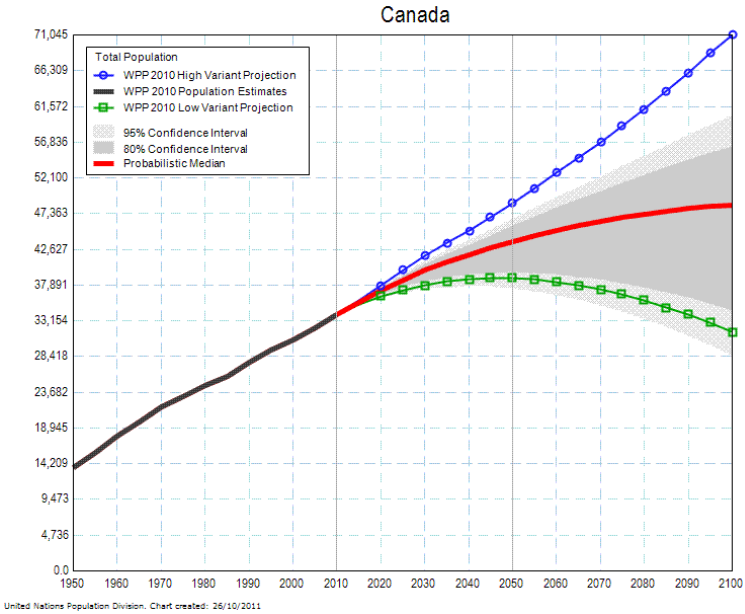

Figure 12.6. *Projected Population in Canada. Canada has an intermediate fertility rate, and therefore, a comparatively moderate projected population growth. (Graph courtesy of USAID)*

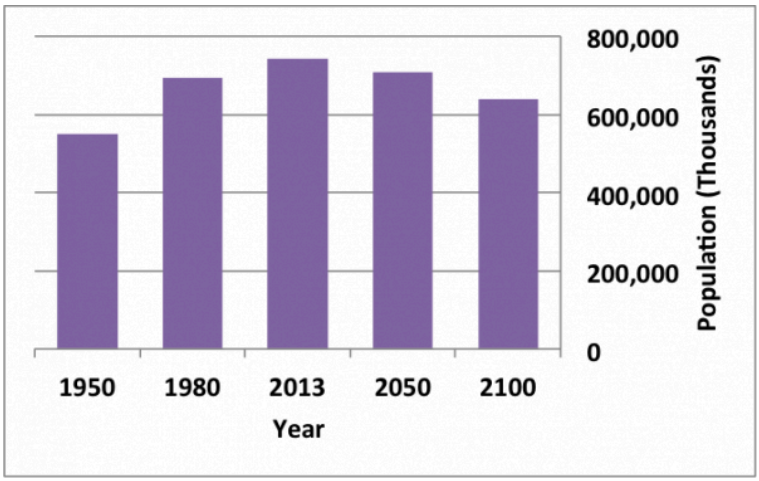

Figure 12.7*. Projected Population in Europe. This chart shows the projected population growth of Europe for the remainder of this century. (Graph courtesy of USAID)*

It would be impossible to discuss population growth and trends without addressing access to family planning resources and birth control. As the stages of population growth indicate, more industrialized countries see birth rates decline as families limit the number of children they have. Today, many people—over 200 million—still lack access to safe family planning, according to USAID (2010). By its report, this need is growing, with demand projected to increase by 40 percent in the next 15 years. Many social scholars would assert that until women are able to have only the children they want and can care for, the poorest countries would always bear the worst burden of overpopulation.

12.2 Urbanization

Figure 12.8. *The towers of Vancouver against the backdrop of Howe Sound and the Coast Mountains are an iconic image of Canadian city life.* (*Downtown Vancouver Sunset by Magnus Larsson CC-BY-SA 2.0 License.*)

Urbanization is the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities, and someone specializing in **urban sociology** would study those relationships. In some ways, cities can be microcosms of universal human behaviour, while in others they provide a unique environment that yields their own brand of human behaviour. There is no strict dividing line between rural and urban; rather, there is a continuum where one bleeds into the other. However, once a geographically concentrated population has reached approximately 100,000 people, it typically behaves like a city regardless of what its designation might be.

12.2.1 The Growth of Cities

According to sociologist Gideon Sjoberg (1965), there are three prerequisites for the development of a city: First, good environment with fresh water and a favourable climate; second, advanced technology, which will produce a food surplus to support non-farmers; and third, strong social organization to ensure social stability and a stable economy. Most scholars agree that the first cities were developed somewhere in ancient Mesopotamia, though there are disagreements about exactly where. Most early cities were small by today's standards, and the largest city around 100 CE was most likely Rome, with about 650,000 inhabitants (Chandler and Fox 1974). The factors limiting the size of ancient cities included lack of adequate sewage control, limited food supply, and immigration restrictions. For example, serfs were tied to the land, and transportation was limited and inefficient. Today, the primary influence on cities' growth is economic forces.

