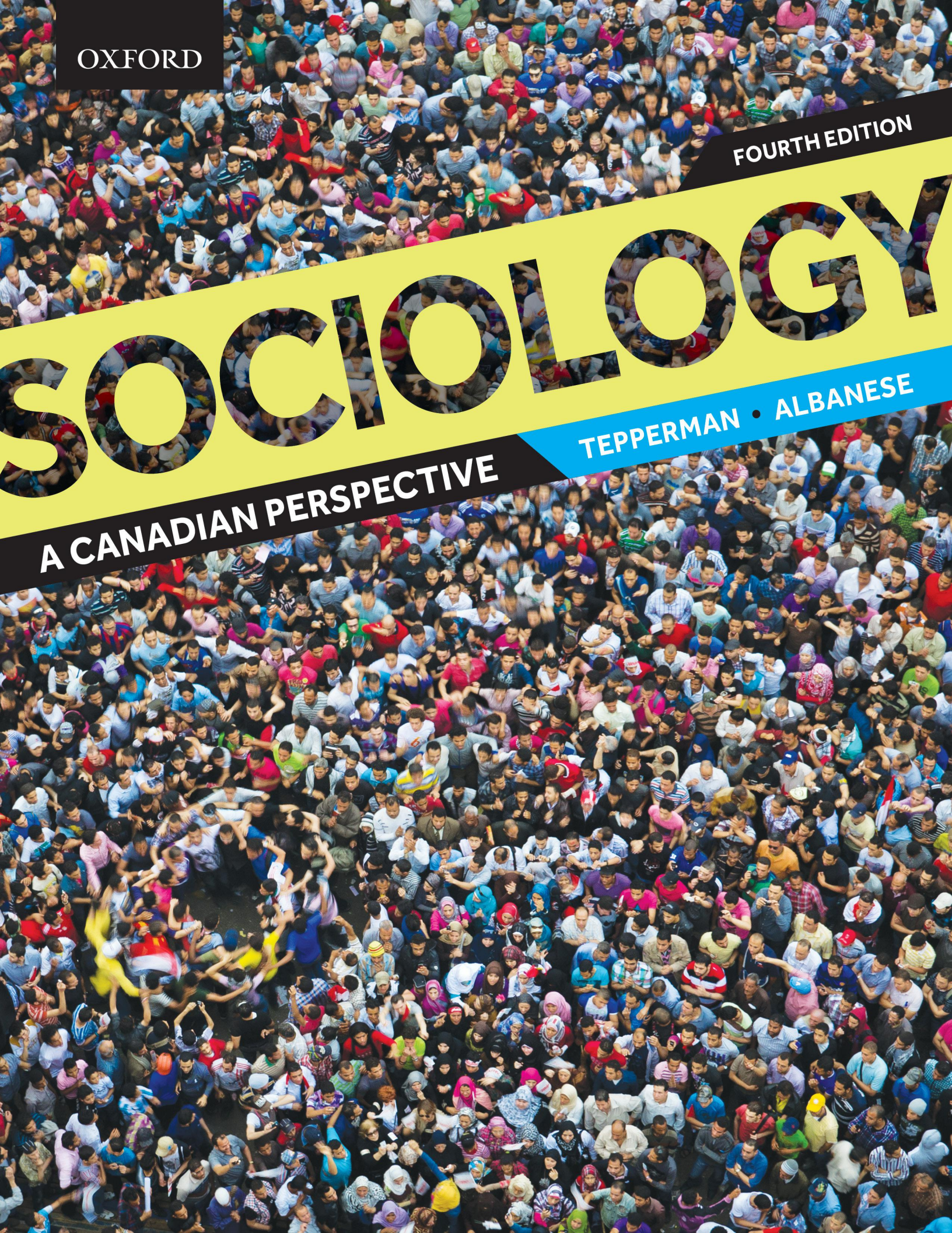
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FOURTH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

TEPPERMAN • ALBANESE

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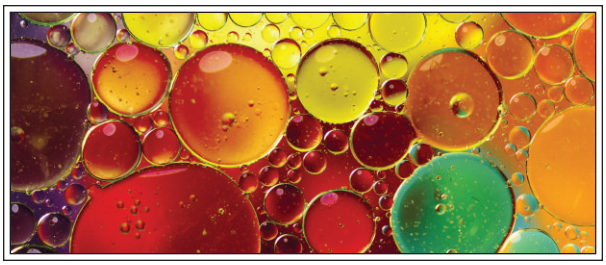

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UNDER THE WIRE

Exploration of the Ways in Which Media and Technologies Intersect with Social Behaviours

RESEARCHERS IN ACTION ▶

PREFACE

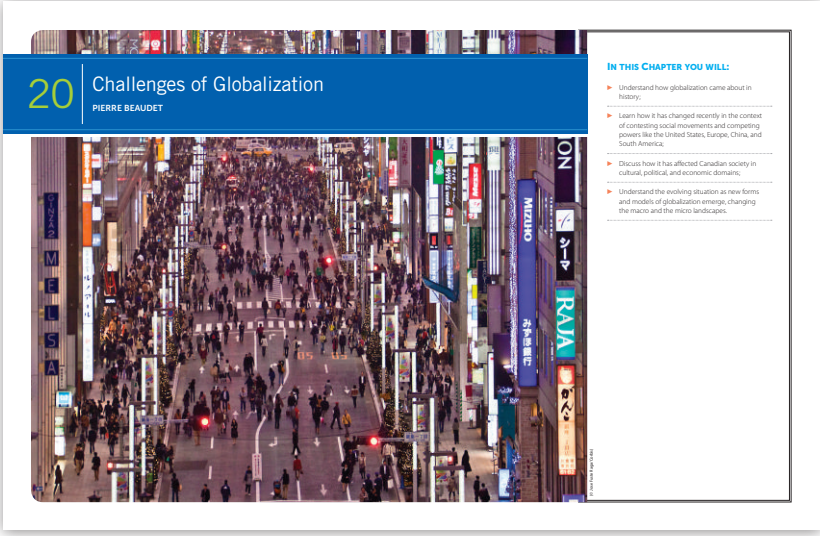
From the Publisher

In preparing this fourth edition of *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, the general editors, contributing authors, design team, and publisher have been guided by a singular goal: to produce the most authoritative, comprehensive, accessible, and interesting introduction to sociology for Canadian students.

This revision builds on the strengths of the well-received previous editions and incorporates new content designed to enhance the book's usefulness for students and instructors alike.

New Chapter on Technology and Society

A brand-new chapter dealing with the sociological implications of technology has been added to this edition. In what has become a critically important area of sociological inquiry, Anabel Quan-Haase reflects on the role technology plays in our society, examining a range of fascinating topics such as the evolution of the digital divide, the "presentation of self" online deception, and cyberbullying.


20 Challenges of Globalization

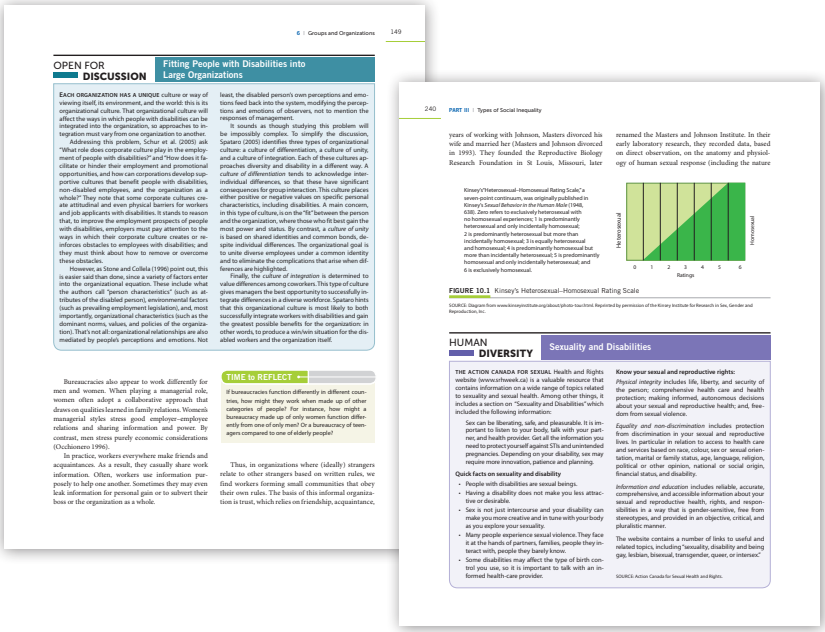
PIERRE BEAUDET

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

- Understand how globalization came about in history;
- Learn how it has changed recently in the context of contesting social movements and competing powers like the United States, Europe, China, and South America;
- Discuss how it has affected Canadian society in cultural, political, and economic domains;
- Understand the evolving situation as new forms and models of globalization emerge, changing the macro and the micro landscapes.

New Coverage of Disability

New content on the conditions and experiences of disabilities has been integrated into a number of chapters, giving students fresh insight into this important topic within sociology today.


OPEN FOR DISCUSSION: Fitting People with Disabilities into Large Organizations

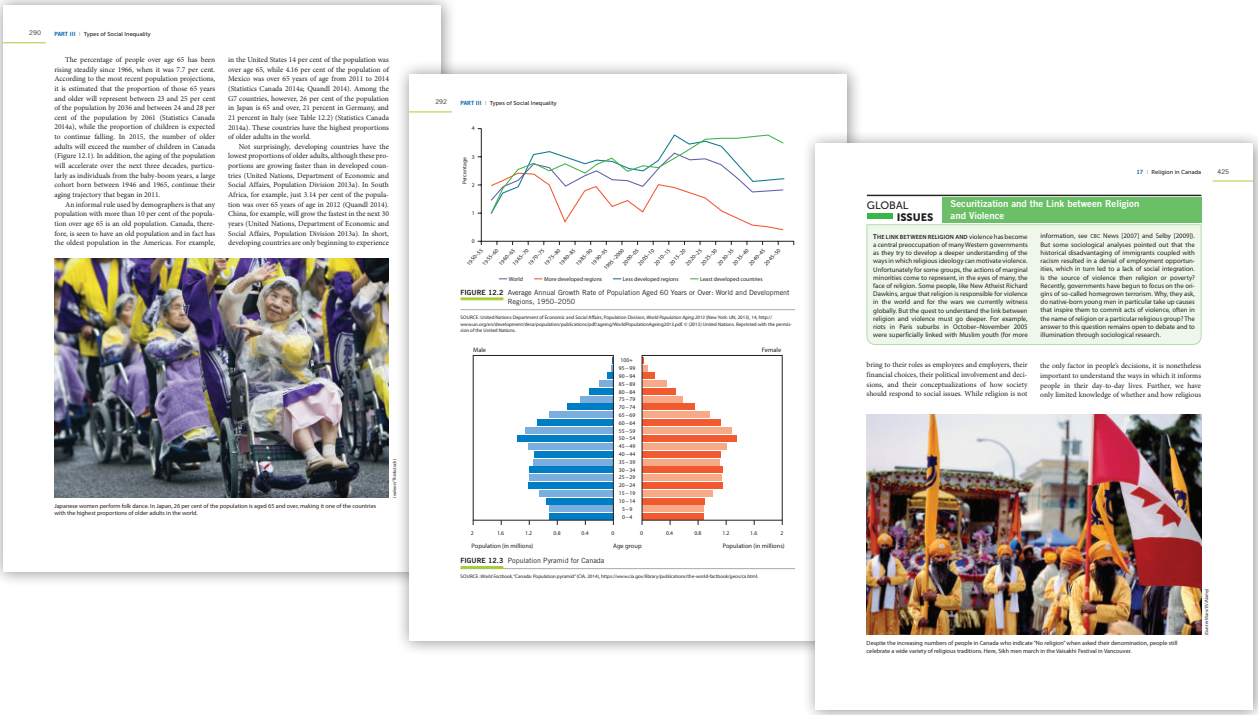
TIME to REFLECT

HUMAN DIVERSITY: Sexuality and Disabilities

FIGURE 10.1 Kinsey's Heterosexual–Homosexual Rating Scale

Vibrant New Design

The book has been completely redesigned and modernized to enhance readability and engagement with the text. The vibrant four-colour aesthetic has been updated to better reflect the vitality of Canadian sociology as an academic discipline.



Top Canadian Contributors

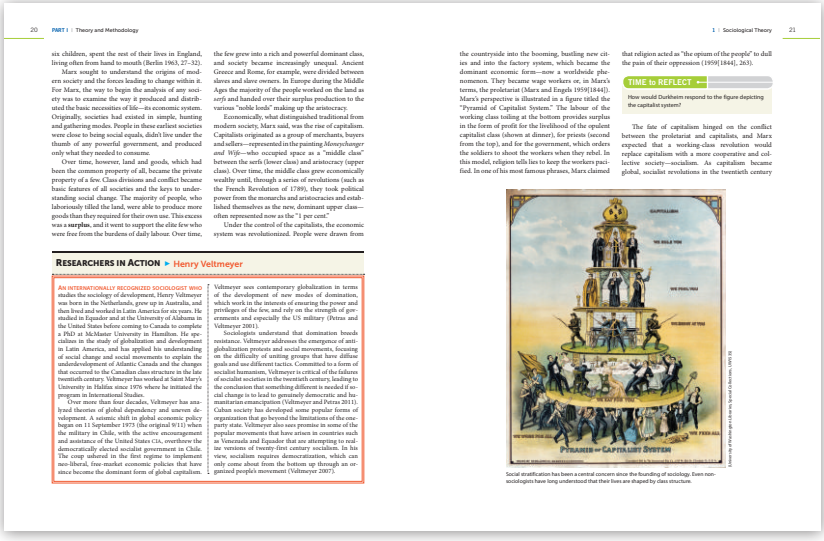
Sociology is a global discipline, but one to which sociologists working in Canada have made unique contributions. Not merely an adaptation of a book originally written for American undergraduates, this text was conceived and written from the ground up to provide a Canadian perspective on this fascinating field. Experts in their particular subdisciplines not only examine the key concepts and terminology of sociology as an academic discipline but also use those concepts to shed light on the nature of Canadian society and Canada's place in the world.

