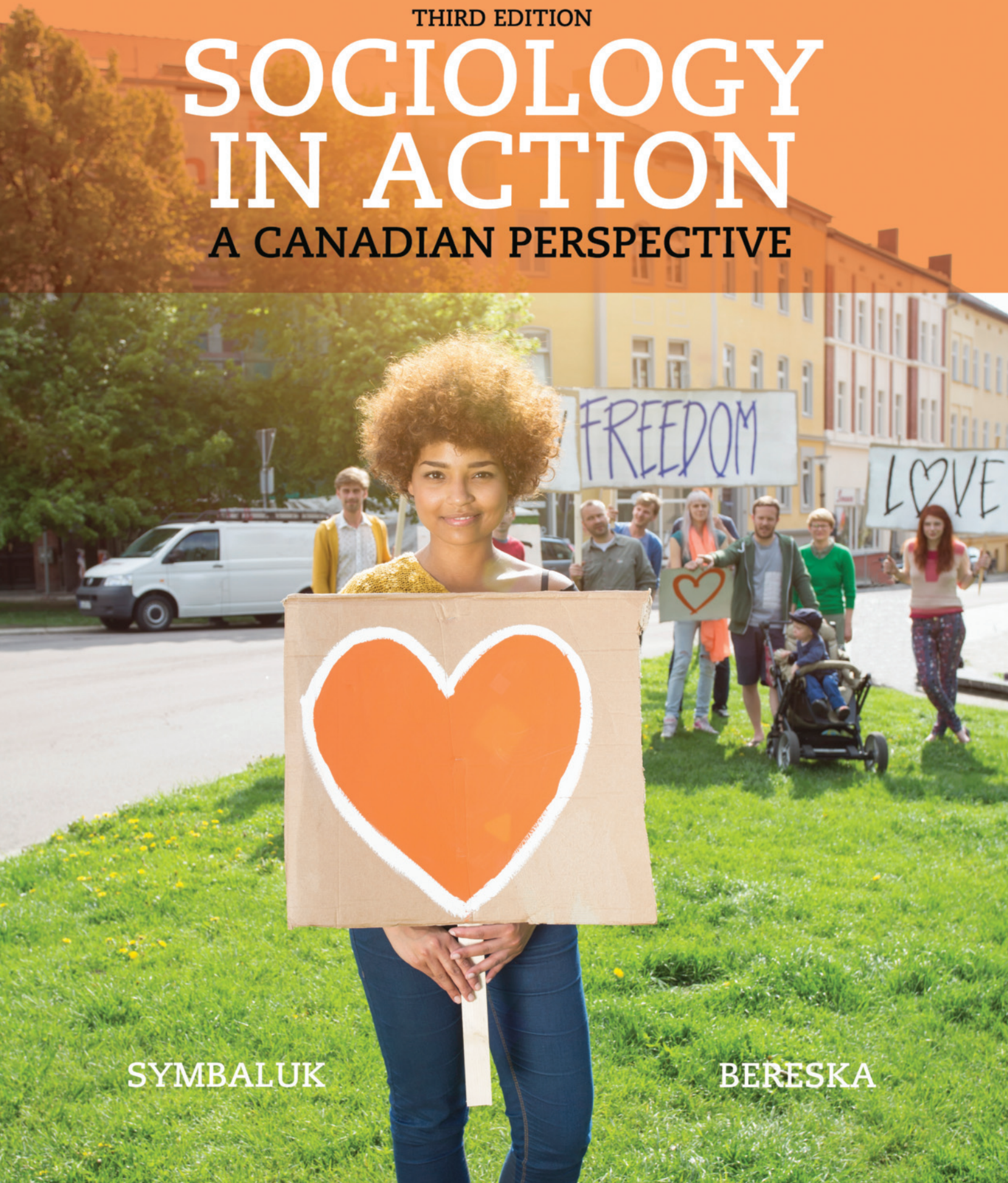
THIRD EDITION

SOCIOLOGY IN ACTION

A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE



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SOCIOLOGY IN ACTION

A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

Diane G. Symbaluk, PhD
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For those who have yet to discover sociology and
those who have already come to appreciate it.

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Brief Table of Contents

A UNIQUE LEARNING SYSTEM xii
PREFACE xvi
ABOUT THE AUTHORS xxiv

PART 1 Practising Sociology: Your Sociological Toolkit 1

Chapter 1: Seeing and Acting Through the Lens of Sociology 2
Chapter 2: Applying Sociological Research Methods 22

PART 2 Society and the Self: The Foundations 45

Chapter 3: "I Am Canadian": What Is "Canadian" Culture? 46
Chapter 4: Socialization: The Self and Social Identity 66
Chapter 5: Social Inequality in Canadian Society 88
Chapter 6: Mass Media: Living in the Electronic Age 110

PART 3 The Micro and Macro of Our Everyday Lives 133

Chapter 7: Sex, Gender, and Sexualities: Deconstructing Dualisms 134
Chapter 8: Race and Ethnicity: Defining Ourselves and Others 156
Chapter 9: Canadian Families: Past, Present, and Future 178
Chapter 10: Learning What Is "True": Religion, Science, and Education 198
Chapter 11: Social Control, Deviance, and Crime 220
Chapter 12: Health and Illness: Is It "Lifestyle" or Something More? 240

PART 4 Our Changing World 265

Chapter 13: Social Change: Collective Behaviour and Social Movements 266
Chapter 14: "Going Green": Environmental Sociology 286
Chapter 15: Globalization: The Interconnected World 310

GLOSSARY 330
REFERENCES 341
INDEX 367

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Detailed Table of Contents

A UNIQUE LEARNING SYSTEM xii

PREFACE xvi

ABOUT THE AUTHORS xxiv

PART 1

Practising Sociology: Your Sociological Toolkit 1

CHAPTER 1: Seeing and Acting Through the Lens of Sociology 2

THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM 3

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY? 6

- COMPARING SOCIOLOGY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES 7

BUILDING YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT 9

- EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODS 9
- SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIZING 9
- CORE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES 9
- CRITICAL THINKING 15
- USING YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT 17

CHAPTER 2: Applying Sociological Research Methods 22

WHY SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT 23

- COMMON SENSE AND SCIENTIFIC REASONING 23
- SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENTIFIC METHOD 23
- SOCIOLOGICAL REASONING 24
- GOALS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH 25

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROCESS 27

- STEPS FOR CONDUCTING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH 27

THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH 29

- HUMAN MISTREATMENT 29
- THE TRI-COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT 30

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS 31

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS 34

- EXPERIMENTS: WHAT IS CAUSING THIS? 34
- SURVEYS: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THIS? 35
- INTERVIEWS: WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS? 36
- SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS: WHAT INFERENCES CAN BE MADE FROM THESE DATA? 38
- ETHNOGRAPHY: WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF THAT GROUP? 39
- SYSTEMATIC AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING? 40
- MULTIPLE METHODS AND MIXED METHODS 42

PART 2

Society and the Self: The Foundations 45

CHAPTER 3: "I Am Canadian": What Is "Canadian" Culture? 46

TYPES OF CULTURE 47

- DEFINING CULTURE 47
- MATERIAL AND NONMATERIAL CULTURE 48

HOW CULTURE SHAPES OUR UNDERSTANDINGS 49

- LANGUAGE AS A PRECURSOR TO SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS 49
- NORMS AS REGULATORS OF SHARED BEHAVIOURS 52
- VALUES AS SHARED IDEAS 54

FUNCTIONALIST AND CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES 56

- IDEAL VERSUS REAL CULTURE 57
- TRADITIONAL BELIEFS VERSUS MODERN PRACTICES 57
- SUBCULTURES AND COUNTERCULTURES 58

HOW IS CANADIAN CULTURE UNIQUE? 59

- THE ABUNDANCE OF CANADIAN SYMBOLS 59
- THE PREVALENCE OF HIGH CULTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE 60

CRITICAL VIEWS OF POPULAR CULTURE 61

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CHAPTER 4: Socialization: The Self and Social Identity 66

IDENTIFYING OURSELVES AND IDENTIFYING OTHERS 67
- THE SUBJECTIVE AND SOCIAL NATURE OF THE SELF 68
- NATURE AND NURTURE: MAJOR INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPING SELF 68

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF 71
- I, ME, AND THE GENERALIZED OTHER 71
- SELF-PERCEPTION: THE LOOKING-GLASS SELF 72

AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION 75
- THE FAMILY 75
- THE SCHOOL 77
- THE PEER GROUP 77
- MEDIA 79

THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE 80
- STATUSES AND ROLES 80
- SOCIAL GROUPS 82

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS 83
- MAX WEBER'S IDEAL TYPE OF BUREAUCRACY 84
- RESOCIALIZATION: MORE THAN STARTING OVER 85

CHAPTER 5: Social Inequality in Canadian Society 88

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: SANCTIONED SOCIAL INEQUALITY 89
- CLOSED SYSTEMS OF STRATIFICATION 89
- OPEN SYSTEMS OF STRATIFICATION: THE CLASS SYSTEM 91

WEALTH AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL CLASS 93
- CANADA'S INCOME-BASED CLASS STRUCTURE 94
- NET WORTH AND CLASS STRUCTURE 95
- POVERTY AND CLASS STRUCTURE 97
- NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY 101

POVERTY AS A FEATURE OF CANADIAN SOCIETY 103
- POVERTY REDUCTION 104

WHY ARE THERE CLASSES IN SOCIETY? 105
- STRATIFICATION IS BENEFICIAL 105
- STRATIFICATION IS A BY-PRODUCT OF CAPITALISM 105
- STRATIFICATION PRODUCES SURPLUS VALUE 107