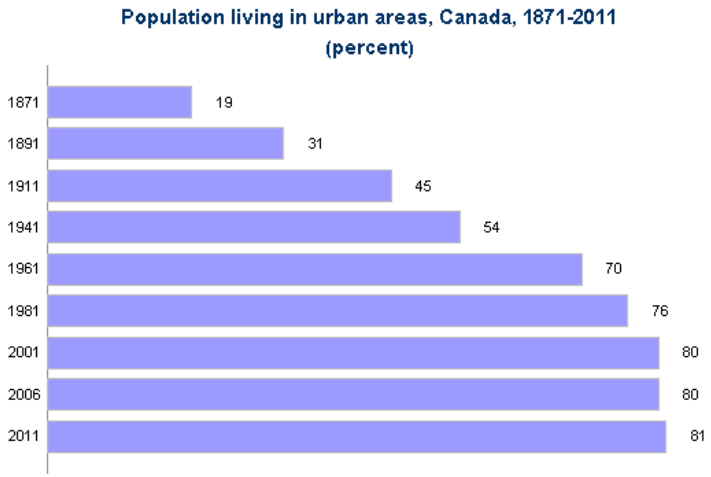

Figure 12.9. *As this chart illustrates, the shift from rural to urban living in Canada has been dramatic and continuous. (Graph courtesy of Employment and Social Development Canada 2014). This reproduction is a copy of the version available at http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=34. The Government of Canada allows reproduction of this graph in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, without charge or further permission, (http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/terms/index.shtml).*

12.2.2 Urbanization in Canada

Urbanization in Canada proceeded rapidly during the Industrial Era of 1870 to 1920. This was the origin of the **industrial city** in Canada, a city in which the major business and employment activities revolve around manufacturing, building, machining. The percentage of Canadians living in cities went from 19 percent in 1871 to 49 percent in 1920 (Statistics Canada 2011). As more and more opportunities for work appeared in factories, workers left farms (and the rural communities that housed them) to move to the cities. Urban development in Canada in this period focused on Montreal and Toronto, which were the two major hubs of transportation, commerce, and industrial production in the country. These cities

began to take on a modern industrial urban form with tall office towers downtown and a vast spatial expansion of suburbs surrounding them.

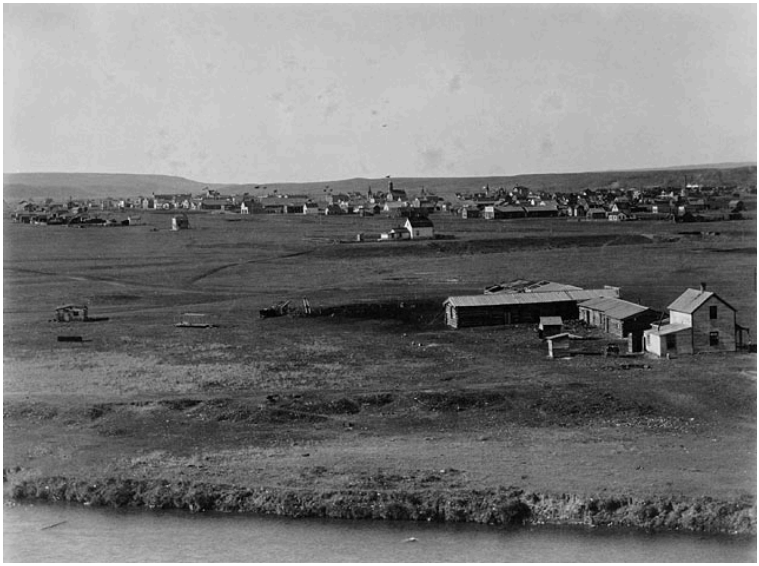

Figure 12.10. *Calgary in 1885. Montreal and Toronto were Canada's major urban centres for most of the 19th and early 20th centuries.* (*Calgary Alberta circa 1885 by William Notman and son is in the Public Domain.*)

Following the Industrial Era, urbanization in Canada from the 1940s onward took the form of the **corporate city**. Stelter (1986) describes the corporate city as being more focused economically on corporate management and financial (and other related professional) services than industrial production. Five features define the form of corporate cities: dispersal of population in suburbs, high-rise apartment buildings, isolated industrial parks, downtown cores of office towers, and suburban shopping malls. This development was made possible by the reorientation of the city to automobile and truck use, deindustrialization and the rise of the service and

knowledge economy, and a spatial decentralization of the population.

Finally we might note the transformation of the corporate city into a **postmodern city** form. Postmodern cities are defined by their orientation to circuits of global consumption, the fragmentation of previously homogeneous urban cultures, and the emergence of multiple centres or cores. John Hannigan (1998) describes three related developments that characterize the postmodern city: the edge city, dual city, and fantasy city. **Edge cities** are urban areas in suburbs or residential areas that have no central core or clear boundaries but form around clusters of shopping malls, entertainment complexes, and office towers at major transportation intersections. **Dual cities** are cities that are divided into wealthy, high-tech, information-based zones of urban development and poorer, run-down, marginalized zones of urban underdevelopment and informal economic activity. Mike Davis (1990) used the term "fortress city" to describe the way that cities abandon the commitment to creating viable public spaces and universal access to urban resources in favour of the privatization of public spaces, a "militarization" of private and public security services, and the creation of exclusive gated communities for the wealthy and middle classes. **Fantasy cities** are cities that choose to transform themselves into Disneyland-like "theme parks" or sites of mega-events (like the Olympics or FIFA World Cup competitions) to draw international tourists. Victoria, B.C., for example, has branded itself as a safe, historical—"more English than the English"—heritage destination for cruise ship and other types of tourism.

