

**COMPASS
FOR A
NEW
SOCIAL
WORLD**

Sociology



**ROBERT BRYM
LANCE W. ROBERTS
LISA STROHSCHNEIN**

**COMPASS
FOR A
NEW
SOCIAL
WORLD**

Sociology

SIXTH EDITION

ROBERT BRYM

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Many authors seem to be afflicted with stoic family members who gladly allow them to spend endless hours buried in their work. I suffer no such misfortune. The members of my family have demanded that I focus on what really matters in life. I think that focus has made this a better book. I am deeply grateful to Rhonda Lenton, Shira Friedland-Brym, Talia Lenton-Brym, Ariella Lenton-Brym, Sophie Friedland, Molly Friedland, and Ben Friedland. I dedicate this book to them with thanks and love.

Robert Brym

To Charlie, our spirited little man: May your navigation through the social maze be revealing and fun.

Lance W. Roberts

To students past and present whose passion and enthusiasm continue to inspire me. And most of all, thanks to my husband, Frank, whose love and support sustains me through it all.

Lisa Strohschein

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Preface

COMPASS FOR A NEW SOCIAL WORLD

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (2002 [1859])

Dickens refers to the end of the eighteenth century, yet he offers a prophetic description of the times in which we live. We, too, set sail at the dawn of an age of superlatives, an age of uncertainty.

Over the past couple of decades, we have torn old countries apart and created new ones. We proclaimed a new era of medical breakthroughs with the sequencing of the human genome, yet learned that the plague is still with us in the form of AIDS, expected to kill 85 million people by 2020. After some economists proclaimed that recessions were a thing of the past, we experienced a devastating economic crisis in 2008–09 that bankrupted many high-flying companies and individuals; we are still living through its aftermath. We saw the world’s mood and its political and economic outlook buoyant one day, anxious the next, as terrorist attacks and wars led us further into an era of uncertainty. Frightening new words entered our vocabulary: climate change, ISIS, Trump.

The world is an unpredictable place. It is especially disorienting for students entering adulthood. We wrote this book to show undergraduates that sociology can help them make sense of their lives, however uncertain they may appear to be. We hope it will serve as their sociological compass in the new world they are entering as young adults. Moreover, we show that sociology can be a liberating practical activity, not just an abstract intellectual exercise. By revealing the opportunities and constraints we face, sociology can help us navigate our lives, teaching us who we are and what we can become in this particular social and historical context. We cannot know what the future will bring, but we can at least know the choices we confront and the likely consequences of our actions. From this point of view, sociology can help us create the best possible future. That has always been sociology’s principal justification, and so it should be today.

UNIQUE FEATURES

We have tried to keep sociology’s main purpose and relevance front and centre in this book. As a result, *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* differs from other major introductory sociology textbooks in four ways:

1. **Drawing connections between one’s self and the social world.** To varying degrees, all introductory sociology textbooks try to show students how their personal experiences connect to the larger social world. However, we employ two devices to make these connections clearer than in other textbooks. First, we illustrate key sociological ideas by using examples from popular culture that resonate deeply with student interests and experiences. For example, in Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass, we illustrate the main sociological perspectives (functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, and feminism) by analyzing changing fashions from Britney

Spears to Lady Gaga. Chapter 15, Families, analyzes new forms of mating, including hookups, friends with benefits, and living together apart. We analyze Canadian hockey to highlight central features of Durkheim's theory of religion in Chapter 16, Religion. Chapter 18, Mass Media and Mass Communication, gives us the opportunity to discuss the rise of social media and its consequences for identity, social relations, and social activism. In Chapter 21, Collective Action and Social Movements, we discuss the role of Facebook and Twitter in helping to mobilize the democratic movement in North Africa and the Middle East. We think these and many other examples speak directly to today's students about important sociological ideas in terms they understand, thus making the connection between self and society clear.

Second, we developed several unique pedagogical features to draw the connection between students' experiences and the larger social world. **Sociology at the Movies** and **Sociology on TV** take universal and popular elements of contemporary culture and render them sociologically relevant. We provide brief reviews of movies and television shows and highlight the sociological issues they raise and the sociological insights they embody. In each chapter, we repeatedly challenge students to consider how and why their own lives conform to, or deviate from, various patterns of social relations and actions. Many chapters feature an **It's Your Choice** boxed feature that sets out alternative approaches to a range of social problems and asks students to use logic and evidence to devise a course of action. Here we teach students that sociology can be a matter of urgent practical importance. Students also learn they can have a say in solving social problems.

2. **What to think vs. how to think.** All textbooks teach students both *what* to think about a subject and *how* to think about it from a particular disciplinary perspective. In our judgment, however, introductory sociology textbooks usually place too much stress on the "what" and not enough on the "how." The result is that these textbooks sometimes read more like encyclopedias than enticements to look at the world in a new way. We have tipped the balance in the other direction.