Global Perspective

Although this is a book written by and for Canadians, the editors and authors never forget that Canada is but one small part of a vast, diverse, and endlessly fascinating social world. Along with Canadian data, examples, and illustrations, a wealth of information about how humans live and interact around the world is presented across the text.

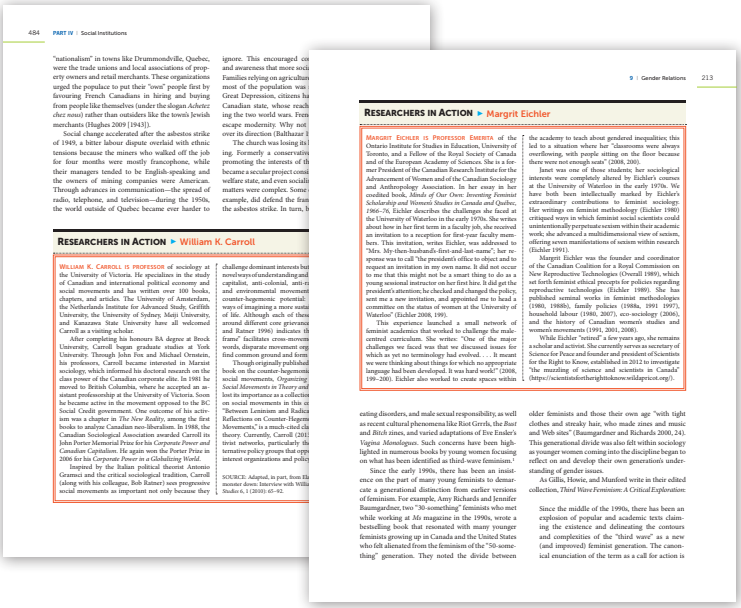
Theoretical Balance

The overriding goal of *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* has been not just to make the theories that underpin the discipline comprehensible but to show how they inform an understanding of the data that sociologists gather—and how the choice of which theoretical perspective to use can yield new and surprising insights. Throughout the text, emerging paradigms are also discussed when they shed new light on longstanding questions.



Insightful Theme Boxes

"Why study sociology?" is a question frequently asked by students. There are many reasons, of course: sociology provides a unique insight into the nature of the human world; it shows us things about society and ourselves that we might not otherwise know; and the lessons of sociology can be intriguing, touching, tragic, and even fun. The dozens of theme boxes scattered throughout the text illustrate all of these dimensions of the discipline.



▶ **New "Researchers in Action" boxes** profile leading Canadian sociologists, giving students insight into the exciting work that has been undertaken in various sub-disciplines of sociology, right here in Canada.

▶ **"Open for Discussion" boxes** use contemporary social issues and debates to broaden student understanding of core sociological concepts. Examples range from sexual assault on campus to medically assisted conception.

▶ **"Sociology in Action" boxes** show how sociological research can help us better understand the everyday world, from issues surrounding gender inequality to neo-liberalism in reality TV.

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GLOBAL ISSUES

Globalization, Children, and Media in Times of War and Conflict

IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBAL WORLD, even crises and catastrophes that take place in countries thousands of miles away become part of children's daily lives when there is exposure to the news media. News reports from the conflicts in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, to name but a few, as well as events such as the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, the bombings of Madrid and London transportation systems, and suicide bombers in Israel, have all been at the center of world media attention. The sad truth is that war and conflict are an everyday reality for many children all over the globe, either directly or in mediated forms. That violent conflicts have always had detrimental effects on all humans, children included, is self-evident. The physical effects (death, injury, famine, infectious disease, relocation, sexual abuse, etc.), the psychological effects (fear, stress, bereavement, post-traumatic reactions, desensitization to suffering, maladjustment, etc.), or even the distant threat of such have proved to have deep and lasting effects on children, even following incidental encounters (Leavitt and Fox 1993).

In her compassionate reflections on the pain of others, Sontag (2003) discussed the meanings of visual portrayals of the suffering of other people in faraway zones of conflicts viewed by privileged and often safe audiences. In her critique, she offered the following observations:

> Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience, the cumulative offering by more than a century and a half's worth of those professional, specialized tourists known as journalists. Wars are now also living room sights and sounds. Information about what is happening elsewhere, called "news," features conflict and violence—"if it bleeds, it leads" runs the venerable guideline of tabloids and twenty-four-hour headline news shows—to which the response is compassion, or indignation, or titillation, or approval, as each misery heaves into view. (18)

What is the meaning of this technological and social development? Children hear about, see, and must cope with these troubling, often frightening events that were once only the preserve of adults. They have to endeavour to assimilate the fragments of information they receive from the media and try to make sense of them. They have to deal emotionally with the suffering of others and with gruesome portrayals of atrocities. Children at various ages, developmental levels, media competencies, and personal life experiences have varying skills and cognitive schemes, as well as interests in and experiences with which to make sense of news reports. Clearly they develop a picture of the events as functions of their personal life history and the media offerings available to them. However, the social-political-cultural environments as well as adult mediation at home and in the educational system also influence them.

SOURCE: Dafna Lemish and May Götz, eds, Children and Media in Times of Conflict (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2007), 1–2. Reprinted with permission of the Publisher.

on police academy socialization explores the socialization that takes place during training to serve on a police force. The researchers found that despite the philosophical emphasis on "community policing" and its powerful themes of decentralization and flexibility, the most important lessons learned in police training were those that reinforce the paramilitary structure and culture.

In the study, it was observed that recruits had to adhere to a strict code of conduct, including a dress code (i.e., a uniform). This is viewed as a type of "symbolic control," since it ensured social distance from "outsiders." Many such lessons were taught and internalized. For example, a strong moral code that categorized and separated "the good guys" from the "bad guys" was emphasized, as were values of group solidarity and loyalty. As one recruit stated, "What happens

Socialization to new roles (such as grandparenthood, retirement, or widowhood) occurs throughout the life course.

"Global Issues" boxes draw upon examples from around the world to illustrate the effects of globalization and show what sociologists have to say about, for instance, health inequality, the Occupy movement, or global progress on education.

2 | Research Methods 39

HUMAN DIVERSITY

Are Leaders Born or Bred?

EVERY ORGANIZATION NEEDS LEADERS. COMPANIES need CEOs who will help them to increase profits or turn around a run of bad years. Churches require strong leaders and universities need visionary presidents to ensure that they remain dynamic and relevant.

But are leaders born or bred? Sociologically, this is an important question, because if they are born (that is, if most of the essential features of a good leader are determined at birth or a young age), then the hundreds of leadership programs available across North America are largely ineffective. If leaders are bred, then a very different story emerges.

This discussion shows how important theory is to the definition of a problem. If the theory is that leaders are born, we should identify these people at a young age and put them in positions of power. But if the theory is that leaders are bred, "leadership training" as a concept starts to make sense.

The prevailing view at present is that leaders are bred—that leadership can be taught. Perhaps this seems to be the prevailing view because so many organizations are offering leadership training programs, and they all have an interest in this position. But if leaders are bred, then it becomes possible to evaluate the quality or effectiveness of different training programs. A great number of studies attempt to do just that. Sometimes the evidence seems to suggest that these programs work (Mighty and Ashton 2003; Nichols 2002), and at other times it suggests they don't (Allio 2005; Fossey and Shoho 2006).

One of the reasons for these conflicting findings is the wide scope of human diversity, so these programs will work for some people and not others. But another possibility is that the prevailing theory is wrong and "natural born leaders" excel in these programs and followers do not.

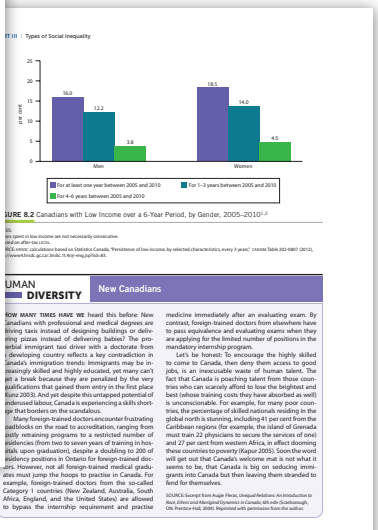
Validity and Reliability

In the process of operationalizing our theories and concepts into variables and hypotheses, it is important that this process of translation be as clean as possible. That is, we want to ensure that our variables and hypotheses accurately reflect our theories and concepts. When we go out and collect our data, we must use measures that are both valid and reliable. The most important step in this process is the construction of *operational definitions* of our concepts. These are definitions that specify what we are going to observe, how we are going to make our observations, and how we are going to differentiate observations from non-observations (or how we will know which possible elements to exclude from our study).

Validity

The **validity** of an empirical indicator is always related to the concept it is supposed to capture. A valid measure is one that adequately represents the concept, and an invalid measure is one that does not. There are no valid or invalid measures as such, and the validity of an indicator is always related to the concept being measured and is always a matter of degree. A measure can be perfectly valid in relation to one concept but invalid for another. For instance, sociologists often use

Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, was selected for his office as the head monk of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism at the age of two. How is a discussion of leadership complicated when spiritual and religious leaders are taken into account?



T III | Types of Social Inequality

URE 8.2 Canadians with Low Income over a 6-Year Period, by Gender, 2005–2010[1,2]

UMAN DIVERSITY

New Canadians

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE heard this before: New Canadians with professional and medical degrees are driving taxis instead of designing buildings or delivering pizzas instead of delivering babies? The proverbial immigrant taxi driver with a doctorate from a developing country reflects a key contradiction in Canada's immigration trends: Immigrants may be increasingly skilled and highly educated, yet many can't get a break because they are penalized by the very qualifications that gained them entry in the first place (Kunz 2003). And yet despite this untapped potential of underused labour, Canada is experiencing a skills shortage that borders on the scandalous.

Many foreign-trained doctors encounter frustrating roadblocks on the road to accreditation, ranging from costly retraining programs to a restricted number of residencies (from two to seven years of training in hospitals upon graduation), despite a doubling to 200 of residency positions in Ontario for foreign-trained doctors. However, not all foreign-trained medical graduates must jump the hoops to practise in Canada. For example, foreign-trained doctors from the so-called Category 1 countries (New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, England, and the United States) are allowed to bypass the internship requirement and practise medicine immediately after an evaluating exam. By contrast, foreign-trained doctors from elsewhere have to pass equivalence and evaluating exams when they are applying for the limited number of positions in the mandatory internship program.

Let's be honest: To encourage the highly skilled to come to Canada, then deny them access to good jobs, is an inexcusable waste of human talent. The fact that Canada is poaching talent from those countries who can scarcely afford to lose the brightest and best (whose training costs they have absorbed as well) is unconscionable. For example, for many poor countries, the percentage of skilled nationals residing in the global north is stunning, including 41 per cent from the Caribbean regions (for example, the island of Grenada must train 22 physicians to secure the services of one) and 27 per cent from western Africa, in effect dooming these countries to poverty (Kapur 2005). Soon the word will get out that Canada's welcome mat is not what it seems to be, that Canada is big on seducing immigrants into Canada but then leaving them stranded to fend for themselves.

SOURCE: Excerpt from Augie Fleras, Unequal Relations: An Introduction to Race, Ethnic and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada, 6th edn (Scarborough, Ont: Prentice-Hall, 2009). Reprinted with permission from the author.

"Human Diversity" boxes seek to introduce students to the ways of life, experiences, and world views of different cultures and social groups, whether they are Aboriginal Canadians, veiled Muslim women, or Mexican farm workers.

416 PART IV | Social Institutions

UNDER THE WIRE

Health Care Online

THE INTERNET HAS CHANGED HEALTH care in the modern world. Nettleton and colleagues argue that this is such a profound alteration that it deserves a new name, which they suggest should be called "e-scaped" medicine (2004). More people go online for medical advice on a daily basis than visit doctors. According to Statistics Canada's Canada Internet Use Survey, 80 per cent of Canadians used the Internet for personal reasons such as email, social networking, and banking in 2009. Almost three-quarters of adult women (74.9 per cent) and about two-thirds of adult men (66 per cent) used the Internet for information about health (Statistics Canada 2009a). This increasing access to and reliance on the medium has led to increased knowledge among patients in their relationships with doctors. Not all of the information available on the Web is credible, however, and evaluating medical sites is complicated. There are often millions of potential Internet sites for any one diagnosis. Nettleton and her colleagues (2005) have found that people have become "medicalized" in their use of the Internet and use "rhetorics of reliability" that suggest there is an increasing level of similarity between the dominant biomedical ideas of what constitutes good information and lay use patterns.

doctor and puts it into the hands of epidemiologists and other scientists who determine best-practice principles that doctors are expected to follow. Moreover, best-practice findings are no longer published only in arcane medical journals but often are easily accessible to insurance company personnel and to individual patients through numerous, disease-specific Internet sites. Thus patients too are more likely to be able to challenge their doctors.

The Socio-Economic Background of Medical Students in Canada

There are substantial differences between the backgrounds of medical students and those of the rest of the Canadian population. Doctors are not drawn in a representative way from across the socio-economic and socio-demographic variations of the whole population of citizens.