Suburbs and Exurbs

As cities grew more crowded, and often more impoverished and costly, more and more people began to migrate back out of them; but instead of returning to rural small towns (like they had resided

in before moving to the city), these people needed close access to the cities for their jobs. In the 1850s, as the urban population greatly expanded and transportation options improved, suburbs developed. **Suburbs** are the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute in, but far enough away to allow for more space than city living affords. The bucolic suburban landscape of the early 20th century has largely disappeared due to sprawl. Suburban sprawl contributes to traffic congestion, which in turn contributes to commuting time. Commuting times and distances have continued to increase as new suburbs developed farther and farther from city centres. Simultaneously, this dynamic contributed to an exponential increase in natural resource use, like petroleum, which sequentially increased pollution in the form of carbon emissions.

In Canada, most consider the suburbs home to upper- and middle-class people with private homes. In other countries, like France, the suburbs––or "banlieues"–– are synonymous with housing projects and impoverished communities. In fact, the banlieues of Paris are notorious for their ethnic violence and crime, with higher unemployment and more residents living in poverty than in the city centre. Further, the banlieues have a much higher immigrant population, which in Paris is mostly Arabic and African immigrants. This contradicts the clichéd Canadian image of a typical white-picket-fence suburb.

As the suburbs became more crowded and lost their charm, those who could afford it turned to the **exurbs**, communities that exist outside the ring of suburbs. Exurbs are typically populated by even wealthier families who want more space and have the resources to lengthen their commute. It is interesting to note that unlike U.S. cities, Canadian cities have always retained a fairly large elite residential presence in enclaves around the city centres, a pattern that has been augmented in recent decades by patterns of inner-city resettlement by elites (Caulfield 1994; Keil and Kipfer 2003). As cities evolve from industrial to postindustrial, this practice of **gentrification** becomes more common. Gentrification refers to

members of the middle and upper classes entering city areas that have been historically less affluent and renovating properties while the poor urban underclass are forced by resulting price pressures to leave those neighbourhoods. This practice is widespread and the lower class is pushed into increasingly decaying portions of the city.

Together, the city centres, suburbs, exurbs, and metropolitan areas all combine to form a **metropolis**. New York was the first North American **megalopolis**, a huge urban corridor encompassing multiple cities and their surrounding suburbs. The Toronto-Hamilton-Oshawa, Vancouver-Abbotsford-Chilliwack, and Calgary-Edmonton corridors are similar megalopolis formations. These metropolises use vast quantities of natural resources and are a growing part of the North American landscape.

12.2.3 Urbanization around the World

As was the case in North America, other urban centres experienced a growth spurt during the Industrial Era. In 1800, the only city in the world with a population over 1 million was Beijing, but by 1900, there were 16 cities with a population over 1 million (United Nations 2008). The development of factories brought people from rural to urban areas, and new technology increased the efficiency of transportation, food production, and food preservation. For example, from the mid-1670s to the early 1900s, London increased its population from 550,000 to 7 million (Old Bailey Proceedings Online 2011). The growth in global urbanization in the 20th and 21st centuries is following the blueprint of North American cities, but is occurring much more quickly and at larger scales, especially in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. Shanghai almost tripled its population from 7.8 million to 20.2 million between 1990 and 2011, adding the equivalent of the population of New York City in 20 years. It is projected to reach 28.4 million by 2025, third in size behind

Tokyo (38.7 million) and New Delhi (32.9 million) (United Nations 2012).

Global urbanization reached the 50 percent mark in 2008, meaning that more than half of the global population was living in cities compared to only 30 percent 50 years ago (United Nations 2008). Global urbanization has been uneven between core countries and the rest of the world, however. Two developments might serve to illustrate some of the stark differences in the global experience of urbanization: the formation of slum cities and global cities.

***Figure 12.11**. The slum city and the global city: the Favéla Morro do Prazères in Rio de Janeiro and the London financial district show two sides of global urbanization (Top Photo by dany13 CC-BY 2.0 License and Peter Pearson/ Flickr)*

Slum cities refer to the development on the outskirts of cities of unplanned shantytowns or squats with no access to clean water, sanitation, or other municipal services. These slums exist largely outside the rule of law and have become centres for child labour, prostitution, criminal activities, and struggles between gangs and paramilitary forces for control. Mike Davis (2006) estimates that

there are 200,000 slum cities worldwide including Quarantina in Beirut, the Favéla in Rio de Janeiro, the "City of the Dead" in Cairo, and Santa Cruz Meyehualco in Mexico City. He notes that while slum residents constitute only 6 percent of the urban population in developed countries, they constitute 78.2 percent of city dwellers in semi-peripheral countries. In Davis's analysis, neoliberal restructuring and the Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are largely responsible for the creation of the informal economy and the withdrawal of the state from urban planning and the provision of services. As a result, slum cities have become the blueprint for urban development in the developing world.