CHAPTER 6: Mass Media: Living in the Electronic Age 110

MASS MEDIA PREVALENCE AND FORMS 111
- MEDIA CONSUMPTION 111
- TRADITIONAL FORMS OF MASS MEDIA 112
- THE INTERNET CHANGES EVERYTHING 114
- NEW MEDIA 115
- CONFLICT FRAMEWORK 118

HOW THE MEDIA SHAPE OUR PERCEPTIONS 121
- THE INTERACTIONIST FRAMEWORK 121
- FEMINIST FRAMEWORK 123
- THE MEDIA REINFORCES STEREOTYPED IMAGES OF WOMEN AND MEN 123
- VIOLENCE IS THE NORM IN THE MASS MEDIA 124
- POSTMODERN FRAMEWORK 128

CONCLUSIONS 129

PART 3

The Micro and Macro of Our Everyday Lives 133

CHAPTER 7: Sex, Gender, and Sexualities: Deconstructing Dualisms 134

ELITE DISCOURSES OF SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY 135
- MOVING OUTSIDE ELITE DISCOURSES 136

GENDER: THE CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING BEEN BORN FEMALE OR MALE 141
- DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES 142
- DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCES 145
- DIFFERENT ECONOMIC EXPERIENCES 147
- DIFFERENT FAMILY EXPERIENCES 147

SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY 151
- FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES 151
- CONFLICT THEORIES 151
- INTERACTIONIST THEORIES 152

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FEMINIST THEORIES 152
POSTMODERN THEORIES 154

CHAPTER 8: Race and Ethnicity: Defining Ourselves and Others 156

ETHNICITY, RACE, RACIALIZATION, AND VISIBLE MINORITIES 157

CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC PATTERNS 160

HISTORICAL IMMIGRATION PATTERNS AND POLICIES 161

CONSEQUENCES OF ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION 162

DIVERSE FAMILY EXPERIENCES 162
DIVERSE ECONOMIC EXPERIENCES 164

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GROUPS 165

ASSIMILATION 165
PLURALISM 168
SEGREGATION AND POPULATION TRANSFER 169

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION 170

THE COGNITIVE COMPONENT 170
THE AFFECTIVE COMPONENT 170
THE BEHAVIOURAL COMPONENT 170

UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE AND RACIALIZATION 172

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES 172
INTERACTIONIST THEORIES 173
CONFLICT THEORIES 174
CRITICAL RACE THEORY 174

CHAPTER 9: Canadian Families: Past, Present, and Future 178

FAMILIES ARE EVERYWHERE 179

WHAT IS A FAMILY? 180

STRUCTURAL, FUNCTIONAL, AND EMOTIONAL DEFINITIONS 180

CHANGING FAMILIES 182

DECLINING MARRIAGE RATES AND DELAYED ONSET OF MARRIAGE 183
MORE COMMON LAW UNIONS 183
MORE DIVORCES 184
MORE LONE PARENTS 184
MORE SAME-SEX COUPLES 185
FEWER CHILDREN 185
IS "THE FAMILY" DECLINING? 186

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SOME FAMILIES 188

INDIGENOUS FAMILIES: PAST AND PRESENT 188
FAMILY VIOLENCE 190
IS THE FAMILY IN DECLINE? 191

SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY 191

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY 192
FAMILY LIFE COURSE DEVELOPMENT THEORY 192
FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES 193
CONFLICT THEORIES 194
FEMINIST THEORIES 194
INTERACTIONIST THEORIES 195

CHAPTER 10: Learning What Is "True": Religion, Science, and Education 198

BELIEF SYSTEMS 199

RELIGION 200

RELIGIOUS PATTERNS 201

IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION 202
SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY: RELIGION 204

THE TRANSITION TO SCIENTIFIC "TRUTH" 206

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AS OBJECTIVE TRUTH 206
SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AS CONSTRUCTED 206

RELIGION AND SCIENCE 210

RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND EDUCATION 210

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN MODERN SOCIETY 211

SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY: EDUCATION 212

CHAPTER 11: Social Control, Deviance, and Crime 220

SOCIAL CONTROL 221

WHAT IS DEVIANCE? 222

DEVIANCE AND CRIME 223

CRIME 223

TYPES OF CRIMES AND LAWS 224
CRIME CLASSIFICATIONS AND STATISTICS 225

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CONTROLLING CRIME:
THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM 229
PUNISHMENT AS SOCIAL CONTROL 229
ALTERNATIVE MEASURES OF CRIMINAL CONTROL 230

EXPLAINING DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL 232

EXPLAINING DEVIANCE 233
EXPLAINING OUR PERCEPTIONS OF, AND REACTIONS TO, BEHAVIOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS 235

CHAPTER 12: Health and Illness: Is It "Lifestyle" or Something More? 240

THE SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS 241

PATTERNS OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS 242

HISTORICAL PATTERNS 242
CONTEMPORARY PATTERNS OF MORTALITY IN CANADA 243

THE "ACTUAL" CAUSES OF ILLNESS: THE ROLE OF LIFESTYLE 245

TOBACCO USE 245
ALCOHOL USE AND MISUSE 246
POOR DIET AND PHYSICAL INACTIVITY 248
SUMMARY 250

THE "FUNDAMENTAL" CAUSES OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS: SOCIAL INEQUALITY 251

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS 251
ETHNIC INEQUALITY AND HEALTH 253
SUMMARY 254

HEALTH CARE 254

THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM TODAY 255

SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY 258

FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVES: THE SICK ROLE 258
INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVES: THE CULTURAL MEANINGS OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS 259
CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES: THE CONSEQUENCES OF POWER AND INEQUALITY 259
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES: WOMEN'S HEALTH AND ILLNESS 260
POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES: KNOWLEDGE, POWER, AND DISCOURSE 260

PART 4

Our Changing World 265

CHAPTER 13: Social Change: Collective Behaviour and Social Movements 266

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL PROGRESS 267

DEFINING COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR 267

COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN LOCALIZED CROWDS 268
EXPLAINING COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN CROWDS 270
DISPERSED FORMS OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR 271

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 276

CLAIMS AND CLAIMS MAKING 277
DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE 278
TYPES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 278

VALUE-ADDED THEORY 280

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY 281
NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY 282

CHAPTER 14: "Going Green": Environmental Sociology 286

SOCIAL FACTORS POSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES 287

HUMAN OVERPOPULATION 287
INDUSTRIALIZATION 290
URBAN SPRAWL 292
OVERCONSUMPTION OF RESOURCES 292

GROWING AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES 296

THE FIRST WAVE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM 296
THE SECOND WAVE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM 297
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY 299
HUMAN EXEMPTIONALISM AND NEW ECOLOGICAL PARADIGMS 299
FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVES: ECOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION 301
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION 301

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STRATEGIES FOR BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES 303
LIVING GREEN: CHANGING THE BEHAVIOUR OF INDIVIDUALS 303
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CHANGING PRACTICES IN GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS 303
A GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION: BRINGING EVERYONE ON BOARD 304

CHAPTER 15: Globalization: The Interconnected World 310

DEFINING GLOBALIZATION 311

THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBALIZATION 312
THE FOUNDATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION 312
GLOBALIZATION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR 312

CHARACTERISTICS OF GLOBALIZATION 314
TECHNOLOGICAL DIMENSION 314
ECONOMIC DIMENSION 314
POLITICAL DIMENSION 315
CULTURAL DIMENSION 316

THE VISION OF GLOBALIZATION AND ITS REALITY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY 317
THE GOOD 317
THE BAD AND THE UGLY 318

GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS 323

SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY 324
MODERNIZATION THEORY 324
DEPENDENCY THEORY 325
WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY 325
POST-COLONIAL THEORIES 325
FEMINIST THEORIES 325

GLOSSARY 330

REFERENCES 341

INDEX 367

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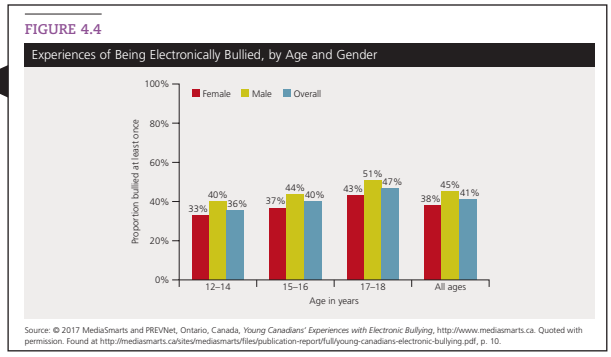
A Unique Learning System

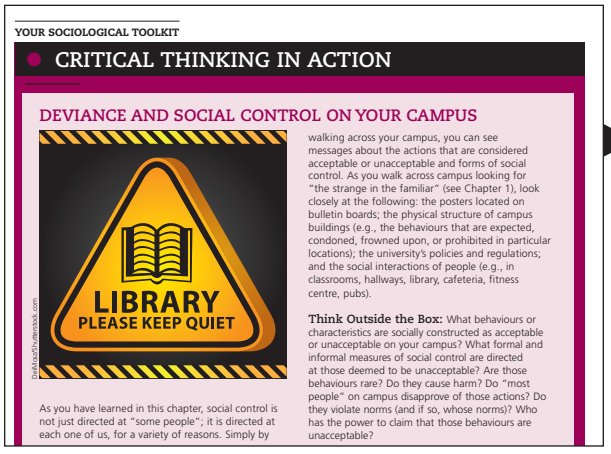
THE SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

The essence of sociology lies in the sociological imagination, a cognitive skill that enables individuals to identify the links between the micro level of individual experiences and choices and the macro level of larger sociocultural forces. This textbook highlights the tools that are necessary to develop that skill: empirical research methods that create verifiable knowledge, sociological theories that explain that knowledge, and critical thinking that enables us to evaluate and to extrapolate from that knowledge.