These elderly people maintain their energy and improve their health by participating in group exercise.

"Under the Wire" boxes analyze the ways in which current media and new technologies influence social patterns and behaviours, such as religious expression on the Internet and environmental cyberactivism.

118 PART V | Canadian Society and the Global Context

UNDER THE WIRE

Environmental Cyberactivism

THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IS a successful social movement is a mark of its adaptability as much as its resiliency. The complexity of the movement, evolving from early preservationists and consumptive wildlife users to today's many-layered and multi-faceted environmentalism, reflects a long-standing talent for transforming itself as circumstances require. Such change keeps it current—able not only to respond to new challenges but also to utilize innovative strategies for spreading its message. Over the years, environmentalism has achieved many successes by drawing on a wide array of means for achieving its ends, from old-fashioned lobbying and politicking, to sit-ins, consumer boycotts, petitions, and lawsuits, to peaceful public protest and even, on occasion, violent direct action.

Recently, environmentalism has begun to draw strength from the new media technologies and social networking, such as Facebook and Twitter. While not exclusive to environmental causes, the environmental movement has embraced these new technologies as the means for inciting, organizing, and directing protest. This strategy, termed **cyberactivism**, permits environmental organizers to use the capability of these vastly popular technologies to reach far greater numbers of potential adherents as well as new political communities, while transcending both geographical and political boundaries.

Take Greenpeace's campaign to force food giant Nestlé to eliminate palm oils from its candy products like Kit Kat and Coffee Crisp. The production of palm oil contributes to the destruction of the Indonesia rainforest, home of the orangutan, which is being pushed toward extinction. Utilizing social networks, Greenpeace spread the message of potential habitat destruction and succeeded in galvanizing thousands of individuals to send online protest messages to Nestlé, with the company eventually announcing it would no longer buy palm oil products that contribute to the destruction of the rainforest. In Canada, Greenpeace has also used cyberactivism to pressure the British Columbia government into preserving the Great Bear rainforest. Greenpeace reaches out to hundreds of thousands through social networking sites and cellphones, and an individual's protest can be quickly directed to the politician or company in question with just a few mouse clicks on the Greenpeace website. As an environmental organization, Greenpeace has long augmented its success through various high-profile media campaigns and stunts, earning the organization and its causes considerable notoriety. Although not intended to replace its impressive arsenal of protest tools, cyberactivism is a significant new and complementary strategy—one that may prove revolutionary.

A grove of cedars in Hesquiat Lake Creek, Clayoquot Sound, on Vancouver Island. Although Clayoquot Sound's rainforest is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, commercial activities such as logging continue.

Sociology as a Human Pursuit

Sociology: A Canadian Perspective celebrates the fact that while sociology is an academic discipline with a distinguished pedigree, it is also a very human pursuit—a fact that becomes clear in the brief "Meet the Author" narratives included in every chapter. The text's contributors first encountered the discipline at the same age as many of the students now using this text in "intro. soc." classes. Sociology is, above all, the study of human beings interacting within society in all their wonderful complexity, and "Meet the Author" provides an intriguing glimpse into why this particular group of individuals chose to make sociology a part of their life work.

236 PART III | Types of Social Inequality

MEET THE AUTHOR

If you asked me in my first year of university what I wanted to do in life, I would probably have said "teach . . . perhaps." If you pressed me, you'd find that I had no idea what I wanted to do in life. To keep my options open, I decided to do a double major in history—my first love—and something else.

Psychology required that I take methods and statistics in upper years, so that was out of the question. Sociology seemed straightforward and based on common sense. They study families; I'm part of a family. They study ethnicity; I'm an immigrant. They study social class; I grew up in a working-class family. Sounded easy, and no stats.

Did I say "no stats"? That was my first mistake. My second was the idea that sociology was based on common sense. I quickly learned that sociology challenges common-sense assumptions about how the world works. That's what got me hooked.

Despite my misinformed and rocky beginning, I find myself teaching sociology at Ryerson (and social research methods, to boot!). In 2013, I also became President of the Canadian Sociological Association.

—Patrizia Albanese

by a variety of languages, which seek to tell us what sex is, what it ought to be—and what it could be." These languages of sex are then "embedded in moral treatises, laws, educational practices, psychological theories, medical definitions, social rituals, pornographic or romantic fictions, popular music and common sense assumptions (most of which disagree) [which] set the horizon of the possible." Sexuality therefore has to do with who we are and what place we (are allowed to) take within society.

Once people are packaged into boxes—male or female, masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual—**sexism** (the subordination of one sex, usually female, and the perceived superiority of the other) and **homophobia** (an irrational fear and/or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality) help to reinforce rigid boundaries and keep people in their place. For example, a young person who challenges traditional gender ideology or practices is likely to be teased and taunted ("you fag"). Boys, perhaps more than girls, who cross the gender divide are often harassed back into stereotypically masculine behaviour. Children and youths learn quickly to avoid ridicule by conforming to prescribed gender and sexual norms. As a result, we come to see certain types of behaviour as normal, natural, and inevitable—the core or **essence** of femininity or masculinity, heterosexuality or homosexuality—when in fact we may have been forced to suppress parts of our identities that cross the gender and sexual divide. (We have come to treat as natural, inevitable, or **essential** things that are cultural, learned, and open to change.)

Sexuality over the Centuries

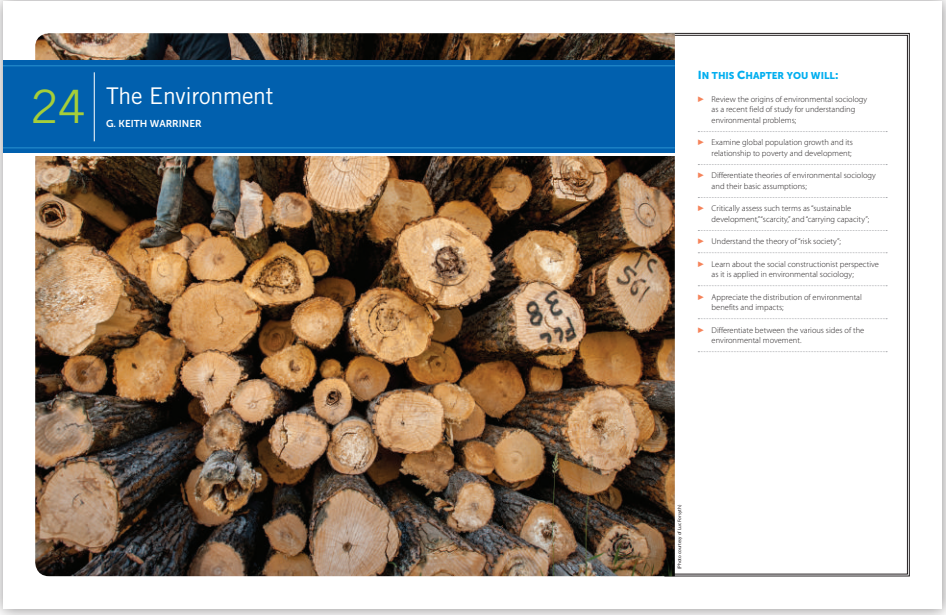
Sex and Spirituality: Cross-Cultural Diversity and Social Change

We often think of sex and religion as being in opposition to one another, but sex and spirituality have been closely linked among some cultures and belief systems, and certainly all religions have had something to say about our sexual, procreative "nature." Theosophy, for example, is a philosophical system professing to achieve knowledge of the divine through spiritual ecstasy. Dozens of cultures throughout history—including ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, and Greeks and, over the past few centuries, some groups in Borneo, the Ibo of Nigeria, the Ewe-speaking peoples of southeast Ghana, Benin, and Togo, and some groups in pre-conquest South and Meso-America—have had sacred male and/or female prostitutes (Bishop 1996). Many North American Aboriginal societies had transgender or two-spirit shamans or healers fulfilling religious duties because they were believed to possess spiritual qualities (Miranda 2010; Carocci 2009; Baird 2001).

In ancient China, sex was seen as a form of worship that led to immortality. Using some of the basic principles of Taoism, the *Su-nu Ching* (an ancient text), believed to have been written around the second or third century CE, noted that "those who know the Tao of loving and harmonize the yin and yang are able to blend the five joys into a heavenly pleasure" (cited in Bishop 1996, 140). In India, some time between the third and fifth centuries CE, the *Kama Sutra* was written by a lifelong celibate and sage named Vatsyayana. The *Kama Sutra* has been identified as significant as a text because it gave as much importance to a woman's active sexual involvement and pleasure as it did to a

Aids to Student Learning

A textbook must fulfill a double duty: while meeting instructors' expectations for accuracy, currency, and comprehensiveness, it must also speak to today's students, providing them with an accessible introduction to a body of knowledge. To that end, numerous features to promote student learning are incorporated throughout the book.



24 The Environment

G. KEITH WARRINER

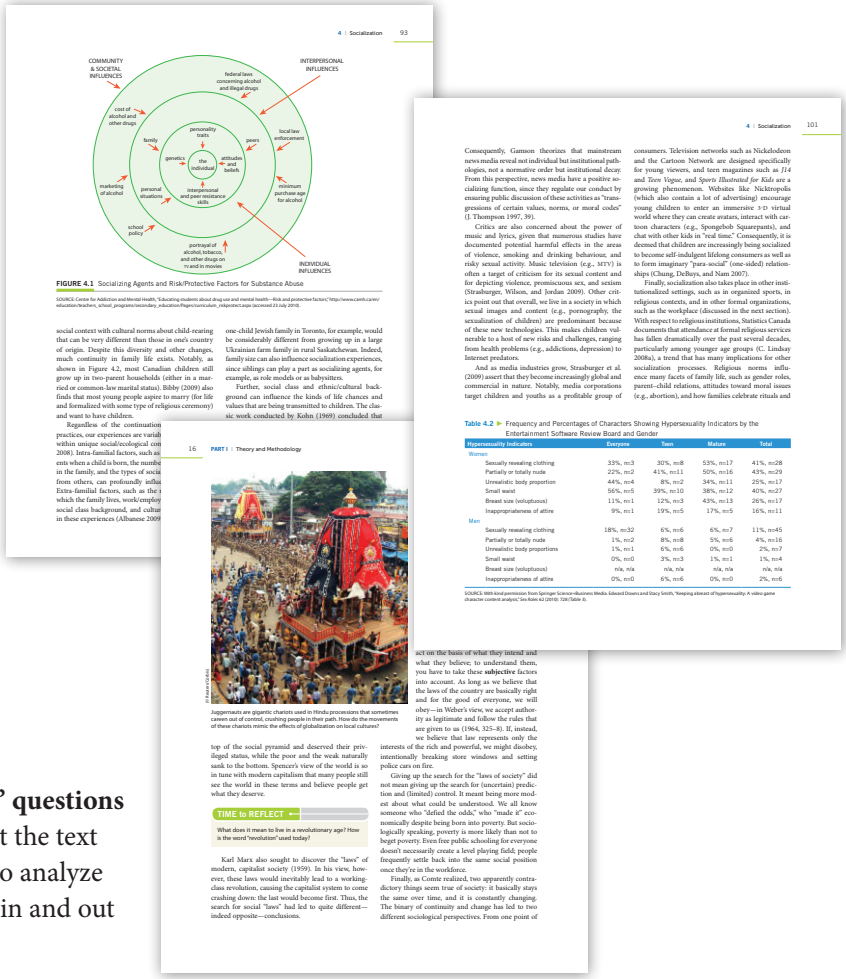
Photo courtesy of Liz Hoyert

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

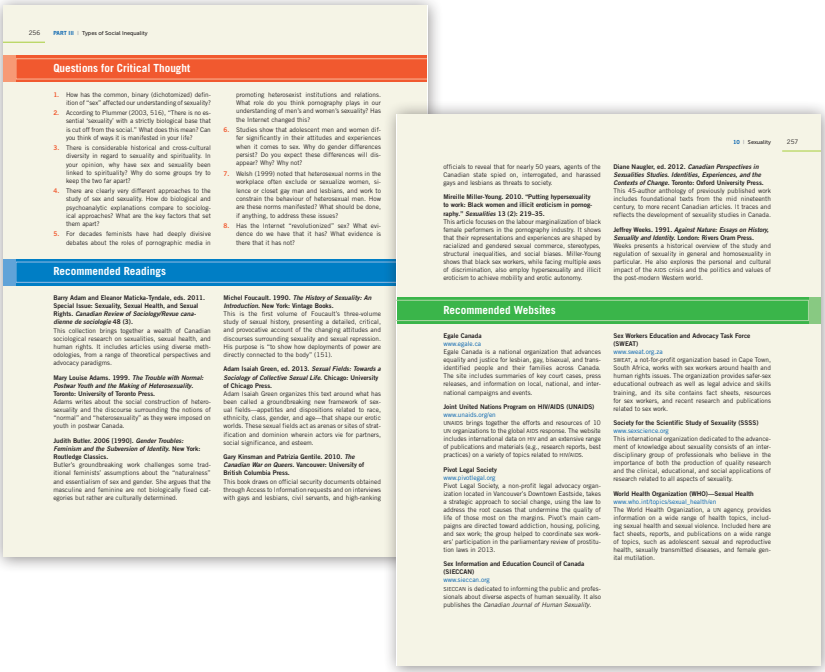
- Review the origins of environmental sociology as a recent field of study for understanding environmental problems;
- Examine global population growth and its relationship to poverty and development;
- Differentiate theories of environmental sociology and their basic assumptions;
- Critically assess such terms as "sustainable development," "scarcity," and "carrying capacity";
- Understand the theory of "risk society";
- Learn about the social constructionist perspective as it is applied in environmental sociology;
- Appreciate the distribution of environmental benefits and impacts;
- Differentiate between the various sides of the environmental movement.