On the other side of the phenomenon of global urbanization are global cities like London, New York, and Tokyo. Saskia Sassen (2001) describes the **global city** as a unique development based on the new role of cities in the circuits of global information and global capital circulation and accumulation. Global cities become centres for financial and corporate services, providing a technical and information infrastructure and a pool of human resources (skills, professional and technical services, consulting services, etc.) to service the increasingly complex operations of global corporations. As such, they are progressively detached, economically and socially, from their local and national political-geographic contexts. They become instead nodes in a global network of informational, economic, and financial transactions or flows. It becomes possible in this sense to say that New York is closer to Tokyo and London in terms of the number of direct transactions between them than it is to Philadelphia or Baltimore.

Sassen (2005) emphasizes three important tendencies that develop from the formation of global cities: a concentration of wealth in the corporate sectors of these cities, a growing disconnection between the cities and their immediate geographic regions, and the development of a large marginalized population that is excluded from the job market for these high-end activities. The increasing number of global cities:

1. Host the headquarters of multinational corporations, such as Coca-Cola
2. Exercise significant international political influence, such as that from Beijing or Berlin
3. Host the headquarters of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the United Nations
4. Host influential media, such as the BBC and Al Jazeera
5. Host advanced communication and transportation infrastructure, such as that in Shanghai (Sassen 2001)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4zM3C1gLrI&feature=emb_logo

12.2.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization

As the examples above illustrate, the issues of urbanization play significant roles in the study of sociology. Race, economics, and human behaviour intersect in cities. We can look at urbanization through the sociological perspectives of functionalism and conflict theory. Functional perspectives on urbanization focus generally on the ecology of the city, while conflict perspective tends to focus on political economy.

Human ecology is a functionalist field of study that focuses on the relationship between people and their built and natural physical environments (Park 1915). According to this Chicago School approach, urban land use and urban population distribution occurs in a predictable pattern once we understand how people relate to their living environment. For example, in Canada, we have a transportation system geared to accommodate individuals and families in the form of interprovincial highways built for cars. In contrast, most parts of Europe emphasize public transportation such as high-speed rail and commuter lines, as well as walking and bicycling. The challenge for a human ecologist working in

Canadian urban planning would be to design landscapes and waterscapes with natural beauty, while also figuring out how to provide for free-flowing transport of innumerable vehicles—not to mention parking!

The **concentric zone model** (Burgess 1925) is perhaps the most famous example of human ecology. This model views a city as a series of concentric circular areas, expanding outward from the centre of the city, with various "zones" invading (new categories of people and businesses overrun the edges of nearby zones) and succeeding adjacent zones (after invasion, the new inhabitants repurpose the areas they have invaded and push out the previous inhabitants). In this model, Zone A, in the heart of the city, is the centre of the business and cultural district. Zone B, the concentric circle surrounding the city centre, is composed of formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments for new immigrant populations; this zone also houses small manufacturers, pawnshops, and other marginal businesses. Zone C consists of the homes of the working class and established ethnic enclaves. Zone D consists of wealthy homes, white-collar workers, and shopping centres. Zone E contains the estates of the upper class (exurbs) and the suburbs.

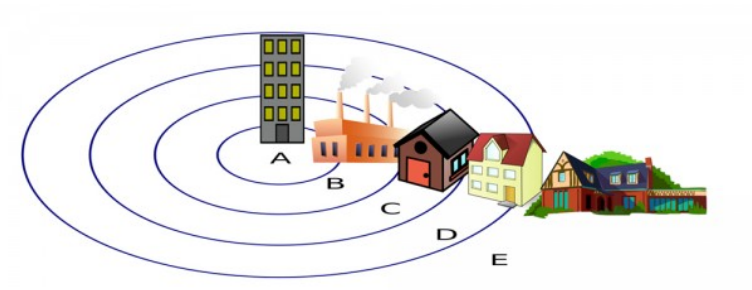

Figure 12.12. *This illustration depicts the concentric zones that make up a city. (Burgess Model by Zeimusu is in the Public Domain)*

In contrast to the functionalist approach, the critical perspective focuses on the dynamics of power and influence in the shaping of

the city. One way to do this is to examine how urban areas change according to specific decisions made by political and economic leaders. Cities are not so much the product of a quasi-natural "ecological" unfolding of social differentiation and succession, but of a dynamic of capital investment and disinvestment. City space is acted on primarily as a commodity that is bought and sold for profit. The dynamics of city development are better understood therefore as products of what Logan and Molotch (1987) call "growth coalitions"—coalitions of politicians, real estate investors, corporations, property owners, urban planners, architects, sports teams, cultural institutions, etc.—who work together to attract private capital to the city and lobby government for subsidies and tax breaks for investors. These coalitions generally benefit business interests and the middle and upper classes while marginalizing the interests of working and lower classes.

For example, sociologists Feagin and Parker (1990) suggested three aspects to understanding how political and economic leaders control urban growth. First, economic and political leaders work alongside each other to effect change in urban growth and decline, determining where money flows and how land use is regulated. Second, exchange value and use value are balanced to favour the middle and upper classes so that, for example, public land in poor neighbourhoods may be rezoned for use as industrial land. Finally, urban development is dependent on both structure (groups such as local government) and agency (individuals including business people and activists), and these groups engage in a push-pull dynamic that determines where and how land is actually used. For example, **NIMBY** (not in my backyard) movements are more likely to emerge in middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods, so these groups have more control over the usage of local land.