Empirical Research Methods and Sociological Theories

Representative of the discipline of sociology, academic research based on empirical research methods and sociological theories constitute the foundation for each chapter.





Your Sociological Toolkit: Critical Thinking in Action

Research has found that critical thinking does not automatically develop with a postsecondary education—it requires practice. In each chapter, a box titled **Your Sociological Toolkit: Critical Thinking in Action** provides students with specific opportunities to think critically about particular issues by evaluating, questioning, or deconstructing certain pieces of knowledge or claims to truth or by extrapolating from the material addressed in the body of the chapter to a broader question or social problem.

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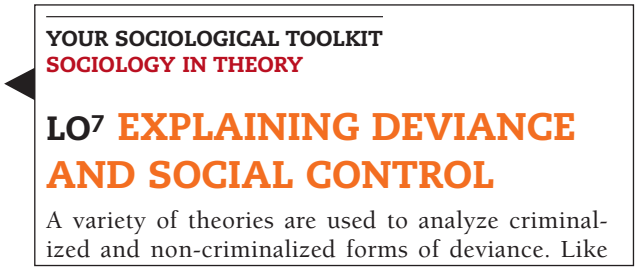
Four distinct but complementary ways of practising sociology

Unique to this textbook, four different settings within which the sociological toolkit can be used are highlighted: **in theory**, **in practice**, **in my community**, and **in my life**. This approach is especially effective for helping students understand how sociology relates to their everyday lives and how academic sociology (i.e., based in theoretical and empirical research) applies to real life.

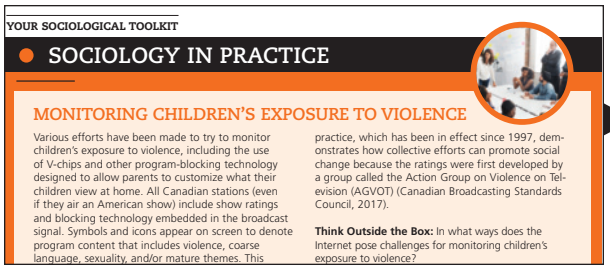
Your Sociological Toolkit: Sociology in Theory sections highlight certain pieces of research by formally trained academics.



YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT
SOCIOLOGY IN THEORY

LO7 EXPLAINING DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

A variety of theories are used to analyze criminalized and non-criminalized forms of deviance. Like



YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

SOCIOLOGY IN PRACTICE

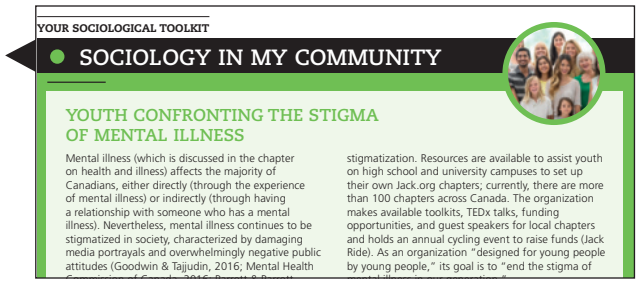
MONITORING CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Various efforts have been made to try to monitor children's exposure to violence, including the use of V-chips and other program-blocking technology designed to allow parents to customize what their children view at home. All Canadian stations (even if they air an American show) include show ratings and blocking technology embedded in the broadcast signal. Symbols and icons appear on screen to denote program content that includes violence, coarse language, sexuality, and/or mature themes. This practice, which has been in effect since 1997, demonstrates how collective efforts can promote social change because the ratings were first developed by a group called the Action Group on Violence on Television (AGVOT) (Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council, 2017).

Think Outside the Box: In what ways does the Internet pose challenges for monitoring children's exposure to violence?

Your Sociological Toolkit: Sociology in Practice boxes consist of applications of sociological concepts for policy development.

Your Sociological Toolkit: Sociology in My Community boxes demonstrate how sociological principles can be transmitted to nonacademic audiences.



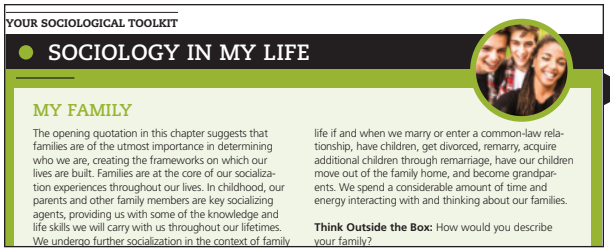
YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

SOCIOLOGY IN MY COMMUNITY

YOUTH CONFRONTING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness (which is discussed in the chapter on health and illness) affects the majority of Canadians, either directly (through the experience of mental illness) or indirectly (through having a relationship with someone who has a mental illness). Nevertheless, mental illness continues to be stigmatized in society, characterized by damaging media portrayals and overwhelmingly negative public attitudes (Goodwin & Taijudin, 2016; Mental Health

stigmatization. Resources are available to assist youth on high school and university campuses to set up their own Jack.org chapters; currently, there are more than 100 chapters across Canada. The organization makes available toolkits, TEDx talks, funding opportunities, and guest speakers for local chapters and holds an annual cycling event to raise funds (Jack Ride). As an organization "designed for young people by young people," its goal is to "end the stigma of



YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

SOCIOLOGY IN MY LIFE

MY FAMILY

The opening quotation in this chapter suggests that families are of the utmost importance in determining who we are, creating the frameworks on which our lives are built. Families are at the core of our socialization experiences throughout our lives. In childhood, our parents and other family members are key socializing agents, providing us with some of the knowledge and life skills we will carry with us throughout our lifetimes. We undergo further socialization in the context of family life if and when we marry or enter a common-law relationship, have children, get divorced, remarry, acquire additional children through remarriage, have our children move out of the family home, and become grandparents. We spend a considerable amount of time and energy interacting with and thinking about our families.

Think Outside the Box: How would you describe your family?

Your Sociological Toolkit: Sociology in My Life boxes are applications of sociological knowledge to one's own personal life experiences.

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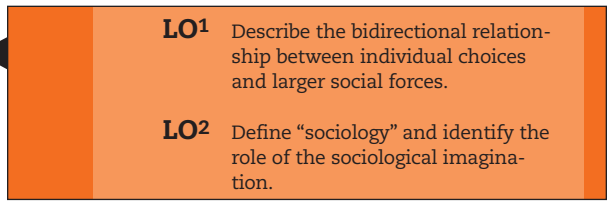
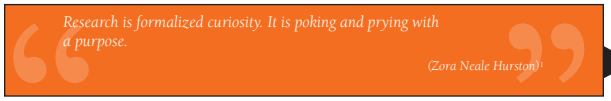
ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The Sociological Toolkit is the organizing framework of the text. The following special features also characterize it:

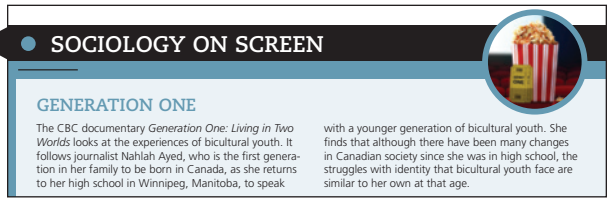
- ***Learning Objectives and Outcomes*** are numbered statements about the intended knowledge and/or skills students should be able to demonstrate following a thorough reading of the chapter. The Learning Objectives and Outcomes run throughout the body of the chapter to encourage critical, focused reading.

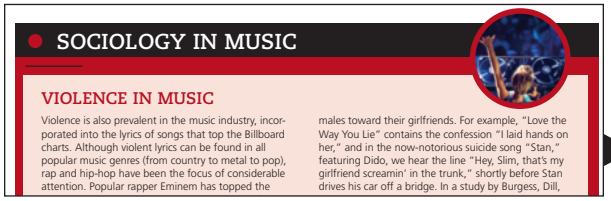




- ***Opening quotations*** begin each chapter; they are intended to spark the reader's interest and set the tone for the chapter by highlighting a central concept, issue, or paradox that is pertinent to the topic covered in that chapter.

- ***Sociology on Screen*** boxes discuss documentaries and/or fictional films that illustrate key concepts and processes.





- ***Sociology in Music*** boxes look at music that illustrates the importance of sociological concepts in everyday practices.

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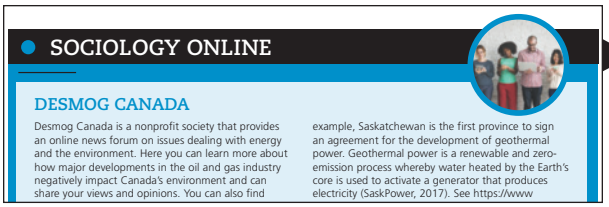
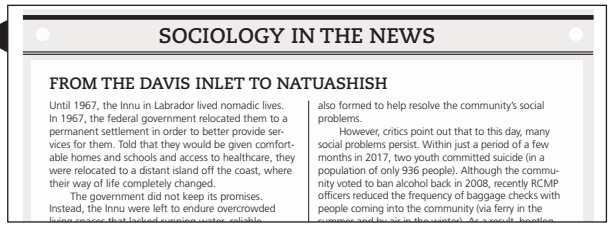
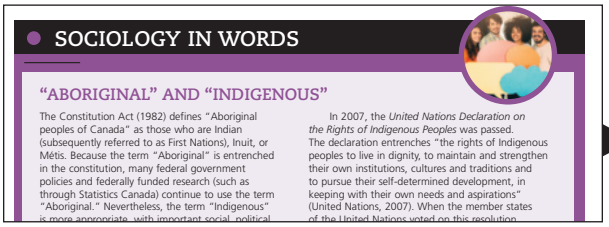


- ***Sociology Online*** boxes highlight particular websites that demonstrate key concepts and provide in-depth examples of topics discussed in the chapters.