◀ **Learning objectives** at the start of each chapter provide a concise overview of the key concepts that will be covered.

- **Graphs and tables.** Although qualitative research methods have grown in importance in recent years, one of the characteristics that still distinguishes sociology from other liberal arts and social sciences is its emphasis on using quantitative data and analysis as a crucial tool for understanding society. Colourful graphs and charts make such data clear in a way that sometimes text cannot.



- **"Time to Reflect" questions** placed throughout the text prompt students to analyze the material both in and out of the classroom.



- **Questions for critical thought**, **recommended readings**, and **recommended websites** at the end of each chapter encourage readers to think deeply about key issues and point students toward useful sources for further research.

Robust Supplements Package

Today's texts are no longer volumes that stand on their own. Rather, they are but the central element in a complete learning and teaching package. *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* is no exception and is supported by an outstanding array of ancillary materials for both students and instructors.

For Instructors

Online Instructor's Manual

This updated online resource includes comprehensive outlines of the text's various chapters, suggested class activities and assignments, questions for encouraging classroom discussion, suggestions on how to use media to enhance classes, and extra resource material for use in lectures.

Online Test Generator

A comprehensive test generator allows instructors to sort, edit, import, and distribute hundreds of questions in multiple-choice, short-answer, true/false, and essay format.

PowerPoint Slides

Hundreds of slides for classroom presentation incorporate graphics and tables from the text, summarize key points from each chapter, and can be edited to suit individual instructors' needs.

Sociology Streaming Video Collection

An exciting online collection provides instant access to a variety of feature-length videos and shorter clips, with an accompanying video guide that includes learning objectives, discussion questions, and assignment suggestions for each video included.

For Students

Companion Website

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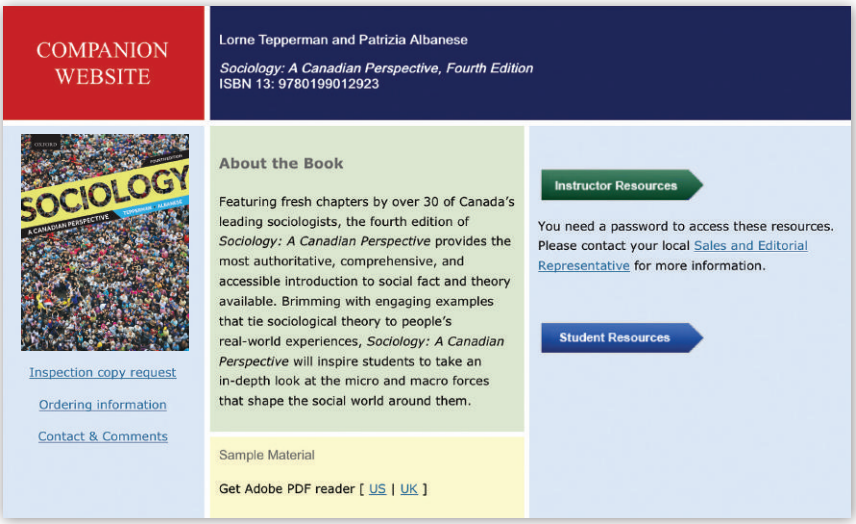

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From the General Editors

The two editors of this book—formerly teacher and student, now colleagues—are happy to bring enthusiastic readers a new edition of a text that tries to explain sociology, and Canadian society, to a new generation of Canadian students. We think that in this fourth edition, *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* continues to provide an up-to-date picture of Canadian society and Canadian sociology in the early parts of the twenty-first century. As always, we remain committed to providing the best, most reader-friendly presentation of social facts and theories. Our publisher, Oxford University Press Canada, has helped us to do so, and we are grateful for this help. *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* has received strong support from the topmost levels of Oxford University Press Canada.

Working with us on this edition of *Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* were developmental editor Tanuja Weerasooriya and copy editor Leslie Saffrey. Tanuja helped us to hone this book so that it is even better than the previous edition. Leslie clarified the writing and made the arguments in each chapter even more forceful and consistent. Our main thanks go to the contributing authors, without whom this book simply would not exist. They put up with our (seemingly endless) demands, and somehow we got from A to B without any catastrophes. It has been a great privilege working with this distinguished group of top Canadian scholars from all over the country. Thank you, authors.

We dedicate this book to the students who will read it and learn from it. Canada is at a crossroads today, with a government that has seemingly pledged itself to under-inform and disinform the Canadian public through such acts as the disruption of the Canadian long-form census and promotion of needless fears about crime and terrorism. Contrary to Mr. Harper's wishes, we all need to "commit sociology" with even more dedication and thoroughness than in the past. We think the present book will go part of the way to achieving this goal.

Lorne Tepperman, University of Toronto
Patrizia Albanese, Ryerson University

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Why Not Become a Sociologist?

LORNE TEPPERMAN AND PATRIZIA ALBANESE

Introduction

(zaragyemo/BigStock.com)

Introduction

Why do people become sociologists? There are many answers to this question, and it is likely that everyone at one point or another has been on the brink of becoming a sociologist. We say this because all people experience odd facets of social life that affect their opportunities, and they try to understand them. This is where sociology begins for most people. When people go beyond that point, they feel even more motivated to do sociology. What can be more fascinating, more empowering, and more personal than to begin to understand the society that shapes our lives? For these reasons, sociology is an inherently attractive area of study, and many people do study it.

Maybe as a child you noticed simply that:

- Parents sometimes treat their sons differently from their daughters.
- Teachers often treat "pretty" little girls better than plain-looking ones.
- Adults treat well-dressed children better than poorly dressed children.
- Upon meeting, children with disabilities are treated differently by their classmates.
- Movies typically portray people with "accents" as strange or suspicious.

If you had noticed these things, you may eventually have wondered why they happen. They may even have affected you, as a daughter or son, a plain-looking or an attractive person, a poorly dressed or well-dressed person, or a person with or without an "accent." You may have felt ashamed, angry, or pleased, depending on whether you identified with the favourably treated or with the unfavourably treated category of people.

Perhaps you grew up in a small town and then moved to a big city, or you grew up in a big city and now live in a small town. You notice that:

- People are not the way the media portray them.
- The ethnic and racial composition of the people around you is not what you are used to.
- The gap between rich and poor is more pronounced.
- People interact with each other differently from the way they do back home.
- They react suspiciously to strangers.
- They talk differently, dress differently, and eat different kinds of foods.

If you noticed these things, you may have wanted to understand them better. These are the kinds of circumstances in which sociological curiosity begins. All sociologists somehow, at some time or another, got hooked on trying to better understand their own lives and the lives of people around them. They come to understand that common sense gave them only incomplete explanations about what happened to people, about people's behaviour, and about the society in which they live. They were not satisfied with the incomplete explanation and wanted to know more.

For many people, and for much of what we do, common-sense understanding is just fine. For anyone who wants to understand how society works, it is not good enough. You may already realize there are many questions common sense cannot answer adequately. For example:

- Why are some people so different from you, and why are some so similar?
- Why do seemingly similar people lead such different lives?
- How is it possible for different people to get along?
- Why do we treat some people as if they are more "different" than others?
- Why do we often treat "different" people much worse than others?
- What do people do to escape from being treated badly?
- Why do some parts of society change quickly and others hardly at all?
- What can residents do to make Canadian society a fairer place?
- What can young people do to make their elders think differently?
- How can we improve the conditions facing people with disabilities in our society?
- Can we bring about social change by changing the laws of the country?

Sociologists try to answer these questions by studying societies methodically. In fact, their task is to study people's lives—their own and others'—more carefully than anyone else. Sociologists want to understand how societies change and how people's lives change with them. Social changes, inequalities, and conflicts captivate sociologists because such issues—war and peace, wealth and poverty, environmental destruction and

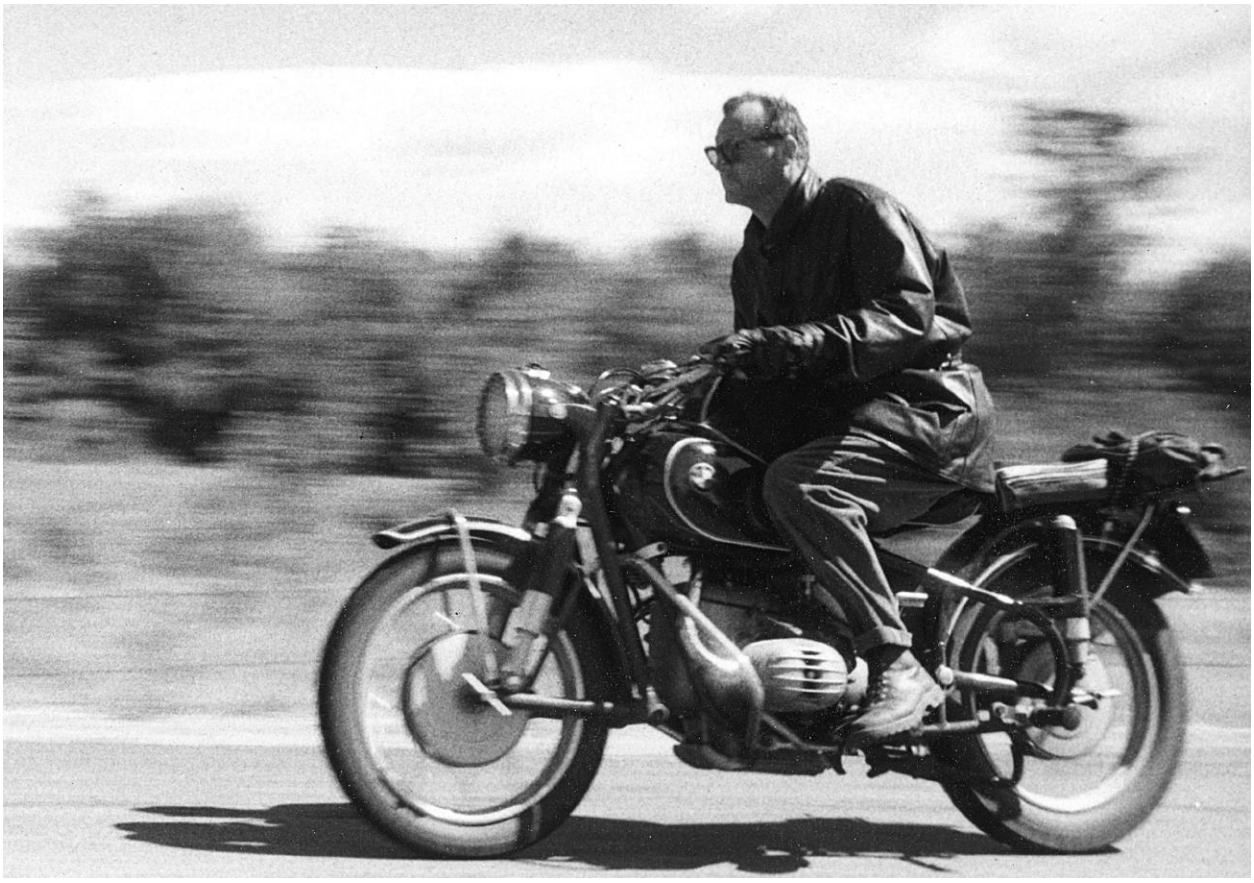
technological innovation, for example—are important for people's lives. Sociologists know that many different kinds of people have the same kinds of "personal problems." They also know that many of our personal problems are the private side of public issues. American sociologist C. Wright Mills called this knowledge or way of viewing the world "the sociological imagination." With this knowledge or way of viewing the world, we know we need to deal with personal problems collectively and, often, politically—with full awareness that we share these problems and their solutions with others.

However, solving problems entails clear thinking and careful research. So social theorists and social science researchers have developed concepts, theories, and research methods that help them study the social world more effectively. Our goal as sociologists is to be able to explain social life, critique social inequities, and work toward effecting social change. In this book, you will learn how sociologists go about these tasks; you will also learn some of the things sociologists have found out about the social world.

Our starting point here is a formal definition of *sociology*, comparisons of sociology with other related fields of study, and a discussion of sociology's most basic subject matter.

A Definition of Sociology

Scholars have defined sociology in many ways, but most practising sociologists think of their discipline as the systematic study of social behaviour in human societies. Humans are intensely social beings and spend most of their time interacting with other humans. That is why sociologists study the social units people create when they join with others. As we will see in the following chapters, these units range from small groups—comprising as few as two people—to large corporations and even whole societies (see, for example, Chapter 6 on groups, cliques, and bureaucracies). Sociologists are interested in learning about how group membership affects individual behaviour. They are also interested in learning how individuals change the groups of



(© Yaroslava Mills)

In the 1950s, American sociologist C. Wright Mills was a famous rebel with a cause. He pushed the sociological community toward a more historically informed, politically committed engagement with the world.

which they are members. In most social life, at least in Canadian society, there is a visible tug-of-war between these two forces: the group and the individual.

However, it is impossible for any sociologist to study all social issues or to become an expert in all the sub-disciplines of sociology. As a result, most sociologists specialize in either macrosociology or microsociology—two related but distinct approaches to studying the social world—and choose problems for study from within these realms.

Macrosociology is the study of large social organizations (for example, the Roman Catholic Church, universities, corporations, or government bureaucracies) and large social categories (for example, ethnic minorities, the elderly, or college students). Sociologists who specialize in the macrosociological approach to the social world focus on the complex social patterns that people form over long periods. You can see this in Parts IV and V of this volume, on social institutions and global society, respectively.