At the micro-level of interaction, sociologists have been interested in how human interaction is affected by living in cities. In his famous study "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Simmel described how the built environment and the sheer size and anonymity of the modern city had become a social form, which

he called the "metropolitan way of life." Although the metropolis, its architecture, and the variety of ways of life it contained were products of human creation and expression, as an entity it confronted the individual as a kind of overwhelming monstrosity that threatened to swallow him or her up in its "social-technological mechanism" (Simmel 1903). As a means of self-protection against the city's overpowering sensory input, people cut themselves off from potentially enriching contact with others and become cold, callous, indifferent, impatient, and blasé.

12.3 The Environment and Society

The subfield of **environmental sociology** studies how humans interact with their environments. This field is closely related to human ecology, which focuses on the relationship between people and their built and natural environment. This area is garnering more attention as extreme weather patterns and policy battles over climate change dominate the news. The primary point of analysis has to do with the ways in which human activity transforms the natural environment and human interactions with other species. Two key concepts in environmental sociology are the concepts of **carrying capacity**, which refers to the maximum amount of life that can be sustained within a given area, and **the commons**, which refers to the collective resources that humans share in common. These collective resources are typically shared natural resources like air, water, plant and animal life, or ecosystems that have remained outside of private ownership or processes of commodification and trade.

In an environmental context, the carrying capacity of different environments depends on the commons to the degree that the commons are necessary for sustaining life. When the commons are threatened through pollution or over-exploitation the carrying capacity of the environment is degraded. While both concepts can

refer to local grazing lands or to rivers, they can also be applied to the Earth as a whole. Climate change is a global issue in which the degradation of the global commons through ecologically unsustainable human activities threatens the earth's carrying capacity as a whole.

You might have heard the expression "the tragedy of the commons." In 1968, an article of the same title written by Garrett Hardin describes how a common pasture is ruined by overgrazing. In England, "the commons" referred to land that the community held in common. Hardin was not the first to notice the phenomenon. Back in the 1800s, Oxford economist William Forster Lloyd looked at the devastated public grazing commons and the unhealthy cattle subject to such limited grazing, and saw, in essence, that the carrying capacity of the commons had been exceeded. However, since no one held responsibility for the land (as it was open to all), no one was willing to make sacrifices to improve it. This is a classical problem of the collective outcome of individual "rational" choices. If each user makes a rational choice by weighing their *individual* costs and benefits with respect to the use of common resources, the *collective* outcome ultimately undermines each user's ability to benefit from the common resource. Their rational choices have an irrational outcome. Cattle grazers benefited from adding more cattle to their herd, but they did not have to take on the responsibility of the destroyed lands that were being damaged by overgrazing. So there was an incentive for them to add more head of cattle, and no incentive for restraint.

Satellite photos of Africa taken in the 1970s showed this practice to dramatic effect. The images depicted a dark irregular area over 300 miles around. When seen from above, there was a large fenced area, where plenty of grass was growing. Outside the fence, the ground was bare and devastated. The reason was simple: the fenced land was privately owned by informed farmers who carefully rotated their grazing animals and allowed the fields to lie fallow periodically. Outside the fence was land used by nomads. The nomads, like the herdsmen in 1800s Oxford, increased their heads of cattle without

planning for its impact on the greater good. The soil eroded, the plants died, then the cattle died, and, ultimately, some of the people died.

How does this affect those of us who do not need to graze our cattle? Well, like the cows, we all need food, water, and clean air to survive. With the increasing consumption of resources in the West, increasing world population, and the ever-larger megalopolises with tens of millions of people, the limit of Earth's carrying capacity is called into question. Earth's carrying capacity is in itself the global commons. As in the tragedy of the commons Hardin described for the pasturelands of England, each economic and state actor in the world has an interest in maximizing its own economic benefit from exploiting the environment with little compelling incentive to conserve it in the global interest. Whether for cattle or humans, when too many take with too little thought to the rest of the population, the result is usually tragedy.

12.3.1 Pollution

Pollution describes the introduction of contaminants into an environment (water, air, land) at levels that are damaging. Directly related to carrying capacity, environments can often sustain a limited amount of contaminants without marked change, and water, air, and soil can "heal" themselves to a certain degree. However, once contaminant levels reach a certain point, the results can be catastrophic.

Water

Look at your watch. Wait 15 seconds. Then another 15. In that time, two children have died from lack of access to clean drinking water.

Access to safe water is one of the most basic human needs, and it is woefully out of reach for millions of people on the planet. Many of the major diseases that peripheral countries battle, such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid, are caused by contaminated water. Often, young children are unable to go to school because they must instead walk several hours a day just to collect potable water for their family. The situation is only getting more dire as the global population increases. Water is a key scarce resource in the 21st century.

As every child learns in school, 70 percent of Earth is made of water. Despite that figure, there is a finite amount of water useable by humans and it is constantly used and reused in a sustainable water cycle. The way that humans use this abundant natural resource, however, renders much of it unsuitable for consumption and unable to sustain life. For instance, it takes two and a half litres of water to produce a single litre of Coca-Cola. The company and its bottlers use close to 300 billion litres of water a year, often in locales that are short of useable water (Blanchard 2007). Industrial processes like tars sands extraction (discussed above) use vast amounts of water that is not returned to the natural cycle.