- ***Sociology in the News*** boxes contain media coverage illustrating how sociological concepts and processes are presented in statements made to the public.





- ***Sociology in Words*** boxes include either the testimony of people who experience sociological concepts first-hand or in-depth explanations by theorists who study sociological issues.

Also included for student review are the following features:

- ***Chapter Summaries*** are succinct examples of the kinds of responses students are expected to provide in relation to the learning objectives and outcomes.
- ***Time to Review*** questions at the end of each main section highlight key points and provide students with a built-in test of their mastery of the material before they proceed to the next section.
- ***Margin Definitions*** provide definitions conveniently located in the text margin beside the section where the term is first introduced. Students can practise their understanding by accessing the interactive flashcards online.
- ***Recommended Resources*** provide references for additional readings, films, and other sources related to the issues pertinent to a given chapter.
- ***For Further Reflection*** questions present opportunities to examine chapter content in more detail and to demonstrate a personal understanding of the key concepts and processes discussed in the chapter.
- A ***Glossary*** of all key terms is included at the end of the text.

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Preface

INTRODUCTION

Sociology is about the real world. It can be thought of as the most comprehensive social science[1]—one that provides a systematic means for understanding the interconnectedness among people, among institutions, and between individuals and the society in which they live. A major objective of our textbook is to give you the tools to help you develop your sociological imagination[2] so that you can see how you (and other people) influence and are influenced by society; so that you can view social issues from a variety of different perspectives and critically evaluate those perspectives (including your own); and so that you can extrapolate from the empirical and theoretical research presented in this textbook to the real-world issues you or others experience every day. The sociological imagination is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is the foundation for social action. We hope that by the time you finish this textbook, you will be better equipped to engage in effective social action in the context of your own families, communities, and professions, as well as in the context of larger social problems, such as social inequality and environmental degradation.

OVERALL GOAL OF THIS BOOK: HELPING STUDENTS ACQUIRE THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIOLOGY

Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed[3] surveyed 44 preeminent leaders in sociology (including American Sociological Association [ASA] presidents, regional presidents, and national grant recipients in sociology), asking them what students need to know by the time they finish a course in introductory sociology. The following nine themes emerged as overall directives for what students should learn about in an introductory sociology course:

1. The "social" part of sociology, or learning to think sociologically
2. The scientific nature of sociology
3. Complex and critical thinking
4. The centrality of inequality
5. A sense of sociology as a field
6. The social construction of ideas
7. The difference between sociology and other social sciences
8. The importance of trying to improve the world
9. The important social institutions in society

Our goal as authors was to provide a foundation on which those objectives can be met by those teaching introductory sociology, whether in classrooms, online, or in other distance learning environments. The feedback of our reviewers was invaluable to our efforts.

ORGANIZATION

Part 1: Practising Sociology: Your Sociological Toolkit provides students with a framework for how to think sociologically. Beginning in Chapter 1, you will start to see the fundamental connection between individual choices and larger social forces, a connection that lies at the heart of the sociological imagination. Chapter 1 explains why the sociological imagination is important—in the 21st century, perhaps more important than ever before—and outlines the tools that will help you build your own sociological imagination (empirical research methods, sociological theories, critical thinking). Empirical research methods are presented in detail in Chapter 2. These methods help us move beyond commonsense ideas to appreciate the scientific nature of sociology as a discipline that provides answers to important questions.

Part 2: Society and the Self: The Foundations has four chapters that constitute a foundation of sociology as a discipline. Chapter 3 highlights the cultural context of our social experiences and outlines

[1] G. Delanty, Social Science: Philosophical and Methodological Foundations, 2nd ed. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005); G. Delanty, "Sociology," in Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, ed. G. Ritzer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), http://www.blackwellreference.com.

[2] C.W. Mills, The Sociological Imagination, 40th anniversary ed., ed. C.W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–24.

[3] C.H. Persell, K.M. Pfeiffer, and A. Syed, "What Should Students Understand After Taking Introduction to Sociology?" Teaching Sociology 35, no. 4 (2007): 300–14.

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the basic components of culture. Chapter 4 addresses the role of socialization in the emergence of our own identities and the identities we ascribe to others, as well as the social structure within which socialization occurs. Chapter 5 discusses social inequality as a challenge for many people and as a stable feature of Canadian society. In the 21st century, the mass media are a key source of information and have come to play a central role in connecting members of society to one another. So this section of the textbook ends with a chapter about the mass media, including a critical look at how they shape our perceptions.

Part 3: The Micro and Macro of Our Everyday Experiences has six chapters that focus on various aspects of students' own experiences. Chapters 7 and 8 consider the implications of sex, gender, and sexualities, as well as ethnicity, for who we are and who others say we are, as well as for socioeconomic status, discrimination, and family life. Chapter 9 helps us appreciate the influence, diversity, and changing nature of Canadian families. Chapter 10 focuses on the various ways we come to know what is "true"—through religion, science, and the modern education system—and the ways in which all three are socially constructed. Chapter 11 explores the myriad ways that people (including ourselves) are subjected to measures of social control on a daily basis, such that we are identified as deviant—sometimes in noncriminal ways, other times in criminal ways. Chapter 12 describes patterns of health and illness, with an emphasis on "lifestyle" factors and social determinants of health, as well as the prevention and treatment of illness in the broader context of health care systems.

Part 4: Our Changing World discusses the importance of collective action, social movements, and globalization for effecting widespread change. Chapter 13 discusses social change as brought about by various forms of collective behaviour and social movements. Chapter 14 focuses on ecological issues and environmental sociology as part of a global call to action for sustainable development. Chapter 15 describes historical precursors to globalization; outlines technological, economic, political, cultural, and social characteristics of globalization; and assesses the relative merits and drawbacks of globalization.

UNDERLYING THEMES

- *The impetus for social action.* All introductory sociology textbooks mention C. Wright Mills's concept of the *sociological imagination*. However, they tend to treat the sociological imagination as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. When Mills spoke of the sociological imagination, he emphasized its centrality in creating informed and active citizens. By focusing on the sociological imagination and social action, this textbook provides the impetus for students to become more socially aware and more active as citizens in their communities, in society, and in the world. Whether they become parents, teachers, community league soccer coaches, entrepreneurs, or social activists trying to create meaningful social change, students will see the value in utilizing their own sociological imaginations.
- *The prevalence of social inequality.* From the stratification of Canadian society into distinct and unequal social classes to the differential treatment of men and women based on socially constructed gender differences, this book teaches students about the centrality of social inequality. Throughout, we emphasize how social inequality is built into Canadian society and how various processes and structures lead to its reproduction in subsequent generations.
- *The socially constructed nature of society.* Whether we are debating how to define the family, how to describe deviance, how to measure poverty, or even how many sexes exist, this book highlights ways in which key concepts we tend to take for granted are actually social constructions contingent on specific historical contexts and the needs or interests of particular groups.
- *Ways to engage students and instructors.* Students need to see the relevance of sociology in their everyday lives as well as how this translates into related careers. Similarly, instructors need to find ways to embed sociological concepts in students' interests and course curriculum paths. We include particular pedagogical features to help bring sociology alive; we then translate social issues from theory into practice and finally into the public and personal domains. A variety of boxes are included to help students and instructors see the links between individuals and society and the overall applicability of the discipline of sociology as a means for facilitating social change. These boxes highlight films, music lyrics, websites, media stories, first-hand testimonies, and the actions of individuals or groups.

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- *Built-in skill development tools for students.* In each chapter, we begin with a set of learning objectives and outcomes and end with a chapter summary that refers back to those objectives and outcomes. Throughout the chapter, indicators draw students' attention to which learning objective is being addressed in any given section. We also provide Time to Review questions throughout each chapter (with answers provided online as part of MindTap) so that students and instructors can gauge how well the main points are understood before moving on to a new section. We end each chapter with a set of recommended resources (readings, films, Internet resources) and critical reflection questions.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS AND WHAT'S NEW TO THIS EDITION

A key change in the third edition is that in all chapters, a critical thinking question (*Think Outside the Box*) has been added to the Critical Thinking in Action box, as well as the other toolkit boxes: Sociology in My Life, Sociology in My Community, and Sociology in Practice. These questions enable students to engage more deeply with the material, and instructors might use the questions to facilitate class discussion or as short written assignments. For users of MindTap, sample answers or points to consider are provided for each of these questions. Listed below are some of the topics and issues covered in specific chapters along with descriptions of key changes integrated into the third edition.