On the other hand, **microsociology** focuses on the typical processes and patterns of interaction in small groups. A microsociologist might study a marriage, a clique, a business meeting, an argument between friends, or a first date. A microsociologist would study the common, everyday interactions and negotiations that together produce lasting, secure patterns. You can see many examples of this in Part II, Chapters 4 and 5, on socialization and on roles and identities, respectively.

The difference in names—**macro** versus **micro**—refers to the difference in size between the social units of interest. Macrosociologists study large social units—organizations, societies, or even empires—over long periods of time: years, centuries, or millennia. Microsociologists study small social units over short periods of time—for example, what happens during a conversation, a party, a classroom lecture, or a love affair. As in nature, large things move (and change) slowly, and small things move more quickly.

As a result, macrosociologists are likely to stress how slowly things change and how persistent a social pattern is as it plays itself out in one generation after another. An example is the way society tends to be

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Teams and other social groups, such as bands, gangs, and classrooms, all need communication, coordination, leadership, shared identity, and ritual. Many teams have uniforms and other insignia to increase their solidarity.

controlled by its elite groups, decade after decade. The connection between business elites and political elites is persistent.

By contrast, microsociologists are likely to stress how quickly things change and how elusive the thing we call "social life" is. In their eyes, any social unit is constantly being created and reconceived by the members of society. An example is the way one's friendship group changes yearly, if not more often, as one moves through the school system or the world of work. Some people remain our close friends over years, but many are close friends for only a short while.

Combining macro and micro approaches improves our understanding of the social world. Consider a common social phenomenon: the domestic division of labour—who does what chores around the home. From the micro perspective, who does what is constantly open to negotiation. It is influenced by personal characteristics, the history of the couple, and many other unique factors. Yet viewed from a macro perspective, different households have similar divisions of labour despite different personal histories. This suggests that the answer lies in a society's history, culture, and economy. It is far from accidental that across millions of households, men enjoy the advantage of a better salary and more social power both in a great many workplaces and at home.

While these approaches are different, they are also connected. They have to be: after all, both macro- and microsociologists are studying the same people in the same society. All of us are leading unique lives within a common social context, facing common problems. The question is, how can sociologists bring these elements together? As noted above, C. Wright Mills (1959) gave the answer when he introduced the notion of the *sociological imagination* as something that enables us to relate personal biographies—the lives of millions of ordinary people like ourselves—to the broad sweep of human history. The sociological imagination is what we need to use to understand how societies control and change their members and, at the same time, are constantly changed by the actions of their members.

All of this is the subject matter of sociology. We may choose to focus on problems of microsociology or macrosociology because of our preference to understand one or the other. However, a full understanding of most problems requires that we consider elements of both, for the two types of processes are closely connected.

Finally, we need to note in passing that Canadian sociology has a rich and distinctive history. This will gradually become clear as you read through this book and, especially, learn about highly esteemed Canadian "Researchers in Action." Regrettably, space does not permit a detailed discussion of the history and organization of sociology in Canada. Some coverage of prominent Canadian sociologists, the Canadian Sociological Association and the funding of sociological research in Canada (Tri-Council/SSHRC) would be beneficial to students, no doubt, but that will have to wait. For more information about the activities of Canadian sociologists, past and present, the reader is directed to explore the website of the Canadian Sociological Association.

How Sociology Differs from Other Academic Fields

Sociology is just one of several fields of study designed to help describe and explain human behaviour; others include journalism, history, philosophy, and psychology. How does sociology differ from these other fields? Canadian sociologist Kenneth Westhues (1982) has compared sociology's approach with those of the others. He stresses that journalism and history describe real events, as does sociology. However, journalism and history only sometimes base their descriptions on a theory or interpretation, and even then it is often an implicit or hidden theory.

Sociology is different. It strives to make its theories clear to test them. Telling a story is important for sociologists, but it is less important than the explanation behind the story. Besides, stories often make the news because they are unusual; sociologists instead are drawn to issues because they are common events or recurring patterns. Sociology may be good preparation for history or journalism, but it differs from these disciplines.

Sociology also differs from philosophy. Both are *analytical*—that is, concerned with testing and refining theory. However, sociology is firmly *empirical*, or concerned with gathering evidence and doing studies, while philosophy is not. Philosophy is more concerned with the internal logic of its arguments. Sociological theories must stand up logically, but they must also stand up to research evidence in a way philosophical theories need not. No matter how logical the theory

may be, sociologists will not accept a sociological theory if its predictions are not supported by evidence gathered in a rigorous and systematic way.

Finally, sociology differs from psychology, which is also analytical, empirical, and interpretive. The difference here lies in the subject matter. Psychologists study the behaviour of individual humans or, sometimes, animals. Generally, they do so under experimental conditions. Sociology's subject matter is social relationships or groups viewed in society. As you will see, sociologists study the family, schools, workplaces, the media—even the total society. Sociology and psychology come close together in a field called *social psychology*, but this field is defined differently by sociologists and psychologists. Studies by sociologists are more likely to focus on the effects of group living on people's views and behaviours. By contrast, psychologists are more likely to focus on particular individuals and how they respond under certain experimental conditions.

Another way of characterizing sociology and what makes it unique has been put forward by Earl Babbie (1988). He states that sociologists hold some basic or fundamental ideas that set them apart from those in other fields:

1. Society has an existence of its own.
2. Society can be studied scientifically.
3. Society creates itself.
4. Cultures vary over time and place.
5. Individual identity is a product of society.
6. Social structure must satisfy survival requirements.
7. Institutions are inherently conservative.
8. Societies constrain and transform.
9. Multiple paradigms or fundamental models of reality are needed.

As we will see in the chapters that follow, these are many of the most basic ideas or assumptions of sociology. Part I of this collection (Chapters 1 and 2) introduces the theoretical underpinnings and methodologies of sociology. Part II addresses the major social processes: culture (Chapter 3), socialization (Chapter 4), role

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Sociology is just one of the fields of study designed to help describe and explain human behaviour—for example, crowd behaviour. It differs from others, such as psychology, in its focus on social relationships or groups observed in society.

and identity formation (Chapter 5), group formation (Chapter 6), and deviance (Chapter 7). Part III presents different forms of inequality people experience through chapters on class and status (Chapter 8), gender relations (Chapter 9), sexuality (Chapter 10), ethnic and race relations (Chapter 11), and aging (Chapter 12). In Part IV, you will learn about different social institutions that shape and constrain our lives, including the family (Chapter 13), education (Chapter 14), work and the economy (Chapter 15), health (Chapter 16), religion (Chapter 17), politics (Chapter 18), and social movements (Chapter 19). Increasingly, understanding Canadian society means also understanding global issues. So in Part V of the book you will read about global society (Chapter 20), population (Chapter 21), cities and urbanization (Chapter 22), the mass media (Chapter 23), the environment (Chapter 24), and, in a new chapter, technology and society (Chapter 25).

What do people do after studying sociology? Obviously, that's a hard question to answer, since every year hundreds of thousands of students take sociology courses in Canada and elsewhere. People who major or specialize in sociology gain valuable skills in critical thinking and research methods. This prepares them for a variety of second-entry college and university programs, including law, social work, teaching, industrial relations, personnel work, opinion polling, public health, public administration, and other fields. People who go on to get an MA or a PhD in sociology often end up teaching in colleges or universities or holding responsible positions as researchers, consultants, and policy planners.

Conclusion

Sociology is a good idea. It pays off by enlightening us, and it has worthy goals. Sociology, as you have heard, is the systematic study of society and the ways patterns of social behaviour change.

It is a broad field of study. This is obvious in the broad theoretical perspectives used to guide most sociological research. Sociology highlights both micro- and macro-level analyses and the complex relationships between the two, as noted in Mills's idea of the sociological imagination. Sociology also covers a broad subject matter—consider the subject matter of the following chapters, ranging across deviance, family, education, religion, politics, the economy, health, and beyond.

Sociology allows people to move beyond a purely common-sense approach to better understanding social life. It gives people more powerful tools to explore the connections between social institutions and processes. In the process, they learn that much common-sense knowledge is faulty. Sociology helps them to see that things are not always what they seem.

Sociology stresses the relationships among individuals, social structure, and culture. As we will see, social structure and culture both constrain the behaviour of individuals. However, they are both essential for social life. As well, both social structure and culture are created by humans in social interaction. Therefore, they are both subject to future change in the same way. In short, sociology demystifies social life, showing that social arrangements are in our own hands. That said, powerful interest groups play a disproportionate role in controlling the kinds of social and cultural change that take place.

Sociology has obvious personal relevance, since it addresses everyday life issues. And finally, sociology has an important goal overall: to contribute positively to the future of humanity. Our sincere hope is that this text will set you on your way to developing your own sociological imagination.

Theory and Methodology

PART I

1 Sociological Theory

ANTHONY THOMSON

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In this Chapter you will:

- Learn that you are already a social theorist;
- Apply the concept of binary thinking to understand the origins of sociology in the transition from traditional to modern society;
- Distinguish between objectivity and subjectivity in social theory;
- Identify the key ideas of the major classical theorists: Durkheim, Marx, and Weber;
- Relate classical social theory to contemporary perspectives in sociology: functionalist, conflict, interactionist, feminist, and post-modernist;
- Connect concepts from classical theory to concerns in contemporary sociology.

MEET THE AUTHOR


Heather Frenette

My earliest experiences with sociological thinking came while I was attending a racially integrated high school just outside my native Halifax. I learned about anti-racism, and a radical history teacher from India opened my eyes to colonialism. I first heard the music of Bob Dylan from a draft-dodging English teacher from Maine. When I was an undergraduate student, my interests were shaped by theatre, English literature, and an art history elective I took initially as a "bird" course. But in the 1960s, only sociologists were talking seriously about the issues of the day—civil rights, the Vietnam War, poverty, and women's liberation. My wife, Heather Frenette, helped me understand and practise the principles of gender equality. Herb Gamberg, a radical American educated at Brandeis and Princeton, drew me into sociology and social theory. After a few years teaching high school in Newfoundland, where I realized that teaching is worthwhile but schools are not, I returned to Dalhousie University to study social history, class theory, and international development with Greg Kealey and Tom Bottomore, and then worked with Bob Blackburn at the University of Cambridge. Since then I have become a father, renovated a century-old home, and become a sociologist at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, where I teach and write about social theory, play noon-hour basketball, and research community policing and penitentiary history. Today, sociology pervades every aspect of my life. I even watch films or TV shows through a sociological lens. Sociology has the potential to change the way you look at the world, what you do in it, and what you do about it.

—Tony Thomson

Introduction: Why Theory?

The Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci believed that everyone is a social theorist. We all have an intellect and use our minds to make sense of the world in which we live. Whether we realize it or not, our thinking is powerfully shaped by our experiences in life and by the ways we have been taught to understand these experiences. To be sociologically educated is to see yourself as a social actor in a world full of powerful forces that shape what you think and feel, while also realizing what you contribute to sustain this world or to change it.

Understanding the world and our places within it is almost as important as eating. Most Canadians (though certainly far from all) can take eating pretty much for granted. This is a great privilege. In our increasingly connected but greatly unequal globe, a full stomach cannot be assumed. Our privilege is also our responsibility. Not only are we able to use our intellect to understand the world, it is a crucial ingredient for guiding the actions we take. From a sociological perspective, what we do—our day-to-day actions—are part of the making and remaking of the actual world we live in.

Gramsci's point is that we already use our intellects to explain how society works. Much of what we do and think, however, is simply taken for granted. This is not necessarily a bad thing. We take it for granted that the physical world will pretty much do what we have come to expect: that food will burn if you add too much heat; that the sidewalk won't turn into quicksand; that the couch you sit on won't collapse, fly away, or swallow you whole (unless you're a character in *The Simpsons*).

We also expect the social world to follow rules that we can take for granted: people in Canada will drive on the right-hand side of the road; our mothers will love us; our paid employees will show up for work on time. But the rules of nature—for example, if you are deprived of food long enough, you will die—are not the same as the rules of society—you will not have enough to eat if you don't have the money to pay for it.

Following social rules more or less unthinkingly most of the time is necessary for society to work. Our way of viewing the world has become something we accept as natural, not something we question. People live, day-to-day, with simple formulas that help them understand the way things work: we tend to think the world is the way it is and couldn't be much different; people get what they deserve; each of us is a unique individual; we are endowed with an inner "self" that truly defines our identity, who we are. Unless there is something spectacular to catch our interest momentarily, we look at society with the blasé attitude that sociologist Georg Simmel talks about—the progressive rock group Pink Floyd would call it "comfortably numb."

TIME to REFLECT

Would you say that your response to things that happen in the world reflects a blasé, indifferent attitude?

We don't, however, just act blindly or randomly or make up these ways of understanding as we go along. To borrow from the film industry, we follow scripts that are given to us and play the roles assigned. We are born into an existing society of things and people and into a world of ideas of what we should and shouldn't think or do. We are told who we are by other people; our identity is not something we make by ourselves, willy-nilly.

Gramsci would say that all these ideas about the world and our place within it reflect theories of society that have been built into our intellect. The process goes on so automatically that, like digestion, it seems to just happen. We begin ingesting ideas about the world along with our mother's milk, as Chapter 4 on socialization demonstrates. But the ideas that we swallow may be open to question. They may not be the best, or the most useful, or the most revealing about how society actually works. They may be popular fictions or myths. They may be part of the problems in the world, not the solutions.