As a consequence of population concentrations, water close to human settlements is frequently polluted with untreated or partially treated human waste (sewage), chemicals, radioactivity, and levels of heat sufficient to create large "dead zones" incapable of supporting aquatic life. The methods of food production used by many core nations rely on liberal doses of nitrogen and pesticides, which end up back in the water supply. In some cases, water pollution affects the quality of the aquatic life consumed by water and land animals. As we move along the food chain, the pollutants travel from prey to predator. Since humans consume at all levels of the food chain, we ultimately consume the carcinogens, such as mercury, accumulated through several branches of the food web.

Soil

Steinbeck's 1930 tale of the Joads, driven out of their home by the Dust Bowl in *The Grapes of Wrath*, is still playing out today. In China, as in Depression-era Oklahoma, over-tilling soil in an attempt to expand agriculture has resulted in the disappearance of large patches of topsoil.

Soil erosion and desertification are just two of the many forms of soil pollution. In addition, all of the chemicals and pollutants that harm our water supplies can also leach into soil with similar effects. Brown zones where nothing can grow are common results of soil pollution. One demand of the population boom on the planet is an attendant requirement for more food to be produced. The so-called Green Revolution in the 1960s saw chemists and world aid organizations working together to bring modern farming methods, complete with pesticides, to peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. The immediate result was positive: food yields went up and burgeoning populations were fed. But as time has gone on, these areas have fallen into even more difficult straits as the damage done by modern methods leave traditional farmers with less than they had to start.

Dredging certain beaches in an attempt to maintain valuable beachfront property from coastal erosion has resulted in greater storm impact on shorelines, and damage to beach ecosystems (Turneffe Atoll Trust 2008). The results of these dredging projects have damaged reefs, sea grass beds, and shorelines, and can kill off large swaths of marine life. Ultimately, this damage threatens local fisheries, tourism, and other parts of the local economy.

Garbage

Figure 12.13. *Where should garbage go when you've run out of room? This is a question that is increasingly pressing the planet. (Plastic Ocean by Kevin Krejci under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

Where is your last cell phone? What about the one before that? Or the huge old television set your family had before flat screens became popular? For most of us, the answer is a sheepish shrug. In several provinces, there are product stewardship programs that oblige manufacturers and retailers to pay a per-item fee to fund electronic recycling (Fishlock 2011), but it is not always clear what happens to the items after they are recycled. As individuals, we do not pay attention to the demise of old items, and since electronics drop in price and increase in innovation at an incredible clip, we have been trained by their manufacturers to upgrade frequently.

Garbage creation and control are major issues for most core and industrializing nations, quickly becoming one of the most critical environmental issues faced in North America. North Americans buy

products, use them, and then throw them away. When you put your garbage out in the trash can where does it go after that?

There are two primary means of waste disposal in Canada: landfill and incineration. When it comes to dangerous toxins, neither is a good choice. In the case of more innocuous trash, the synthetic Styrofoam and plastics that many of us use every day do not dissolve in a natural way. Burn them, and they release carcinogens into the air. Their improper (intentional or not) incineration adds to air pollution and increases smog. Dump them in landfills, and they do not decompose. As landfill sites fill up, we risk an increase in groundwater contamination.

Electronic waste, or e-waste, is one of the fastest growing segments of garbage. And it is far more problematic than even the mountains of broken plastic and rusty metal that plague the environment. **E-waste** is the name for obsolete, broken, and worn-out electronics—from computers to mobile phones to televisions. The challenge is that these products, which are multiplying at alarming rates thanks in part to planned obsolescence (designing products to quickly become outdated and then replaced by the constant emergence of newer and cheaper electronics), have toxic chemicals and precious metals in them, which makes for a dangerous combination.

So where do they go? Many companies ship their e-waste to developing nations in Africa and Asia to be "recycled." While they are, in some senses, recycled, the result is not exactly clean. In fact, it is one of the dirtiest jobs around. Overseas, without the benefit of environmental regulation, e-waste dumps become a kind of boomtown for entrepreneurs willing to sort through endless stacks of broken-down electronics for tiny bits of valuable copper, silver, and other precious metals. Unfortunately, in their hunt, these workers are exposed to deadly toxins.

Governments are beginning to take notice of the impending disaster, and the European Union and Canadian provinces have put stricter regulations in place. These regulations both limit the amount of toxins allowed in electronics and address the issue of

end-of-life recycling. But not surprisingly, corporations, while insisting they are greening their process, often fight stricter regulations. Meanwhile, many environmental groups, including the activist group Greenpeace, have taken up the cause. Greenpeace states that it is working to get companies to:

1. Measure and reduce emissions with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy policy advocacy
2. Make greener, efficient, longer-lasting products that are free of hazardous substance
3. Reduce environmental impacts throughout company operations, from materials and energy used to make products right through to global take-back programs for old products (Greenpeace 2011)

Greenpeace produces annual ratings of how well companies are meeting these goals so that consumers can see how brands stack up. For instance, Apple moved up five spots since the 2010 report. Hopefully, consumers will vote with their wallets, and the greener companies will be rewarded.