Chapter 1 Seeing and Acting Through the Lens of Sociology

- What is sociology?
- What can I do with a degree in sociology?
- Comparing sociology and other disciplines
- The value of the sociological imagination
- The beginner's guide to critical thinking

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

This chapter introduces the idea of the sociological toolkit. Just as a hammer and a saw enable an individual to build a shed in the backyard, empirical research methods, sociological theories, and critical thinking enable students to develop their sociological imaginations. The chapter has been updated to include a discussion of Peter Berger's emphasis on seeing the "strange in the familiar" and the "general in the particular," as well as expanded material on Canadian feminist scholar Dorothy Smith and a new Sociology in Words box (When Is the Time to "Commit Sociology"?). The chapter continues to emphasize research on critical thinking, which shows that most students enter university with lower order thinking skills and that a significant number graduate without having had sufficient opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills. Critical thinking skills require practice, and this chapter outlines for students how this textbook will give them opportunities for that practice.

Chapter 2: Applying Sociological Research Methods

- Goals of sociological research
- Steps for conducting sociological research
- Ethical conduct for research involving humans
- Distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative methods

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

This chapter has been updated to include new studies demonstrating the array of approaches used in sociology (e.g., evaluation research, empowerment research, decolonization research, and participatory action research). It now includes current research on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), distracted driving (texting), organized crime, fear of cancer recurrence, and rights involving end-of-life circumstances.

Chapter 3: "I Am Canadian": What Is "Canadian" Culture?

- Language as a precursor to shared understandings
- Norms as regulators of shared behaviours
- Values as shared ideas
- Popular culture and high culture

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

Additional information on language diversity and usage in Canada is provided, including recent attempts to preserve Cree via immersive schooling, the use of unique "Canadianisms," and the incorporation of

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gender-neutral pronouns in public institutions. This chapter also expands on cultural relativism and multiculturalism debates. including Quebec's Bill 62, "An Act to foster adherence to State religious neutrality." Finally, at the request of reviewers, information on culture shock and cultural omnivores has been introduced.

Chapter 4: Socialization: The Self and Social Identity

- The self and its connection to socialization and social interaction
- Primary agents of socialization
- Master status and the looking-glass self
- Components of the social structure
- Social institutions and bureaucracy

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

At the request of reviewers, a new section on socialization and genetic influences has been included, with an emphasis on how epigenetics blur the distinction between nature and nurture influences on the developing self. Additional information is provided on agents of socialization, including what effective parenting and schooling entail and how peers contribute to bullying. New information is also included on child rights and child welfare in Canada.

Chapter 5: Social Inequality in Canadian Society

- Connections between social stratification and social inequality
- Slavery in the past and human trafficking in the present
- Class structure and social mobility
- Blaming the poor for their plight
- Consequences of social inequality

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

Updated information and statistics are provided throughout this chapter on stratification, wealth, net worth, poverty, and poverty reduction, with an emphasis on Canada's income-based class structure. At the request of reviewers, the sections on measuring poverty and Canada's poor are expanded. In addition to the low-income cutoff, information is provided on two other measures of poverty (the Low-Income Measure and the Market Basket Measure) and more information is included on the intersectionality of age, gender, and race.

Chapter 6: Mass Media: Living in the Electronic Age

- Media prevalence and forms
- "Being alone together" in public spaces
- Agenda setting: the media are not neutral
- How the media shapes our perceptions
- Media literacy: thinking critically about the media

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

In the 21st century, the media are in a constant state of evolution. So in the third edition, this chapter provides important updates regarding the nature of contemporary media (e.g., media consumption, media concentration, and media violence, as well as termination of cable and satellite subscriptions, increased prevalence of simultaneous media, Bitcoin's latest status, popular apps, and the prevalence of augmented reality). At the request of reviewers, additional information is included on privacy and regulation and on the repercussions of continual online connectivity with others.

Chapter 7: Sex, Gender, and Sexualities: Deconstructing Dualisms

- Elite discourses of sex, gender, and sexuality
- Spectrums of sex, gender, and sexualities
- The educational, occupational, economic, and familial consequences of being born male or female

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

At the request of reviewers, this chapter is updated to include a discussion of Alfred Kinsey's work on sexuality as a continuum, and the concepts cisgender, gender non-conformity, and pansexuality are introduced. There is new material about non-traditional gender socialization by parents and the resistance they often encounter and, conversely, the way that some parents' identities are threatened when they are faced with raising a gender non-conforming child. The section on the household division of labour is expanded to include discussions of domestic outsourcing, younger couples in cohabitational relationships, and LGBTQ couples. Statistics on gender performance in education, gender segregation (in education and occupation), and gendered economic experiences are updated. At the request of reviewers, the section on theories of gender is expanded to include a discussion

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of Indigenous feminisms, intersectionality and the matrix of domination, and more material on Judith Butler's work. In addition to revised boxes, there are several new boxes as well: movies and television shows that deconstruct dualisms; Plan International's "Because I am a Girl" campaign; and how gender nonconformity is supported with Bill C-16.

Chapter 8: Race and Ethnicity: Defining Ourselves and Others

- Ethnicity, race, racialization, and visible minorities
- Contemporary ethnic patterns
- Bicultural adaptation patterns
- Media frames of ethnicity
- Prejudice and discrimination

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

In the third edition, the statistics on current ethnic patterns, the economic experiences of Indigenous people and immigrants, and hate crimes are updated. New examples of discrimination include the Saskatoon police starlight tours, police carding of racialized groups, and the hashtag activism of Black Lives Matter. In addition to revised boxes, there are three new boxes: Spencer Wells's TED talk ("A Family Tree for Humanity") and the affiliated genographic project of the National Geographic Society; a CBC documentary about bicultural youth in Canada; and the macro-level implications of using the term "Indigenous" in place of "Aboriginal."

Chapter 9: Canadian Families: Past, Present, and Future

- Contemporary trends in Canadian families
- Is the family declining?
- The commodification of children arising from new reproductive technologies
- The effects of colonization on Aboriginal families

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

In addition to updated statistics on contemporary trends in Canadian families, the chapter includes expanded discussions of family violence and social exchange theory (within the context of dating and relationships between adult children and their parents, especially when adult children live in the family home). New examples include the money that families spend on their pets and debates over when it is appropriate to use reproductive technologies. In addition to revised boxes, there are several new boxes: parallels between the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system today and residential schooling in the past; agencies that help newcomer families with parenting; and Parenting After Separation (PAS) courses that are required of divorcing parents in some provinces.

Chapter 10: Learning What is "True": Religion, Science, and Education

- The origins and meaning of "truth"
- Implications of religious affiliation
- The transition to scientific truth
- Scientific knowledge as constructed
- The role of education in modern society

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

The chapter includes new examples, such as Stephen Harper's and Donald Trump's muzzling of government scientists and reduced funding for climate change research and epigenetics as a paradigm shift affecting sociology. There is new material on debates over religion in public schools, current research questioning whether religiosity is associated with greater philanthropy, expanded discussion of Indigenous education and curriculum, and updated statistics on religious patterns. In addition to revised boxes, there are several new boxes: Indigenous science, petitions for an inclusive education in Quebec, and the group People for Education.

Chapter 11: Social Control, Deviance, and Crime

- Are you socially controlled?
- Social control and deviance
- Forms and patterns of crime
- Racialization within the criminal justice system
- Theories of deviance and crime

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

The concept of social control serves as the frame for this chapter, emphasizing the myriad ways in which we are all subjected to social control on a daily basis—and correspondingly, the ways in which we are all socially typed as deviant in some way. In the third edition, new examples include WannaCry ransomware, extremist groups, and the carding of black youth

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in Toronto. Material on summary and indictable offenses, crime rates, crime severity, and empirical applications of various theories to criminal and non-criminal behaviour is updated. In addition to revised boxes, there are several new boxes: family violence and restorative justice; a critique of imprisonment as a form of punishment (using the United States as an illustration); and the youth group Jack.org (which works to end the stigmatization of mental illness).

Chapter 12: Health and Illness: Is It "Lifestyle" or Something More?

- Patterns of health and illness
- "Lifestyle" behaviours and health
- Social inequality and health
- Health care systems

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

There are extensive updates to statistics on causes of death, patterns of morbidity and mortality, tobacco use, alcohol use, diet, physical activity, health inequalities, food insecurity, and health care expenditures. New topics include the illness identities of children with cancer and youth with eating disorders as well as privileged medical discourses involving physician and nurse power over health care assistants. In addition to revised boxes, there are two new boxes: the causes and implications of new viruses spreading to humans from other animals and the World Health Organization's recommendations for controlling the impact of the tobacco life cycle (from cultivation to disposal) on the environment and human health.

Chapter 13: Social Change: Collective Behaviour and Social Movements

- Collective behaviour in crowds
- Rumours, gossip, and urban legends
- Widespread panic and moral panic
- Claims and claims making
- Types of social movements

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

This chapter has been extensively updated to provide recent examples of various forms of collective behaviour (e.g., Pride Parades, new fads and fashions, disasters [oil spills, Fort McMurray fires]) and moral panic (Islamic extremist groups). The section on social movements has been expanded to include current research on recent social movements (e.g., the Arab Spring and Winter, People Against Distracted Driving, and Idle No More).

Chapter 14: "Going Green": Environmental Sociology

- Social factors posing environmental challenges
- Growing awareness of environmental issues
- Strategies for better environmental choices

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

This chapter includes important updates to environmental issues and patterns of environmental degradation. A number of concepts are clarified and expanded on (e.g., the ecological footprint, ecological overshoot, and climate change), and new information is introduced on how individuals and members of society can contribute to sustainable growth in the future, including the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Chapter 15: Globalization: The Interconnected World

- Neoliberalism and its implications
- The vision of globalization and its reality: the good, the bad, and the ugly
- Global justice movements

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION . . .

In this chapter, there are several new examples, such as the softwood lumber dispute, global terrorist networks, the downward transfer of power from nation-states to alliances of cities working toward common goals (such as sustainability), and the global assembly line involved in manufacturing the iPhone. New topics include global child labour and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to revised boxes, there are several new boxes: the five flagship programs of the International Labour Organization, the organization Global Citizen, and the uneasy alliances between government leaders and the global banking industry.

ANCILLARIES

Our textbook has several supplements for instructors and students.

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INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

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The following instructor resources have been created for *Sociology in Action*, Third Edition. Access these ultimate tools for customizing lectures and presentations at nelson.com/instructor.

NETA Test Bank

This resource was written by Vincent Sacco of Queen's University. It includes over 1100 multiple-choice questions written according to NETA guidelines for effective construction and development of higher order questions. Also included are over 350 true/false questions, 100 short-answer questions, and 100 essay questions.

The NETA Test Bank is available in a new, cloud-based platform. **Nelson Testing Powered by Cognero®** is a secure online testing system that allows instructors to author, edit, and manage test bank content from anywhere Internet access is available. No special installations or downloads are needed, and the desktop-inspired interface, with its drop-down menus and familiar, intuitive tools, allows instructors to create and manage tests with ease. Multiple test versions can be created in an instant, and content can be imported or exported into other systems. Tests can be delivered from a learning management system, the classroom, or wherever an instructor chooses. Nelson Testing Powered by Cognero for *Sociology in Action* can be accessed through nelson.com/instructor.

NETA PowerPoint

Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for every chapter have been created by Tami Bereska of Grant MacEwan University. There is an average of 25 slides per chapter, many featuring key figures, tables, and photographs from *Sociology in Action*. NETA principles of clear design and engaging content have been incorporated throughout, making it simple for instructors to customize the deck for their courses.

Image Library

This resource consists of digital copies of figures, short tables, and photographs used in the book. Instructors may use these jpegs to customize the NETA PowerPoint or create their own PowerPoint presentations. An Image Library Key describes the images and lists the codes under which the jpegs are saved.

NETA Instructor Guide

This resource was written by Karen Taylor of NorQuest College. The Enriched Instructor's Manual provides strategies for engaging students actively and deeply in the study of sociology. Each chapter addresses key educational concerns, such as typical stumbling blocks students face and how to address them, as well as engagement strategies and assessment tools. "What Can I Do Online" is a new section in each chapter. Our intention is to provide instructors with ideas they may choose to include in their teaching toolkit.

MindTap

Offering personalized paths of dynamic assignments and applications, **MindTap** is a digital learning solution that turns cookie-cutter into cutting-edge, apathy into engagement, and memorizers into higher-level thinkers. MindTap enables students to analyze and apply chapter concepts within relevant assignments, and allows instructors to measure skills and promote better outcomes with ease. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all student learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a single Learning Path that guides the student through the curriculum. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools to their students, even seamlessly introducing their own content into the Learning Path.

STUDENT ANCILLARIES

MindTap

Stay organized and efficient with **MindTap**—a single destination with all the course material and study aids you need to succeed. Built-in apps leverage social media and the latest learning technology. For example:

- ReadSpeaker will read the text to you.
- Flashcards are pre-populated to provide you with a jump start for review—or you can create your own.

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- You can highlight text and make notes in your MindTap Reader. Your notes will flow into Evernote, the electronic notebook app that you can access anywhere when it's time to study for the exam.
- Self-quizzing allows you to assess your understanding.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

MAKING WOMEN COUNT

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent, member-based research institute that works on various projects of interest to Canadians (e.g., climate change, economic security, seniors care). A current focus is *Making Women Count*, which highlights how gender inequality impacts the economy, politics, and well-being of Canadians. Here you can find publications and news releases about gender inequality, including information on how women continue to bear much of the burden for unpaid and undervalued work. Find out why Victoria is considered the best and Windsor is considered the worst place to live as a woman in Canada based on indicators of economic security, education, health, leadership, and personal security by accessing *Making Women Count* at **https://www.policyalternatives.ca.**

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A question often asked at interviews for academic positions is about the links between research and teaching. It seems that all candidates easily refer to how their research influences their teaching by providing a body of knowledge they can bring to the classroom. Less common are responses that emphasize how teaching influences their research—how much they, as academics, are able to learn from their students. We have learned more from our students than can be easily expressed. Our students, past and present, are the most important part of the team that has created this book. They have inspired us, given us profound ideas at times when our own ideas are in short supply, and shown us how students today *really* learn. The students at Grant MacEwan University, in particular, have shown us the amazing things that can happen when people use their sociological imaginations in their own lives, in their communities, and in the world. Above all, this book is for the students.

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About the Authors

Diane G. Symbaluk

Like many students, I found sociology quite by accident. While trying to find a course that would fulfill a Canadian content requirement for a B.Ed. degree en route to a teaching career, I stumbled across an introduction to sociology course advertised with descriptive words such as "people," "society," "families," and "deviance" that sounded interesting. I could never have known then that my tendency to say "don't assume" and "don't take people for granted" underscored the beginnings of the development of my sociological imagination. After completing an Introduction to Sociology, my interest was piqued; I switched to the sociology program, where I earned a B.A., followed by an M.A. and a Ph.D. I went on to teach sociology full-time at Grant MacEwan University, where I continue to teach a range of courses: introductory sociology, social psychology, criminology, and social research methods. I love teaching, and I appreciate my students even more. They have inspired me to write resources that will contribute to their success, including study guides, manuals, Web-based course tools, and especially this textbook. I am also interested in student ratings of instruction and student assessments of instructors' character strengths—the focus of my current research interests. I constantly re-evaluate my initial assumptions of people and social situations while maintaining allegiance to the Chinese proverb: He who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person who is doing it.

Tami M. Bereska

I began university as a psychology major. I had never even heard of sociology. But then I made my discovery. A discipline in which you could study families, teenagers, television shows, popular music, crime, and white supremacists—wow! Who could have ever believed that learning could be so interesting? Sociology grabbed me and has never let me go. Since obtaining my M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology, I've studied all sorts of interesting topics: adult and adolescent series romance novels (e.g., *Harlequin*, *Sweet Valley High*), what being a "real man" means in young adult novels for boys, and representations of Scientology in movies and on TV. Popular culture, deviance, and youth fascinate me. Along with my love of sociology is a love for teaching undergraduate students. I had my first opportunity to give a university lecture as a teaching assistant while working on my M.A. My supervisor had to be away, and he asked me to lecture in his Social Organization class, with 180 students. As someone who had always hated giving presentations in class, I was terrified. But 10 minutes into my lecture, I knew this was what I wanted to do with my life. I've since taught courses ranging from deviance to social psychology, with class sizes as small as four and as large as 400. The pleasure I derive from connecting with students has also led me to write textbooks—first, a book on deviance and social control and now this book, one that will bring the fascinating world of sociology to those students who, like me, may have never even heard of sociology.

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PART 01

Practising Sociology: Your Sociological Toolkit

CHAPTER 1:
Seeing and Acting Through the Lens of Sociology

CHAPTER 2:
Applying Sociological Research Methods

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01 CHAPTER

Seeing and Acting Through the Lens of Sociology

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It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem.

(Berger, 1963, p. 23)

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

LO1 Describe the bidirectional relationship between individual choices and larger social forces.

LO2 Define "sociology" and identify the role of the sociological imagination.

LO3 Elaborate on the similarities and differences between sociology and other related disciplines.

LO4 List and describe the tools that are used to develop the sociological imagination.

LO5 Contrast positivist, interpretive, and critical approaches to theorizing.

LO6 Outline the core assumptions of the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, feminist, and postmodern perspectives.

LO7 Identify what critical thinking is and explain its importance.

LO8 Describe the four different ways that sociology can be practised.

LO1 THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM

"I'll believe it when I see it!" How many times have you heard someone say this or used that phrase yourself? Although we often come to trust in what we can see for ourselves, sociology asks us *not* to automatically trust what we see. Consider, for example, a television screen like the one in the photo below. If you were asked what you see when you look at that screen, your initial response might be, "I see a road." But if you took a closer look—presuming that there is more than meets the eye—you might see something very different. Walk up to a television screen and look at it from a centimetre or two away, and now you'll realize that what first looked like a road is really rows and columns of pixels, tiny squares of coloured light. If you looked even more closely, you would see that what first appeared to be a dark grey road is really a combination of red, green, and blue pixels. *Things are not what they seem.*

Now shift your attention to yourself and to the clothes you wore to class today. Initially, you might say personal choice led you to wear those particular clothes. But if you now look at your classmates, you can see that many of them are wearing clothes that are very similar to yours (e.g., jeans and a T-shirt). You and many other people have made a similar choice today, suggesting that there is something more than just individual preference operating here. If I were to go on to ask you why you are a university or college student, you might give me a similar answer—personal choice. And indeed, unless someone registered you as a student against your will, physically dragged you to class this morning, and tied you into your chair, it most certainly *is* your choice. But remember, there is more than first meets the eye. If you examine these circumstances more closely, you will start to realize that just as pixels of coloured light underlie the televised image

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If we look closely, we can see that there is more than meets the eye in this image.

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of a road, an array of social factors and experiences has contributed to your choice to become a university or college student. When you begin to consider the ways that society shapes your personal choices, you are starting to practise sociology by seeing the **strange in the familiar** (Berger, 1963).