Sociologists argue that although people are physical beings, they are also intellectual beings who can question the rules about such social problems as how food is distributed, to whom, and at what social and environmental cost. In fact, people can even choose to violate what might be seen as the most basic rule of biology: survival. People can and have chosen, in the midst of plenty, to starve themselves to death in support of some political or social cause.

The key to understanding, C. Wright Mills says, is the ability to connect personal problems with larger forces in society. Mills, a critical and caustic sociologist, wrote in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) that it wasn't enough to focus only on a person's experiences. These experiences must be understood in their social context. Sociology must address social problems by linking an individual's personal troubles—one's own biography—with the way society is organized and structured.

In her groundbreaking book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan found that educated housewives in the United States were generally unhappy. They had been taught to find fulfillment in the roles of wife and mother, and each assumed that her private misery was her own fault. Looking at their situation sociologically, Friedan said these women suffered because they had been socialized into playing the traditional role of housewife. This role denied them the opportunity for a meaningful career outside the home for which they had been educated and trained, and which they believed they deserved. What each woman saw as her personal and private trouble was actually rooted in a widespread social problem.

A great deal of sociology is concerned with the question of why society operates so imperfectly. As much as the chapters that follow explain how social institutions such as the family, schooling, or religion actually work, they also identify social problems. Sociology is a critical study. Most of the social theorists you will read about in this book have been motivated by a desire not only to understand society but to change it for the better. Sociology challenges existing ways of thinking, and this book is as much about helping you see the world sociologically as about providing information.

Binary Thinking

How do theorists go about building a framework for understanding social life? Quite a lot depends on how they approach some basic questions about individuals and society. Are people's actions the result of a choice they have made? Or are people really just the puppets of social forces that work the strings behind their backs, determining what they do or think? Should you only look at the existing facts as they appear, such as how food is distributed, or should you also ask questions about values, such as how food *should* be distributed?

The use of either/or propositions is termed **binary** thinking. One of the most important binary distinctions in contemporary social theory is between "structure" and "**agency**." On the one hand, we are born into pre-existing social arrangements or structures, including physical objects such as buildings as well as social codes of behaviour and morality. On the other hand, we choose one course of action over others. You didn't choose the degree requirements for the credentials you are seeking, but you chose to enter one program among many that were available to you. And you may toss the whole thing aside tomorrow, drop out, and travel to Bali. People are thinking and acting individuals; in short, they exercise agency.

Typically, thinking that you make choices purely on your own comes easily. It is part of the taken-for-granted way we have learned to look at ourselves. Yet how much choice are people actually able to realize? You might have chosen to work toward a university degree and a specific career, but you have virtually no

influence over the job opportunities that will be available to you when you enter the job market or how the world of work will have changed by then. Like Friedan's housewives, too many young people today are caught between the education they've made sacrifices to achieve and the structure of global capitalism that often doesn't provide a matching set of suitable careers. Making choices in an uncertain, risky world brings with it much anxiety, unhappiness, and an undeserved sense of personal failure.

TIME to REFLECT

As a theorist yourself, what do you think causes some people to be employed and others to be unemployed? How might you think sociologically about this question?

Social thinkers have examined society—the ways that people organize their lives together—for thousands of years. Every new idea comes into a world that is dominated by old ideas—"new" versus "old" is one of the most ancient and enduring binaries. Sociology was developed by scholars who were aware that their world was changing rapidly and fundamentally. What was new when sociology was invented about two centuries ago was the idea that society could be studied scientifically. It was a broad and somewhat surprising claim.

The Birth of Sociology in the Age of Revolution

People who are part of the generation now reaching adulthood are used to rapid change, at least in many of the ways they go about their lives—how they communicate, travel, work, and experience diversions and pleasures. There is a sense that the gap between generations is widening, that the old generation can't understand the new one and can't appreciate the ways microchip technology has been inserted into social life. "*I used to be* with it," Grandpa Simpson says, but now what's "it" seems pretty weird and scary to him. Sociology thrives in these periods of large-scale social change. It is harder to take things for granted when the ground that had seemed so familiar is shifting under your feet.

When European social theorists surveyed their "new" world and began to apply the word "modern" to it, they simultaneously created the binary concept, "traditional," meaning Europe before the modern age. Looking backward, they believed the key difference separating the traditional from the modern was the way people understood and thought about the world. Traditional society had been a world of magic, mystery, and religious authority. In contrast, modern society had entered a new world of **Enlightenment**. Through the use of reason or rationality, the human mind could shine light into the darkest caves and discover "true" knowledge. More than 200 years later, we seem no closer to this elusive and improbable "universal" understanding.

The French social theorist who invented the term "sociology," Auguste Comte (1798–1857), intended to create a "science" of society that would allow us to understand social life the way that biology had enabled us to understand physical life. Sociology would be based on facts, evidence, and scientific laws, not just on imagination, abstract philosophy, or fiction. But the "natural" sciences—astronomy, physics, chemistry—were more advanced in their knowledge at that time than any purported science of social life. There was a lot of catching up to do.

Natural scientists had combined careful, detailed, and systematic observations of nature with logical, systematic thought (theories). They had "discovered" that natural laws made the world orderly and predictable. Scientific knowledge of the world gave people power over nature. The way forward for sociology, then, was to discover the "natural" laws that determined social life. Just as Isaac Newton had discovered the law of gravity, there must be similar laws that explained how society worked. Once discovered scientifically, these laws could be applied to controlling social life. And society seemed to need controlling. During Comte's time, political and social revolutions were undermining the traditional authority of church and state. Capitalists had become the sorcerer's apprentices, as industrialization transformed social life rapidly, profoundly, and disturbingly. Comte said that the understanding of society—social theory—had to be rooted in science if social life was again to be orderly, peaceful, and secure.

As Comte (1974, 19–27) saw it, there was a "law" according to which social thinking necessarily passed through three stages. People in the first stage assumed that the world was run by supernatural powers, by gods

and spiritual forces. In the Middle Ages, for example, people believed that angels actively pushed the sun as it made its daily circle around the flat, stationary earth.

With the rise of scientific understanding, religious theory (theology) gave way to philosophy and science, Comte's second stage. The idea of "nature" replaced the idea of an active, miracle-working god. The world proceeded on its way like clockwork following only the laws of nature. Finally, in the third, positive stage, people began to apply their scientific knowledge of the laws of nature to change the physical world to suit themselves. Similarly, the knowledge developed by the new social science Comte termed "sociology" would give humans power over social order and social change.

Comte's own life, however, didn't quite follow this rational, scientific script. He experienced bouts of insanity, attempted suicide, fell romantically and passionately in love with Clotilde de Vaux, who died of tuberculosis within a year, went through a religious conversion, and tried to establish a new "religion of humanity" with himself as pope (Andreski 1974, 8–9). Real life was clearly a lot messier than pure scientific reason would suggest, and unreason—the irrational—had to be taken into account. As his social theory evolved backward from science to theology, Comte's own career served to refute his "law" of three stages.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, sociological thinking involved the search for law-like certainties that could explain social life. Following Comte, this approach became known as **positivism**. English sociologist Herbert Spencer (1969, 120) believed that society, like nature, was a struggle for existence. The strongest and "best" individuals inevitably rose to the

GLOBAL ISSUES

Origin of Globalization

SOCIOLOGY WAS BORN IN THE nineteenth century when the promise of a better future sometimes seemed overshadowed by the emergence of new, perhaps worse, problems. The original myth of the Sorcerer's Apprentice concerns a young magician-in-training who can't control the dangerous results of the magic he sets in motion. Many of the social theorists who created sociology saw that their "new," modern world was running dangerously out of control. With industrial development comes urban slums, contagious diseases, abject poverty, joblessness, and rising crime. The same phenomenon is currently playing out worldwide. Modern society was exhilarating in its rapid change and amazing possibilities, but it was also frightening because of the collapse of so much that had seemed to hold society together. Now theorists talk about the careening "**juggernaut**" of modern globalization—the phrase comes from Anthony Giddens. "Globalization" is a seemingly neutral word for a complex and troublesome social change through which the globe becomes increasingly integrated. What we call globalization may be thought of, in the rest of the world, as Westernization, Americanization, or imperialism.

Sociology, as an attempt to understand society objectively and scientifically, was a European invention, constructed to enable people to understand and hopefully control the transformation of traditional society into modernity. The first sociologists had a thoroughly Eurocentric view of the world. While the "North" (Europe, North America) had progressed to the stage of industrialization, sociologists believed the South (Africa, Latin America, Asia) was mired in a stagnant, traditional, and undeveloped social system. It was the "white man's burden," poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling said, to "rescue" the rest of the world from its backwardness. Karl Marx deplored the terrible effects that European colonialism imposed on India, but he believed that the old ways had to be destroyed before modern capitalism could be introduced to Asia as the first step to its full integration into the modern world.

We are a lot closer now to this "fully integrated" world. In 2010, China became the world's second-largest economy after the United States, which is the most important consumer of Chinese products. Many new graduates from Canada will seek their first job opportunities in Japan, Korea, or China. In our megacities, such as Toronto and Vancouver, the previously predominant white Europeans will soon become a "visible minority." Globalization in the age of classical sociology wasn't then—and it isn't now—a gentle, benevolent evolution. The term "globalization" is now likely to evoke images of mass protest and police repression (as in Toronto in 2010), the re-emergence of ethnic violence to the point of genocide, the resurgence of extremism rooted in religious fundamentalism linked to state and individual terrorism (as in ISIS), and the widespread environmental destruction caused by endless-growth capitalism. In this world of rapid social and economic change, sociology has never been more relevant.

(© Reuters/Corbis)

Juggernauts are gigantic chariots used in Hindu processions that sometimes careen out of control, crushing people in their path. How do the movements of these chariots mimic the effects of globalization on local cultures?

top of the social pyramid and deserved their privileged status, while the poor and the weak naturally sank to the bottom. Spencer's view of the world is so in tune with modern capitalism that many people still see the world in these terms and believe people get what they deserve.

TIME to REFLECT

What does it mean to live in a revolutionary age? How is the word "revolution" used today?

Karl Marx also sought to discover the "laws" of modern, capitalist society (1959). In his view, however, these laws would inevitably lead to a working-class revolution, causing the capitalist system to come crashing down: the last would become first. Thus, the search for social "laws" had led to quite different—indeed opposite—conclusions.

Classical Sociology

What was a sociologist to do? First, let's consider that many of the questions sociologists are interested in don't have a rational basis. The idea that we frequently act according to habit or custom, unthinkingly, or according to our beliefs and values, suggests that people often do not reason things out and make "rational" choices. Many of the things we accept as natural, from our experience of time to our views of "human nature," are actually socially constructed.

Second, many social theorists have sought to understand people's intentions and bring the elements of thinking and choosing into their analysis. German sociologist Max Weber said that people act on the basis of what they intend and what they believe; to understand them, you have to take these **subjective** factors into account. As long as we believe that the laws of the country are basically right and for the good of everyone, we will obey—in Weber's view, we accept authority as legitimate and follow the rules that are given to us (1964, 325–8). If, instead, we believe that law represents only the interests of the rich and powerful, we might disobey, intentionally breaking store windows and setting police cars on fire.

Giving up the search for the "laws of society" did not mean giving up the search for (uncertain) prediction and (limited) control. It meant being more modest about what could be understood. We all know someone who "defied the odds," who "made it" economically despite being born into poverty. But sociologically speaking, poverty is more likely than not to beget poverty. Even free public schooling for everyone doesn't necessarily create a level playing field; people frequently settle back into the same social position once they're in the workforce.

Finally, as Comte realized, two apparently contradictory things seem true of society: it basically stays the same over time, and it is constantly changing. The binary of continuity and change has led to two different sociological perspectives. From one point of

view, what is most important about society is how it remains, day to day, basically the same. Look around your classroom, and imagine the things you and your classmates *could* be doing together now. But what you *are* doing in reality allows the lecture to go on, in an orderly and routine way.

An important perspective in sociology seeks to understand this continuity—how society is reproduced. Part of the answer is that society possesses powerful mechanisms that force us to obey, such as police and prisons. But maintaining social order is usually much more subtle than employing direct coercion. Operating more or less behind the scenes are powerful social influences that shape what we do and help determine the consequences of our actions.

Understanding these structural forces is the business of sociological theory. Functionalist theorists, for example, seek to identify the basic **functions** that must be fulfilled in all societies and understand how they are accomplished. From a functionalist perspective, if something exists in society and persists over time—religion, for example, or sports, or even crime—it must perform some necessary function that is important for the reproduction of society. When society responds harshly to a criminal act, social rules and the rules of morality are strengthened. What is necessary is to understand the forces that generate agreement and solidarity among people.

Reproduction of society over time is one side of the story. But things also change over time, which is the focus of another group of sociologists. Marx famously said that the purpose of social theory is not to understand the world but to change it (although we might argue that you have to understand it *in order to* change it). According to the conflict perspective in sociology, change comes from conflict—between generations, between the government and the people, between rich and poor, and between men and women. Many sociologists adopted the conflict approach, including Max Weber in Germany and, more recently in France, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu.

In short, studying sociological theory entails grasping the perspectives of the early developers of sociology who strove to carve out the new discipline, the new science of understanding social life. We refer to members of the founding generation of sociologists as classical theorists. Three of the most important are Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber; all three are cited frequently throughout this text, so at this point it is useful to outline their thinking (see Thomson 2010).

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) would become the most famous French sociologist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but he was originally destined to be a rabbi. He was born in eastern France to a close-knit, strictly moral, and orthodox Jewish family, part of a small and cohesive community. Educated in Paris among the intellectual elite of his generation, Durkheim broke with the Jewish faith and with religious belief generally, but he understood the powerful hold that religion has on people in society (Lukes 1972, 39–46).