Air

China's fast-growing economy and burgeoning industry have translated into notoriously poor air quality. Smog hangs heavily over the major cities, sometimes grounding aircraft that cannot navigate through it. Pedestrians and cyclists wear masks to protect themselves. In Beijing, citizens are skeptical that the government-issued daily pollution ratings are trustworthy. Increasingly, they are taking their own pollution measurements in the hopes that accurate information will galvanize others to action. Given that some days they can barely see down the street, they hope that action comes soon (Papenfuss 2011).

Humanity, with its growing population, use of fossil fuels, and increasingly urbanized society, is putting too much stress on Earth's atmosphere. The amount of air pollution varies from locale to locale, and you may be more personally affected than you realize. Along with breathing in oxygen, most of the time we are also breathe in soot, hydrocarbons, carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur oxides. Ground-level ozone (O3), which is associated with eye irritation, respiratory problems, and heart diseases, is a colourless gas that forms when nitrous oxides and volatile organic compounds from engine exhaust and industrial processes combine in sunlight. Approximately 5,000 people a year die prematurely in Canada due to air pollution (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2007) and more than half of all Canadians live in areas where ground-level ozone during the summer smog season reaches unacceptable levels (Duncan et al. 1998). Much of the smog in Canada is the product of coal-fired electrical generation stations and industries south of the border. The nitrous oxides and other contaminants drift north with the prevailing winds. The hot and stagnant summers in the Windsor-to-Quebec-City corridor are unfortunately ideal for the creation of ground-level ozone.

Much of the pollution in the air comes from human activity. How many university students move their cars across campus at least once a day? Vancouver and the lower Fraser Valley have the dubious distinction of having the highest per capita car ownership in Canada. Eighty percent of the ground-level ozone in this area comes from automobile exhaust (Vincent and Fick 2000). The volatile organic compounds in the air come from vehicles, printing and surface coating, solvents, and other industrial processes (Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change 2010). Who checks the environmental report card on how many pollutants each company throws into the air before purchasing a cell phone? Many of us are guilty of taking our environment for granted without concern for how everyday decisions add up to a long-term global problem. How many minor adjustments can you think of, like

walking instead of driving, that would reduce your overall carbon footprint?

Remember the example of the "tragedy of the commons." Each of us is affected by air pollution. But like the herder who adds one more head of cattle to realize the benefits of owning more cows, but who does not have to pay the price of the overgrazed land, we take the benefit of driving or buying the latest cell phones without worrying about the end result. Air pollution accumulates in the body, much like the effects of smoking cigarettes accumulate over time, leading to more chronic-illnesses. And in addition to directly affecting human health, air pollution affects crop quality as well as heating and cooling costs. In other words, we all pay a lot more than the price at the pump when we fill up our tank with gas.

Toxic and Radioactive Waste

While nuclear energy promises a safe and abundant power source, increasingly it is looked upon as a danger to the environment and those who inhabit it. The meltdown of three nuclear reactors in Fukushima, Japan, in 2011 resulted in the release of substantial amounts of radioactive material into the environment. It is estimated that cleanup will take decades. In addition to the problems of accidental meltdown, regular operation of nuclear power plants leads to the accumulation of nuclear waste, which we must then keep track of long term. This leads to the problem of how to store the toxic waste material without damaging the environment or putting future generations at risk.

The 2011 earthquake in Japan illustrates the dangers of even safe, government-monitored nuclear energy. When disaster occurs, how can we safely evacuate the large numbers of affected people? Indeed, how can we even be sure how far the evacuation radius should extend? Radiation can also enter the food chain, causing damage from the bottom (phytoplankton and microscopic soil

organisms) all the way to the top. Once again, the price paid for power is much greater than what is seen on the electric bill.

Figure 12.14*. An aerial view of the Gulf Coast, taken in May 2010, illustrates the damage done by the BP Deep Water Horizon spill.* (100724-A-3715G-066 *by Jim Greenhill is in the* Public Domain.)

The enormous oil disaster that hit the Louisiana Gulf Coast is just one of a frighteningly high number of environmental crises that have led to toxic residue. From the Exxon *Valdez* oil tanker crash of 1989 to the Enbridge pipeline spill in the Kalamazoo River in 2010, from the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 to Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant incident in 2011—the list goes on. Often, the stories are not newsmakers, but simply an unpleasant part of life for the people who live near toxic sites such as in the stories of Fort Chipweyan, Alberta, and Hinkley, California. In many cases, people in these neighbourhoods can be part of a cancer cluster without realizing the cause.

***Figure 12.15**. Oil on the gulf shore beaches caused great destruction, killing marine and land animals and crippling local business. (Oil arrives on Bon Secour by Jereme Phillips, USFWS under a CC-BY 2.0 License.)*

12.3.2 Climate Change

World systems analysis suggests that core nations (like the United States and those of western Europe) were historically the greatest source of greenhouse gases, but have now evolved into postindustrial societies. Now that semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are industrializing, the core nations wish to enact strict protocols regarding the causes of global warming (since their economies are no longer so dependent on greenhouse-gas-causing industries). However, the semi-peripheral and peripheral nations rightly point out that they only want the same economic chance to evolve their economies, and since they were unduly affected by the progress of core nations, if the core nations now insist on "green" policies, they should pay offsets or subsidies of some kind. There are

no easy answers to this conflict. It may well not be "fair" that the core nations benefited from ignorance during their industrial boom. But with China leading the way as a top greenhouse gas emitter, it matters less to the planet whether they get their fair shake at polluting. The international community continues to work toward a way to manage climate change. The Durban Talks that concluded in December 2011 point to a willingness by both core countries and peripheral nations to move toward a legally binding instrument for all countries (World Resources Institute 2011).