When examining your choice to become a student, you might first consider specific people who influenced your decision, such as the family members and friends who supported, encouraged, or demanded that option. You could then go on to look at some of the more personal social and economic resources that enabled you to become a university or college student—a student loan, a Registered Education Saving Plan (RESP), or parents who support you. The personal resources you have available are important factors that underlie your ability to pursue a postsecondary education. But using a sociological perspective requires you to analyze even beyond your own family, friends, and resources. In much the same way that many of your classmates chose to wear similar clothing to you, many others have elected to attend university or college alongside you. In the 2014–2015 academic year, more than 2 million students were registered in undergraduate programs in Canadian universities and colleges (Statistics Canada, 2016). That means more than 2 million people—with different families, sets of friends, and personal resources—all made the same personal choice that year! Explaining this fact requires you to extend your sociological gaze beyond your own life to larger sociocultural and socioeconomic forces affecting many people simultaneously, or seeing the **general in the particular** (Berger, 1963).

For instance, after the worldwide economic recession in 2008 that limited job opportunities, undergraduate enrollments increased by 4.1 percent in 2009 and by another 3.6 percent in 2010 over the previous year; economic downturns motivate people to improve their educational qualifications and skills (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2009). The impact of the economy on postsecondary enrollment is readily apparent. But more subtle influences on the decisions we make come from society's expectations, or **norms**. By virtue of growing up in a specific family in a particular society at a certain time in history, we learn how we are supposed to act. Whether or not we actually behave in accordance with those norms, we are still aware of what those expectations are.

In Canada today, a postsecondary education is **normative** in that it corresponds to norms about the kind of education people need before entering the workforce. In contrast, had you been a young Canadian woman in the 1950s, a university education would *not* have been normative; instead, society's expectations were that you should marry young, have children, and be a full-time homemaker. Sometimes society's norms are so powerful that they influence formalized rules, such as policies and even the law. For example, if you were a Jewish Canadian before the end of the Second World War, the doors of many universities would have been closed to you, regardless of your academic ability and desire to pursue a university education. Similarly, if you were an Indigenous person in the early 20th century, the residential school that you would have been forced to attend by law would not have given you the education necessary to gain entrance to a university. And although the opportunity for a university education is available to everyone in the 21st century, sociologists point out that the ability to take advantage of that opportunity is not equally available to all (see *Sociology in My Life*).

The essence of sociology is this connection between individual experiences and larger social forces that exist outside the individual (see *Figure 1.1*). This is also known as the relationship between the **micro level** and the **macro level**. Thus far, we have examined ways that larger social forces (the macro level) influence individual experiences (the micro level). However, the relationship is bidirectional, in that your personal choices also have an impact on the people around you, your community, and your workplace—what sociologists refer to as **agency**. When enough people make similar choices or acquire support for particular decisions, the macro level is affected—either the status quo is supported or social change occurs. Social movements can occur, and school practices and policies, workplace culture and policies, social programming, legislation, and larger cultural norms can all be affected.

For instance, when the authors of this book were in elementary school in the mid-1970s, it was rare for children to eat lunch at school; children either had to go home for lunch (regardless of whether there was an adult there to supervise them), or they walked to a

Strange in the familiar: Instead of assuming that people's actions are determined solely by personal choice, looking for the ways that society shapes those choices.

General in the particular: The broader social patterns that are reflected in the actions of individuals.

Norms: Society's expectations for how we are supposed to act, think, and look.

Normative: Behaviours, appearances, and thoughts that correspond to society's norms.

Micro level: The level of individual experiences and choices.

Macro level: The level of broader social forces.

Agency: People's capacity to make choices, which then have an impact on other people and on the society in which they live.

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YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

SOCIOLOGY IN MY LIFE

THE IMPACT OF LIFE CHANCES

Think about your own background for a moment—the neighbourhood you lived in while growing up, your parents' jobs, your lifestyle. If the two photos below represent two ends of a continuum, where would you locate your own childhood background—closer to the photo on the left (i.e., extreme poverty) or to the photo on the right (i.e., attending a private school)? Do individuals who grow up in these very different types of neighbourhoods have the same freedom to go to university? Is that opportunity equally available to both of them? Think about the resources it takes to go to university or college and the obstacles that can prevent it. Perhaps you enjoyed similar resources or encountered similar obstacles in your path. Max Weber (1864–1920), one of the founders of the social sciences as a distinct area of study, referred to these varying opportunities that people face as **life chances** (1978). Social stratification, inequality, race, ethnicity, and gender are just some of the factors that affect one's life chances. You will learn more about all of these factors in later chapters.

Think Outside the Box: What other areas of life, in addition to education, might be affected by the life chances reflected in the above photos?

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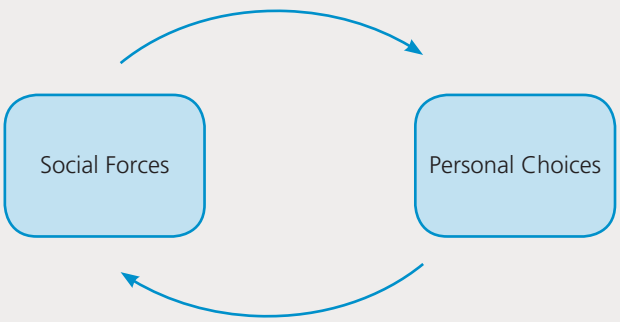
FIGURE 1.1

Personal Choices and Social Forces



nearby care provider's place. If there was an unusual circumstance (e.g., the caregiver had to be at an appointment), then the parent would write a note to the teacher and request that the child be permitted to eat lunch at school that day under the teacher's supervision or be sent to a classmate's home. Less than a decade later, processes and procedures had been developed around the need for lunch-hour supervision. Why did such a dramatic change occur in such a relatively short time? Because economic and social factors changed the lives of parents, and then the changing lives of parents made changes in school practices necessary.

Life chances: The opportunities an individual has in life based on various factors, including stratification, inequality, race, ethnicity, and gender.

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The assumption that mothers were at home to make lunch for their children was based on family patterns that existed in previous decades, when most middle-class married women were full-time homemakers. This began to change in the 1960s and 1970s, when more married mothers began to enter the paid labour force. The changing choices of parents elicited changes in the environment outside the family. But at the same time, larger sociocultural factors were contributing to parental choices. More mothers were entering the workforce because of changes in the economy that necessitated dual incomes for many families, as well as the influence of the women's movement, which emphasized the importance of female equality. The media also played a role in the evolution of a "risk society" through their coverage of missing children cases, which contributed to growing concerns about children being sent home unsupervised.

Thus, when we look at people's experiences, the micro level and the macro level are intertwined. Recognizing the myriad ways in which they are intertwined requires using something sociologists distinctively call the "sociological imagination."

TIME TO REVIEW

- What do sociologists mean when they say that "things are not what they seem," and what are some examples?
- What type of relationship exists between the micro level and the macro level? Provide some examples of this relationship.

LO2 WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Sociology is the systematic study of society using the sociological imagination. The connection between the micro level and the macro level is the essence of the sociological perspective. C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) defined the discipline of sociology on the basis of the **sociological imagination**, which involved looking for the "intersections of biography and history" (1959/2000, p. 7), tracing the linkages between individual experiences and larger sociocultural forces. For example, we can use the sociological imagination to explore body modification. If we consider why a particular person gets a tattoo or a piercing, the answer may tell us something specific about that one individual, such as that he or she is a risk taker. But when we consider the nature of body modification in general, we learn about larger social relationships. We learn about workplace norms, in that people must hide their body art in certain workplaces but not others (Timming, 2015). We also learn about interpersonal relationships, such as in the historical and contemporary practice of memorial tattoos (DeMello, 2016). Similarly, we learn about norms governing gender. Women with tattoos are perceived more negatively than men with tattoos, especially if they are middle-aged (rather than younger) and their tattoos have masculine designs (Musambira, Raymond, & Hastings, 2016). We identify allegiances to certain subcultures since tattoos can indicate membership in particular gangs. We even learn about the ideologies of subcultures—for example, a "Poison-Free" tattoo on a member of the Straightedge subculture signifies commitment to a substance-free lifestyle (Straightedge Worldwide, 2017).

Sociology: The systematic study of society using the sociological imagination.

Sociological imagination: The ability to perceive the interconnections between individual experiences and larger sociocultural forces.

Mills (1959/2000) did not see the sociological imagination as an intellectual tool to be used solely by sociologists (or even by students in sociology classes); he proposed that society as a whole *needed* its citizens to look for the links between the macro and micro levels. In fact, Mills criticized many of his fellow sociologists for spending their time intellectualizing in the ivory towers of academia and for not assuming any personal responsibility for improving society. The sociological imagination is not just about *thinking*; it is also about *action*. That action might be at the level of your everyday life, where paying attention to the relationship between individual choices and larger social forces will make you a more informed parent, voter, teacher, office manager, or team member. But it might also be at a more macro level of social action, trying to improve some aspect of your community or even society as a whole (see *Sociology in Words*).

Berger (1963) describes sociologists as professional people watchers who are gripped by curiosity whenever they find themselves "in front of a closed door behind which are human voices" (p. 21). In order to build knowledge and facilitate social action, sociologists use the sociological imagination to study just about anything that is related to people—social inequality, the economy, politics, media, families, gender, sexualities, ethnicity, deviance, crime, social movements, and the environment, just to name a few.

The ability to use your sociological imagination, see the strange in the familiar, and look for the general in the particular translates into a considerable breadth of potential careers. Unlike some university programs that train students for specific jobs upon graduation

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SOCIOLOGY IN WORDS

WHEN IS THE TIME TO "COMMIT SOCIOLOGY"?