As a university lecturer, Durkheim began his lifelong study of the relationship between the individual and society. Above all, he thought, modern society seemed to have lost that solid and shared code of morality that had acted as the glue holding society together—in Durkheim's terms, people no longer shared a collective conscience (Durkheim 1964, 444). Durkheim argued that the simplest societies were held together by such practices as religious celebrations and gift-giving. When wives, or gossip, or stories, or "gifts" were exchanged among tribal members, relationships were strengthened and given meaning. Even in our culture, gift-giving carries much more symbolic meaning than a merely economic exchange. It stands for friendship or love; it may be a peace offering or a token of respect; it helps to repair or cement our relationships.

A second source of togetherness, Durkheim said, originated in regular, sacred gatherings, events in which the tribe feasted and celebrated its community. In joyous, often delirious celebration, people experienced a "collective effervescence" that bound them together and generated a feeling of spirituality—they sensed a power greater than themselves. This feeling, said Durkheim, was the root of religious belief, but it actually originated from the shared social experience itself—that is, not from the supernatural but from society, which is the material foundation of the religious life. People today who are caught in the ecstasy of a religious revival meeting might believe they feel

an external, spiritual power coursing through them. Something similar and entirely secular may happen in the mosh pit of a rock concert.

Durkheim hypothesized that over time, the sacred part of life had become overshadowed by the secular. Gift-giving in modern society, for example, is highly ritualized and closely integrated into consumer society. For Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), modern individualism is paradoxically expressed by participation in the rites of mass consumption (1998). Through the ostentatious display of goods for sale in shop windows and enormous boxmalls, "things" take on an almost sacred aura, even when goods are merely worshipped through gazing (window-shopping). At every moment in consumer society, "in the streets . . . on advertising hoardings and neon signs," (1988, 166) individuals are trained into a modern collective consciousness of mass consumption.

In modern society, Durkheim felt, the power of religion to uphold a system of moral rules had diminished. People were no longer united by a single code of right and wrong, an uncertainty that Durkheim termed **anomie**. He saw that other traditional institutions, such as marriage and the family, also seemed to be breaking down in modern society. He believed that men had an inborn sexual passion that had to be curbed and regulated by marriage. Otherwise, he thought, men's sexual desires would lead them into the pursuit of novelty and excess. It seemed to him that it was far better for people to live "courageously" with unhappiness in their marriage than to abandon their duties to their family and society. He might well have understood a line from the 1926 silent film *The Crowd*: "Marriage isn't a word, it's a sentence." In his view, marriage was a sentence that had to be endured for the good of society. A typical Victorian man, Durkheim also opposed sex education, which, he said, was like treating a mysterious and private act as if it were no more than digestion (Lukes 1972, 530–4). Women sociologists, on the other hand, soon recognized that the writings of classical male sociologists reflected their culturally induced gender biases.

For Durkheim, people were becoming more individualized as modern society had evolved away from the spirit of community. How could millions of increasingly distinct individuals ever create an orderly society? At the same time, Durkheim recognized that the old community spirit could not be brought back to life; it had disappeared forever. Individualism was here to stay, and it had both positive and negative features. It was progressive insofar as it promoted respect for human rights, which Durkheim actively defended. However, individualism created problems because it undermined people's connection to society; it was at the root of modern aimlessness and anomie. The task of sociology, then, was to put an end to anomie and the conflict it engendered.

But how to overcome anomie? Society needed a new moral code, but it could not be based on the old model of everyone thinking and acting in identical ways. Instead, people would have to be educated to recognize that each person's individuality should be respected. At the same time, each individual should understand that his or her welfare depends, in a deep and multi-faceted way, on everyone else. Just as many organs keep an animal alive, everyone in society plays a part in maintaining social life, which Durkheim termed *organic solidarity*. The individual, Durkheim said, is "the organ" of a much larger organism—society—and everyone must learn to perform conscientiously "one's role as an organ" (Lukes 1972, 102).

Feeling closely connected to others was good for society, but it was also essential for the well-being of an individual, Durkheim felt. His best-known application of sociological methods to understand a social problem was his examination of suicide. Taking one's own life would seem to be an absolutely individual act that could be understood only by examining the psychology of the victim. This was not entirely true, Durkheim reasoned. He used his examination of suicide to demonstrate that sociology could make an important contribution to the study of what is perhaps the most lonely act.

One of Durkheim's closest friends at school, Victor Hommay, committed suicide in 1886. Teaching in isolated provincial towns, Hommay felt himself a stranger in small communities where people observe each other too closely. His life felt "pale, colourless, monotonous, [and] insipid." Durkheim concluded that Hommay's situation might have been typical of cases of suicide in which the individual feels isolated, has few ties to other people, and sees no reason to live (Lukes 1972, 49–51). The key to the sociological explanation for suicide, Durkheim reasoned, was the strength or weakness of the individuals' ties to their community and society (Durkheim 1951, 208–23).

He saw self-destruction as a social fact that could be understood scientifically and objectively.

Durkheim's social theory involved examining society as a totality of interconnected parts, an approach that is fundamental to theory. Through his publications, his teaching, and the work of his followers, he stamped his functionalist approach to understanding society on the new discipline he helped to create.

Karl Marx

While he did not describe his work as "sociological," the theories of Karl Marx (1818–83) have inspired movements of revolution and reform that have had deep and lasting consequences for sociological theory. Both Émile Durkheim and his German contemporary, Max Weber—who is discussed next—developed their ideas in the context of, and often consciously in opposition to, socialist movements that had been inspired by Marx. In the 1960s and 1970s, Marx's theories entered sociology directly as part of a critical and radical reorientation of the discipline that challenged functionalist arguments and emerged as conflict theory. Many contemporary theorists begin their explanations by differentiating their ideas from Marx's.

The son of a Jewish lawyer, Marx was born into a respectable middle-class family in Trier, Germany. In 1843, he followed in the footsteps of many middle-class German professionals and married into the minor aristocracy. His wife was Jenny von Westphalen, the daughter of a baron. For the 25-year-old Marx, however, the match was a romance, not a route into the upper class. The groom was not conventionally ambitious but instead was steeped in youthful radicalism. In Germany at that time, open identification with left-wing politics closed the door to any career as a university professor. Marx's writing soon ran afoul of the German authorities, and Marx and Jenny, along with

(Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France/Bridgeman Images)

Moneychanger and Wife, by Marinus Van Reymerswaele. Oil on wood, 1539.

six children, spent the rest of their lives in England, living often from hand to mouth (Berlin 1963, 27–32).

Marx sought to understand the origins of modern society and the forces leading to change within it. For Marx, the way to begin the analysis of any society was to examine the way it produced and distributed the basic necessities of life—its economic system. Originally, societies had existed in simple, hunting and gathering modes. People in these earliest societies were close to being social equals, didn't live under the thumb of any powerful government, and produced only what they needed to consume.

Over time, however, land and goods, which had been the common property of all, became the private property of a few. Class divisions and conflict became basic features of all societies and the keys to understanding social change. The majority of people, who laboriously tilled the land, were able to produce more goods than they required for their own use. This excess was a **surplus**, and it went to support the elite few who were free from the burdens of daily labour. Over time, the few grew into a rich and powerful dominant class, and society became increasingly unequal. Ancient Greece and Rome, for example, were divided between slaves and slave owners. In Europe during the Middle Ages the majority of the people worked on the land as *serfs* and handed over their surplus production to the various "noble lords" making up the aristocracy.

Economically, what distinguished traditional from modern society, Marx said, was the rise of capitalism. Capitalists originated as a group of merchants, buyers and sellers—represented in the painting *Moneychanger and Wife*—who occupied space as a "middle class" between the serfs (lower class) and aristocracy (upper class). Over time, the middle class grew economically wealthy until, through a series of revolutions (such as the French Revolution of 1789), they took political power from the monarchs and aristocracies and established themselves as the new, dominant upper class—often represented now as the "1 per cent."

Under the control of the capitalists, the economic system was revolutionized. People were drawn from

RESEARCHERS IN ACTION ▸ Henry Veltmeyer

AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SOCIOLOGIST WHO studies the sociology of development, Henry Veltmeyer was born in the Netherlands, grew up in Australia, and then lived and worked in Latin America for six years. He studied in Equador and at the University of Alabama in the United States before coming to Canada to complete a PhD at McMaster University in Hamilton. He specializes in the study of globalization and development in Latin America, and has applied his understanding of social change and social movements to explain the underdevelopment of Atlantic Canada and the changes that occurred to the Canadian class structure in the late twentieth century. Veltmeyer has worked at Saint Mary's University in Halifax since 1976 where he initiated the program in International Studies.

Over more than four decades, Veltmeyer has analyzed theories of global dependency and uneven development. A seismic shift in global economic policy began on 11 September 1973 (the original 9/11) when the military in Chile, with the active encouragement and assistance of the United States CIA, overthrew the democratically elected socialist government in Chile. The coup ushered in the first regime to implement neo-liberal, free-market economic policies that have since become the dominant form of global capitalism. Veltmeyer sees contemporary globalization in terms of the development of new modes of domination, which work in the interests of ensuring the power and privileges of the few, and rely on the strength of governments and especially the US military (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001).

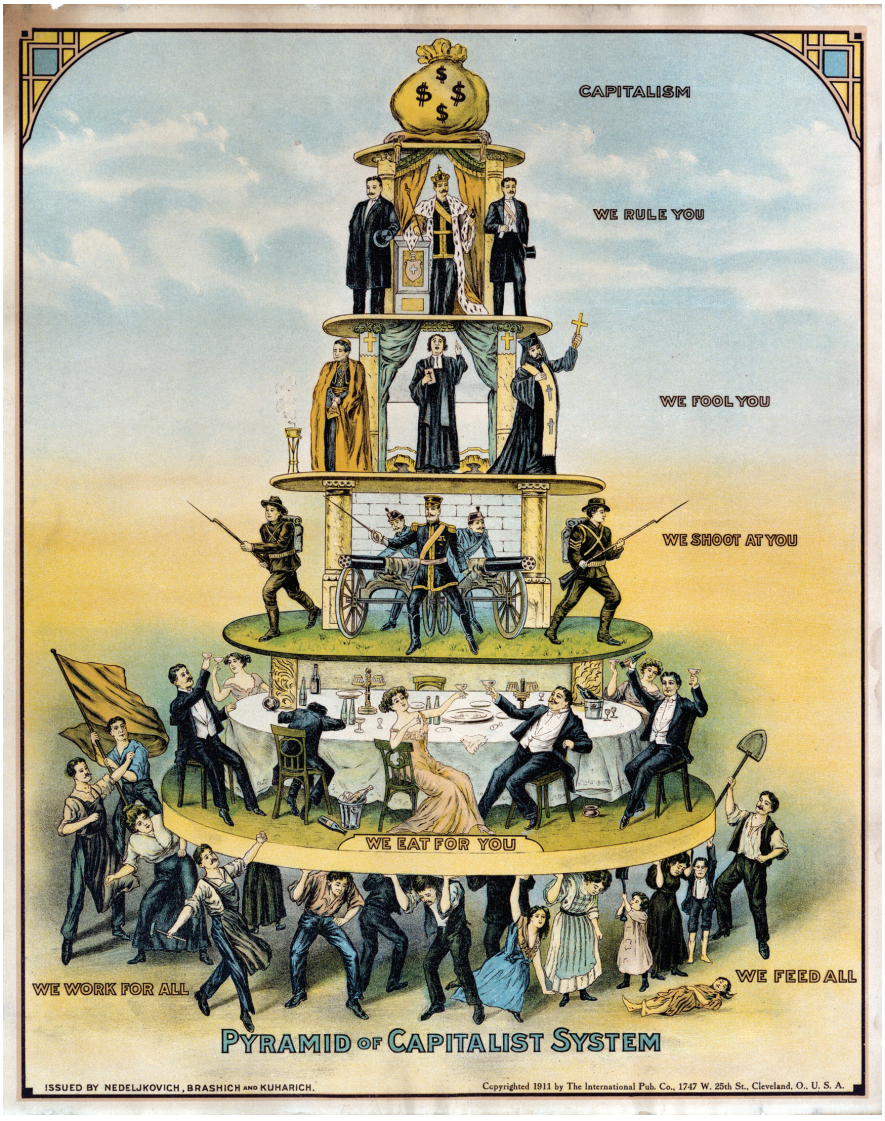
Sociologists understand that domination breeds resistance. Veltmeyer addresses the emergence of anti-globalization protests and social movements, focusing on the difficulty of uniting groups that have diffuse goals and use different tactics. Committed to a form of socialist humanism, Veltmeyer is critical of the failures of socialist societies in the twentieth century, leading to the conclusion that something different is needed if social change is to lead to genuinely democratic and humanitarian emancipation (Veltmeyer and Petras 2011). Cuban society has developed some popular forms of organization that go beyond the limitations of the one-party state. Veltmeyer also sees promise in some of the popular movements that have arisen in countries such as Venezuela and Equador that are attempting to realize versions of twenty-first century socialism. In his view, socialism requires democratization, which can only come about from the bottom up through an organized people's movement (Veltmeyer 2007).

the countryside into the booming, bustling new cities and into the factory system, which became the dominant economic form—now a worldwide phenomenon. They became wage workers or, in Marx's terms, the proletariat (Marx and Engels 1959[1844]). Marx's perspective is illustrated in a figure titled the "Pyramid of Capitalist System." The labour of the working class toiling at the bottom provides surplus in the form of profit for the livelihood of the opulent capitalist class (shown at dinner), for priests (second from the top), and for the government, which orders the soldiers to shoot the workers when they rebel. In this model, religion tells lies to keep the workers pacified. In one of his most famous phrases, Marx claimed that religion acted as "the opium of the people" to dull the pain of their oppression (1959[1844], 263).