Climate change, which used to be called global warming, has been made into a deeply controversial subject, despite decades of scientific research that demonstrates its existence. **Climate change** refers to long-term shifts in temperatures due to human activity and, in particular, the release of greenhouse gases into the environment. While the planet as a whole is warming––hence the term global warming––the term climate change is now used because the short-term variations can include higher or lower temperatures, despite the overarching trend toward warmth. Another effect is more extreme weather. There are increasingly more record-breaking weather phenomena, from the number of Category 4 hurricanes to the amount of snowfall in a given winter. These extremes, while they make for dramatic television coverage, can cause immeasurable damage to crops, property, and even lives.

So why is climate change a controversy? The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) recognizes its existence. So do the close to 200 countries that signed the Kyoto Protocol, a document intended to engage countries in voluntary actions to limit the activity that leads to climate change. (The United States was not one of the 200 nations committed to this initiative to reduce environmental damage; while Canada did sign on, the Conservative government withdrew from the Kyoto accord in 2011.) So what's the argument about? Well, for the companies making billions of dollars in the production of goods and services, climate change is a dirty concept indeed. The idea of costly regulations that would require expensive operational upgrades has been a source of

great anxiety to much of the business community, and as a rebuttal they argue, via lobbyists, that such regulations would be disastrous for the economy. Some go so far as to question the science used as evidence. There is a lot of finger-pointing among countries, especially when the issue arises of who "gets" to pollute. It is only reasonable perhaps, to give the last word to youth, as it is they who will reap the consequences of the political and economic decisions that have been made in the past, and are being made in the present. What do members of the Youth Climate Movement make of the economic justifications for 'business as usual' in the face of mounting scientific evidence that it is business as usual that is contributing to the current 'tragedy of the commons'?

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc111/?p=968

Key Terms and Concepts

cancer cluster: A geographic area with high levels of cancer within its population

capital accumulation: The reinvestment of profit in order to increase capital assets (rather than for any specific social use).

carrying capacity: How many people can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources

climate change: Long-term shifts in temperature and climate due to human activity

commons: Collective resources that humans share in common

concentric zone model: A model of human ecology that views cities as a series of circular rings or zones

cornucopian theory: Theory which asserts that human ingenuity will rise to the challenge of providing adequate resources for a growing population

corporate city: A city form based economically on corporate management and financial services

demographic transition theory: Theory that describes four stages of population growth, following patterns that connect birth and death rates with stages of industrial development

demography: The study of population

dual cities: Cities that are divided into wealthy, high-tech, information-based zones of urban development and poorer, run-down, marginalized zones of urban underdevelopment and informal economic activity

edge cities: Urban formations based on clusters of shopping malls, entertainment complexes, and office towers at major transportation intersections

environmental sociology: The sociological subfield that addresses the relationship between humans and the environment

environmental sustainability: The degree to which a human activity can be sustained without damaging or undermining basic ecological support systems

e-waste: The disposal of broken, obsolete, and worn-out electronics

exurbs: Communities that arise farther out than the suburbs and are typically populated by residents of high socioeconomic status

fantasy cities: Cities that choose to transform themselves into Disneyland-like theme parks or sites of mega-events to draw international tourists

fertility rate: A measure noting the actual number of children born

gentrification: When upper- and middle-class residents renovate and live in properties in certain city areas or communities that have been historically less affluent

global city: A unique development based on the new role

of cities in the circuits of global information and global capital circulation and accumulation

human ecology: A functional perspective that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural environment

industrial city: A city in which the major business and employment activities revolve around manufacturing, building, machining.

Malthusian theory: Theory which asserts that population is controlled through positive checks (war, famine, disease) and preventive checks (measures to reduce fertility)

megalopolis: A large urban corridor that encompasses several cities and their surrounding suburbs and exurbs

metropolis: The area that includes a city and its suburbs and exurbs

migration: The movement of people into and out of an area

mortality rate: A measure of the number of people who die

NIMBY: "not in my back yard," describing the tendency of people to protest poor environmental practices when those practices will impact them directly

pollution: When contaminants are introduced into an environment at levels that are damaging

population composition: A snapshot of the demographic profile of a population based on fertility, mortality, and migration rates

population pyramid: Graphic representation that depicts population distribution according to age and sex

postmodern city: A city defined by its orientation to circuits of global consumption, the fragmentation of previously homogeneous cultures, and the emergence of multiple centres or cores

sex ratio: The ratio of men to women in a given population

slum cities: The development on the outskirts of cities of unplanned shantytowns or squats with no access to clean water, sanitation, or other municipal services

suburbs: The communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute

urban sociology: The subfield of sociology that focuses on the study of urbanization

urbanization: The study of the social, political, and economic relationships of cities

zero population growth: A theoretical goal in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration

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