What are the root causes of terrorism? This question was asked by Justin Trudeau in April 2013. He asked it because of two recent incidents—a terrorist bombing at the Boston Marathon and the arrest of two men for conspiring to attack a Via Rail train in Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper criticized Trudeau for raising this question, saying, "… this is not a time to commit sociology" (Fitzpatrick, 2013). In Harper's view, understanding the causes of terrorism was of less value than apprehending and punishing individual terrorists. Of course, since that time, there have been many more terrorist attacks in countries around the world, such as Kenya, Iraq, France, and England.

One year later, Harper made a similar point regarding another social issue. In response to demands for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, he "urged Canadians away from understanding missing and murdered aboriginal women as a 'sociological phenomenon' and instead suggested Canadians 'view it as a crime'" (Kaye & Béland, 2014). Once again, he argued that understanding the reasons why Indigenous women are overrepresented as victims of violence was of less value than apprehending and punishing individual criminals.

Why is it important to "commit sociology"? Fletcher (1971) argued that sociology is of "central importance in and for our time" (p. 5). Several decades later, his argument is stronger than ever:

> We would like to eliminate from society war, poverty, crime and delinquency.… We would like to improve matters; to remove these obstacles to social justice; and would therefore like to know the underlying *causes* of these social facts. Then, on the basis of this knowledge, if we could get it, we would like to formulate effective social policies and institute political reforms.… [We must] establish reliable knowledge *on the basis of which to a*ct. For we quickly learn that we can only effectively change the nature of society … *if we know what that nature is.**

*R. Fletcher, *The making of sociology: A study of sociological theory*, Vol. 1. London, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, pg. 36, 1971.

Snapshots

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"I love our lunches out here, but I always get the feeling that we're being watched."

(e.g., teacher, accountant), an education in sociology provides its graduates with a knowledge base and a set of skills that apply to a variety of careers (beyond sociology professor). Graduates have a deep understanding of community, social, and cultural issues; knowledge of group dynamics, public policies, and community development; skills in gathering and analyzing data; and the ability to problem solve and think critically. Graduates may work with clients of community or social service agencies, develop or administer programs for community agencies or governments, conduct research in the public or private sector, and much more.

LO3 COMPARING SOCIOLOGY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

As you may have already noticed in some of your classes, similar topics are covered in different disciplines. For example, you may have studied families in a psychology, anthropology, or even political science course—and you will also learn about families in your sociology course. Many of the topics studied by sociologists are

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also analyzed by researchers in other social science disciplines—culture and cultural variations (anthropology and cultural studies), political forces (political science and development studies), occupational and economic forces (economics and political economy), families (family studies and social work), and media (psychology, cultural studies and communications). What are the differences, then, between sociology and the other social science disciplines?

Scholars within the discipline of sociology were not the first to study society. Arab scholar Ibn Khaldun's work (1332–1406) is recognized as a significant forerunner to sociology. He studied the structures and processes of power in different societies (ranging from desert tribes to nations). He proposed that as societies grew in size, labour was no longer used for survival but rather for the pursuit of luxury for society's wealthy and powerful (Weiss, 1995). Sociology as a discipline later emerged in a particular context of place and time. It can be traced to a historical period that includes the French Revolution (1789–1799) and the accompanying Enlightenment. This was a time of rapid social, political, and economic change—cities increased in size, there was the transition to a wage economy, absolute monarchies were threatened, the power of religion declined, and the power of science grew. For some more politically and socially active scholars, these social, political, and ideological changes illustrated that ordinary citizens could create large-scale transformations in society. For other scholars, the question was one of how it was possible for society not to crumble in the midst of these massive changes. Intellectuals sought to understand and explain social change and its consequences.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who coined the term *sociology*, suggested that empirical research and theory should be used in pursuit of this goal. The sociological perspective developed out of philosophy, economics, history, psychology, and law. Many of the well-known scholars who are referred to as "sociologists" because their work is central to sociology (and whose work will be presented at various points in this book) were, in fact, not "sociologists" by training. For example, Max Weber's training was in economic history, Karl Marx's in philosophy, and Émile Durkheim's in educational thought and philosophy. With that knowledge, they sought to understand social change and what made "society" possible in the face of change.

The sociological perspective emerged in the 19th century; the formation of distinct disciplines is a more recent phenomenon. In the 20th century, distinct boundaries were constructed around bodies of knowledge and the subject matter of specific disciplines (Delanty, 2005, 2007). Thus, while historians studied the past, anthropologists studied premodern societies, political scientists analyzed structures of governance, and economists studied the production and consumption of goods and services. The attention of scholars within each of these disciplines was focused on a certain part of society. In contrast, sociologists studied *all* of these parts of society while using a wider range of research methodologies and theories (Delanty, 2005, 2007). Hence, sociology can be thought of as the most *comprehensive* of the social sciences.

However, sociology goes a step further and proposes that society is more than a compilation of history plus government plus the economy (and so on). There is a web of interconnectedness *among* its parts—they interact in particular ways, and the nature of that interaction contributes to any social phenomenon, such as social problems (e.g., terrorism and environmental destruction) or even more mundane aspects of everyday life (e.g., tattooing and social media use). What governs a sociological approach is an analysis of these interactions and an emphasis on tracing the linkages between individual experiences and larger sociocultural forces.

Although distinct disciplines were formed in the early 20th century, the 21st century is characterized by greater *postdisciplinarity* (Urry, 2000). This means that the differences among disciplines are less apparent. For example, today sociology and anthropology both study premodern and modern societies, although in varied ways (Delanty, 2005, 2007).

In addition to blurred boundaries between disciplines, the 21st century is also characterized by greater *interdisciplinarity* (Delanty, 2005, 2007), where scholars in a variety of disciplines work together to better understand social phenomena. For instance, globalization is not associated with a specific discipline but rather brings together diverse groups of scholars, including sociologists, economists, and political scientists (you will learn more about globalization in Chapter 15). Interdisciplinarity has created new disciplines as well, such as women's studies, cultural studies, and family studies. University departments that are affiliated with these areas of study will often include faculty members who are sociologists, economists, political scientists, historians, social psychologists, and philosophers.

TIME TO REVIEW

- What is sociology, and what is the role of the sociological imagination?
- Who should be using the sociological imagination, and for what purpose?
- How is sociology related to other disciplines?

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LO4 BUILDING YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

If the sociological imagination is the foundation of sociology, and if it is necessary for effective social action from your own personal micro level to society's (or the world's) macro level, where does it come from? In the same way that you need a variety of tools to build a shed in your backyard (e.g., hammer and saw), several tools, when used in an array of settings, will enable you to develop your sociological imagination: empirical research methods, sociological theories, and critical thinking.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODS

As was pointed out earlier, "reliable knowledge" (Fletcher, 1971, p. 36) must serve as the basis of social action. **Empirical methods** are used to create that knowledge. Sociological research methods are empirical because, through direct observation of the social world, they generate findings that can be verified by other members of the academic community. In Chapter 2, you will learn more about the steps in the sociological research process and the systematic procedures that comprise its empirical methods.

LO5 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIZING

The data gathered using empirical methods are explained using sociological theories. Sociological theorizing was central to explaining changes during the French Revolution and continues to be crucial to understanding and explaining society.

A **theory** is a set of propositions intended to explain a fact or a phenomenon. Theorizing can be thought of as "puzzle-building" (Bengston et al., 2005, p. 5), trying to fit the pieces of some social phenomenon together in order to reveal a cohesive picture. There are three different approaches to theorizing: *positivist, interpretive*, and *critical* (White, Klein, & Martin, 2015).

Positivist approaches stem from the natural sciences and have an interest in objective *explanation and prediction*. In the social sciences, such approaches are used to examine relationships between variables in an effort to learn more about how society works, enabling subsequent improvements in the social environment (Ashley & Orenstein, 2001). For example, knowledge of factors that contribute to hate crimes can lead to the development of more effective prevention and intervention efforts. In contrast, interpretive theorizing and critical theorizing reject the positivist assumption that there are objective "laws" governing the way society works. Instead, they emphasize the cultural and historical specificity of all processes.

Interpretive approaches focus on *understanding*—the ways that people come to understand themselves, others, and the world around them. They presume that human beings are "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor, 1985, p. 45), constructed and shaped through culture. Here, the goal of sociology is to describe the role culture plays in creating people and societies and how people come to think about their positions within that culture and their relations with other people. For instance, interpretive theorizing might explore what masculinity means to men who have been convicted of hate crimes.

Critical approaches explore the role that *power* plays in social processes, the reason why some people's understandings of the world become dominant (such as through being reflected in legislation); it then ties that knowledge to *emancipation*—empowering subordinated groups in society. For example, critical theorizing might analyze how members of certain social groups are subordinated in society in many ways, including through being victimized by hate crimes—and emphasize the importance of changing society in order to end that subordination.

Positivist, interpretive, and critical approaches to theorizing give rise to a number of specific theoretical perspectives (or frameworks) in sociology. Some address the micro level, emphasizing individuals as the basic component of society, whereas others emphasize the macro level, focusing on social institutions as the basic component of society.

Empirical methods: Data collection that produces verifiable findings and is carried out using systematic procedures.

Theory: A set of propositions intended to explain a fact or a phenomenon.

Positivist: An approach to theorizing that emphasizes explanation and prediction.

Interpretive: An approach to theorizing that focuses on the ways people come to understand themselves, others, and the world around them.

Critical: An approach to theorizing that explores the role power plays in social processes and emphasizes the importance of knowledge being tied to emancipation.

LO6 CORE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The core theoretical perspectives in sociology are the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, feminist, and postmodern perspectives. One easy way to help you consider

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