TIME to REFLECT

How would Durkheim respond to the figure depicting the capitalist system?

The fate of capitalism hinged on the conflict between the proletariat and capitalists, and Marx expected that a working-class revolution would replace capitalism with a more cooperative and collective society—socialism. As capitalism became global, socialist revolutions in the twentieth century



(University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW1535)

Social stratification has been a central concern since the founding of sociology. Even non-sociologists have long understood that their lives are shaped by class structure.

actually occurred in poor, unindustrialized countries such as Russia and China. Ironically, both of these societies have now become part of global capitalism; for proof, check out the "Made in . . ." labels on many of your consumer goods.

As the 2008 "great recession" made clear, Marx's economic analysis of capitalism still resonates in the twenty-first century, but globalization has transformed its structure. The film *Wolf of Wall Street* (2014) caricatures the contemporary, decadent age of speculative investment and high-level graft, claiming that stock-market values are little more than fairy dust. But at bottom, the capitalist system is still about selling as many things as possible for profit, and social media such as Twitter and Facebook feature ads ever better tailored to entice individual consumption. Google is a massive platform for advertising.

Another Marxist concept that has resonance in contemporary society is alienation, a concept that has been applied widely in sociology. In simple terms, alienation means to be separated from something. In Marx's hands, alienation means being separated from other people, from control over your work and the product of your labour, and from your true human potential. The earliest "humans" separated, or alienated, themselves from nature. Thereafter, people developed increasingly complex technologies to control the natural environment. Generally for Marx, the separation from nature was a good thing, and it was necessary for all the progress that followed—potentially, for a world of shared wealth and high living standards for all. But power over nature has now proved to be a double-edged sword. In our current environmental crisis, which critics claim is one of the consequences of constant-growth capitalism, it is clear that alienation from nature has had some disastrous consequences.

TIME to REFLECT

Thinking of Marx's concept of alienation, in what ways would you describe your university education either as alienating or as helping to break down alienation?

Marx's theory is critical of existing society and openly declares its biases and interests. While no theory is socially neutral, the values of working-class revolt and revolutionary change are central to his. It combines analysis of cultural, political, and economic structures with human action or agency. For Marx, the relative truth of a social theory has to be tested in practice and modified as a result of experience. In our world of unequal economics, climate change, international conflict, and threats to people's welfare, Marx remains a central theorist.

HUMAN DIVERSITY

W.E.B. Du Bois and the Veil of Racism

THE VALUE ORIENTATION OF THE first prominent black sociologist, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), was never in doubt. Born in Massachusetts, Du Bois experienced racial discrimination at the hands of his classmates—the shadow of racism crept over him, he wrote. Rejected on racial grounds as an undergraduate by Harvard, Du Bois went below the US "colour-line" to Fisk, a black university in Tennessee. Once back north, he became the first African American to graduate with a PhD from Harvard. He conducted an extensive sociological study of the black community and published *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899, discussing racism, employment, poverty, and the emergence of a black middle class.

The fundamental problem of the twentieth century in America, he declared, was the colour-line. The laws of segregation (known as "Jim Crow") were deepening in the United States. Du Bois wrote extensively about racism and the creation of a distinctly racial "caste" system in America. He was also a social activist and a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He sought a broad alliance of progressive people—black as well as white—to bring about legal and social change. Ultimately, he believed, it was up to African Americans to fight for their own liberation. No group had achieved emancipation by simply asking for it—liberation had to be won through struggle.

Having studied in Germany, Du Bois's approach to sociology was directly influenced by classical theory in that country. He intended to establish American sociology on a scientific basis, employing concepts such as race, class, and status in the interpretation of grounded empirical research. In practice, Du Bois worked to deepen black pride and independence. He lived through the civil-rights movement in the 1950s, but he became increasingly disillusioned by American society and turned his attention to independence movements in Africa. He died in 1963, a self-exiled radical in Ghana.

TIME to REFLECT

Is the "colour-line" still a fact of life in Canada, or is racism largely a thing of the past?

Max Weber

Like Durkheim, the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) understood that modern society was increasingly individualistic, and like Marx, he spent much of his historical research uncovering the roots of capitalism. In his view, however, neither individualism nor capitalism captured the fundamental way that modern society differed from traditional society. For Weber, the growing importance of rationality was the basic underlying difference.

Weber was born near Weimar, Germany, and grew up under the iron-fisted power of Kaiser Wilhelm. His father was a lawyer who came from a family of industrialists and merchants in the textile business. Content under authoritarian rule, Weber's father was dictatorial, patriarchal, self-centred, and hedonistic (Käsler 1988, 1–3). Weber himself was serious, studious, and liberal in his politics. Appointed to his first academic position by the age of 30, Weber's career was wracked by periodic breakdowns and bouts of depression (Gerth and Mills 1946, 11).

In Germany, Marxism was an influential political force by the time Weber had begun to address sociological issues. As with Marx, Weber's sociology is historical and comparative, two essential elements of good social theory. But Marx was identified with positivism, and Weber used this simplification as a convenient foil for building his own theory of society. Weber sought to uncover the social, cultural, and political factors that shaped modern society independently of economic processes.

For Weber, modern society differed from traditional society in that it was highly rational, and the most direct example was modern science and its use of reason to understand the world. Arising in a traditional society dominated by religion, science tended to erode mystical and supernatural beliefs. Weber referred to this process as the disenchantment of the world (Weber 1946, 350–1). He saw the modern world as characterized by a certain type of rational thinking that he defined as formal. Formal rationality involves calculating the most efficient means to achieve a goal, just as a "pitchman" figures out the best type of propaganda to sell products such as the Slap Chop or the DaVinci Pro knife or as politicians plot how to manipulate public opinion and win votes.

In traditional monarchies, the first-born son of the sovereign automatically becomes the next ruler, but this form of "traditional authority" does not mean that person is actually fit to rule. In *The King's Speech*, set in the 1930s, the shy, speech-impaired second son of the deceased British king learns to rule in place of his older but decadent, pro-Nazi brother. The ability to exercise power over others can also be based on personal, "charismatic authority"—an irrational power that compels people to follow a leader, such as Jesus or Hitler. Charismatic authority either dies with the leader or is converted into another form of tradition, as demonstrated by the evolution of Christianity following the death of Jesus.

In the modern world, politics has become rationalized. Tradition and charisma, Weber says, have been replaced by "legal–rational authority." A set of rational and legal regulations determine how we choose those who govern us and the rules they must follow. All of the formal institutions of modern life are governed according to a rational set of rules that define the duties of a hierarchy of positions and power—in short, by a bureaucracy. When you get a job as an assistant bank manager, you are at the bottom of a highly organized, complex, and rationally devised career ladder. Your work will be judged according to objective standards of performance, which will determine whether you keep your job and whether you are promoted. Increasingly, traditional types of evaluation and judgment—who you know or to whom you are related—become less important than your qualifications, experience, and work habits.

TIME to REFLECT

Weber says that traditional authority and charismatic authority have been largely superseded by legal–rational authority. Thinking about Canadian elections, would you say this is largely true?

In addition to rational calculations, Weber understood, sociologists have to pay attention to the unintended consequences of people's actions. Things don't always work out the way we intended or rationally expected they would. We may intend to deter criminals from a life of crime by locking them in a

maximum security prison, but prison may be graduate school for criminality. In one of his most controversial historical investigations, Weber concluded that the rise of capitalism in Europe was an unintended consequence of the Protestant Reformation (1958a).

For Weber, capitalism was not the inevitable outgrowth of European feudalism; rather, capitalism had sprouted in many places in ancient times, but family traditions, religious beliefs, or political values had strangled its development (Weber 1964). It took a change in religious values (Protestantism) in Europe for capitalism to emerge as the single, dominant economic system. Once industrialization took off, all aspects of life were transformed.

Furthermore, Weber argued, modern capitalism was busily creating a new middle class of professionals, technicians, and office workers who were employees—like Marx's proletariat—but were paid higher salaries and given more autonomy at work. The "new middle class" occupied positions of higher status than factory workers. Weber's attention to class, status, and power as partly independent forms of inequality suggested a multi-variable analysis of modern society.

In contemporary sociology, French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) has redefined Weber's analysis of modern society to examine the various ways in which people can acquire resources of power and control (1984). Money capital is obvious. For Bourdieu, the structure of power in society is also maintained partly through culturally acquired "tastes" and practices, such as what we eat and how we are entertained—even how we blow our nose—which give individuals a sense of their place in the world. If you are well educated and have acquired the necessary knowledge and "taste" to be able to fit seamlessly into higher classes, you have cultural capital. If you are well connected and have an "in" with important people, you can benefit by using these connections and have social capital, says Bourdieu.

Weber's analysis of formal rationality—calculating the most efficient means to attain an end such as private profit—is central to globalization. George Ritzer's influential analysis of the spread of rationality in the global economy takes off from Weber. Ritzer calls the process "McDonaldization," since the fast-food chain's techniques of production and marketing have become the model for others. McDonaldization is evident in "education, work, health care, travel, leisure, dieting, politics, the family, and virtually every other aspect of society" (Ritzer 2000a, 1–2).

TIME to REFLECT

How would you rate your own social and cultural capital? Do they connect closely to your *money* capital?

Weberian categories of sociological analysis have many applications, and they recur frequently in the chapters that follow. For Weber, however, the goals that we seek are not necessarily rational ones. We may seek profit, but we may just as likely seek pleasure for its own sake or seek a goal that we value highly on purely emotional grounds, such as justice or religious salvation (1964, 211–12). The Holocaust entailed the application of formally rational techniques of systematic persecution, mass execution, and ethnic genocide in pursuit of an essentially irrational belief in racial inferiority.

In fact, as life becomes increasingly dominated by rational calculation, people often try to escape from rationality into other, competing, and non-rational realms. To escape from the routine world of workaday life, which has no deep or ultimate meaning, people strive for self-cultivation through acquiring things that are valued in our culture and express "good taste." The value we sometimes put on erotic love, for example, can act as a life-affirming, enchanting goal that gives meaning to our existence. In the modern world, the value of eroticism is accentuated, and erotic love, Weber said, not only is a joyous triumph over the all-too-rational but appears to be the gateway into the irrational "real kernel of life" (1946, 341–7).

The focus on people's values and goals meant that sociology could not, as with Durkheim, concentrate only on "social facts." In his discussion of the methods of sociology, Weber emphasized the binary (or dual) nature of facts and values. Facts were open to objective analysis or understanding, but values were entirely subjective—within the mind of the individual. You could rationally calculate the best means to terminate a pregnancy, but there was no objective way to determine whether this goal was right, or moral, or desirable. Rational arguments are ineffective when they come up against irrationally held, and especially supernaturally based, beliefs. Sociologists, then, had to get inside a person's thinking to understand why

OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

Should (Can) Social Theory Be Value-Neutral?

THE PRACTICE OF NATURAL SCIENCE is said to be value-neutral; the evidence is supposed to speak for itself. Studying physics or chemistry, scientists are expected to leave their values behind, at the laboratory door. Whether smoking causes lung cancer, for a scientist, is a question to be decided by objective evidence. Scientists whose research funding comes from tobacco companies, however, may report only findings that don't show a link between smoking and cancer. Their interest in keeping their research money flowing may influence the results of their work. If you don't believe climate change is caused by carbon emissions, you will search for and believe only the data that confirms your pre-existing belief.

A lot depends on how you look at things. When we look at a typical Canadian map of the Earth, north is up and south is down. Canada sits on top of the United States, and we go "down" to Florida. Things change if you look at a map drawn from the perspective of "down under" in Australia. The Australian-drawn globe appears, to Canadians, to be "upside down." Canada appears beneath the US and we have to drive *up* for spring break in Fort Lauderdale. There really is no simple "up" and "down." These binary terms are purely relative to where you are, a point made photographically by the film *Gravity*.

The search for generalizations about people's actions and beliefs is not straightforward. Values and beliefs intrude at least as much, and probably more, in sociological inquiry as in natural science. For any social theorist, much depends on the assumptions she or he makes about human nature. Spencer believed that people were naturally and always selfish and competitive. The cruel, dog-eat-dog world of capitalism in which he lived was, for him, a natural result of human nature and couldn't be any different. Marx, on the other hand, believed that there was no fixed and unchanging "human nature." The way humans acted, whether selfishly or compassionately, depended on the circumstances in which they lived. If you change society, you change the circumstances of life and change "human nature." For Marx, the world was cruel and unfair, but it could be changed for the better.

Among all the differences between groups, however, there are certain common elements or features that explain a lot—if not everything—about society. The view of the world of the average American may be quite different from that of the average Canadian. But neither may be close to the view of a slum-dweller in Mumbai, India. It is likely that women and men experience and understand the world somewhat differently. The view of how society works from the point of view of the urban underclass is different in understandable ways from the perspective of Conrad Black or members of the corporate elite.

In sociology, "where you are" is a complicated business. So, too, is what is done about different perspectives and interests. In the residential schools, church and state in Canada attempted to erase the cultural heritage of Canada's Indigenous peoples, a practice referred to as "cultural genocide." At a minimum, as Max Weber said, in sociology it is necessary to understand your biases and make them clear.

(Warner Bros/The Kobal Collection/Art Resource)

The film *Gravity* tells us there is no sound in space. The cinematography reminds us that there is also no perspective that is consistently up or down.