Of course, *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* contains definitions and literature reviews. It features standard pedagogical aids, such as a list of **chapter objectives** at the beginning of each chapter, a new **Time for Review** feature at the end of each major section in each chapter, a detailed **Summary** at the end of each chapter, and definitions of key terms in the margins of the text. However, we devote more space than other authors do to showing how sociologists think. The **Social Policy: What Do You Think?** feature asks students to think critically and form an opinion about social policy issues by bringing logic and evidence to bear on them. We often relate an anecdote to highlight an issue's importance, present contending interpretations of the issue, and then adduce data to judge the merits of the various interpretations. We do not just refer to tables and graphs, we analyze them. When evidence warrants, we reject theories and endorse others. Thus, many sections of the book read more like a simplified journal article than an encyclopedia.

If all of this sounds just like what sociologists do professionally, then we have achieved our aim: to present a less antiseptic, more realistic, and therefore intrinsically exciting account of how sociologists practise their craft. Said differently, one of the strengths of this book is that it does not present sociology as a set of immutable truths carved in stone tablets. Instead, it shows how sociologists actually go about the business of solving sociological puzzles.

3. **Objectivity vs. subjectivity.** Sociologists since Max Weber have understood that sociologists—indeed, all scientists—are members of society whose thinking and research are influenced by the social and historical context in which they work. Yet most introductory sociology textbooks present a stylized and unsociological view of the research process. Textbooks tend to emphasize sociology's objectivity and the hypothetico-deductive method of reasoning, for the most part ignoring the more subjective factors that go into the research mix. We think this emphasis is a pedagogical error. In our teaching, we have found that drawing the connection between objectivity

The text features **student-tested pedagogical aids.**

Time for Review

- What role do self-fulfilling prophecies play in labelling theory?
- How would a conflict theorist explain why street crimes receive more attention from the criminal justice system than does suite crime?
- A parent of a juvenile delinquent seeks your advice on how to get her daughter to conform. Based on control theory, what advice would you give?
- What have feminist researchers added to our understanding of criminal conduct?

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Define and measure crime.
- Distinguish crime from deviance.
- Compare and contrast the major sociological explanations of deviance and crime.
- Recognize the principal trends in social control and regulation.

BOX 1.2 Sociology at the Movies

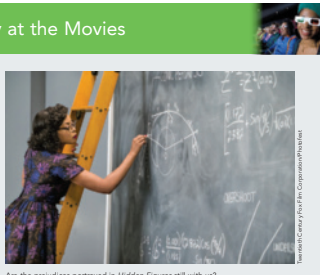
HIDDEN FIGURES

The high-stakes space race of the 1950s and 1960s is the stuff of legend. Celebrated in movies and history books, one might be tempted to think that John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, accomplished this great feat on his own. *Hidden Figures* sets the record straight by highlighting the contributions of three black women, exceptionally gifted scientists Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, whose work went largely unnoticed. In doing so, the film also sheds light on the pervasiveness, cruelty, and even absurdity of sexist and racist views at the time. No sphere of life, not even NASA's prestigious Langley Research Center, was exempt.

In the movie, as in life, Katherine Johnson, a math prodigy from an early age, is employed as a human "computer." Her ability to calculate complex math with speed and precision rivals and sometimes exceeds the first generation of electronic computers just entering the workplace. Her work is so trustworthy that John Glenn demands that she be the one to verify the estimates being spit out by the newly installed IBM computers.

Originally trained as a mathematician, Mary Jackson distinguishes herself by becoming NASA's first black female engineer. She first had to receive permission to attend classes where only whites were permitted. Dorothy Vaughan, a home-maker and high-school math teacher, is recruited to work alongside Katherine and Mary. She becomes the first black female supervisor and develops early expertise in computer programming. She needs permission to borrow books from the whites-only library to teach herself computer programming language.

The accomplishments of these three women are at odds with the treatment they receive in the aerospace community where they work and live. That is because, despite their obvious abilities, their contributions are always seen through the lens of race and gender. Because they are black, their work takes place in the segregated "colored" section of the company cafeteria. They are barred from the company cafeteria, so they have to place orders with a cafeteria attendant and then go back to their desks



Are the prejudices portrayed in *Hidden Figures* still with us?

to eat. The half-mile walk to the only bathroom for black women takes 40 minutes there and back.

As women, they are regarded as less competent and less ambitious than are men. They are paid far less than their male co-workers. They get passed over for promotion. Their contributions are ignored in scientific publications, even though each male engineer gets authorship. Every effort to be treated fairly is met with hostility and resentment by their male co-workers. At one point, head NASA engineer Paul Stafford dismisses Katherine Johnson's request to attend a meeting about John Glenn's upcoming mission on the grounds that "there's no protocol for women attending."

Hidden Figures reminds us how both ordinary and exceptional humans can be viewed by powerful ideas. Prejudice against blacks and women made sense and seemed justifiable to those who lived in the 1950s and early 1960s—history had not yet delivered the lessons of the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement. When those lessons arrived, the perceptions of most people inevitably shifted.

It is easy to see the faults of a different era. Less obvious are the prejudices that define our society and underlie our behaviour today. Most of us are sensitive

enough to refrain from expressing or acting on racist or sexist ideas. Nonetheless, some of us think of members of some social groups as inferior and therefore treat them poorly. Recognizing the ideas that envelop us for what they are requires an active sociological imagination. The sociological imagination urges us to connect biography with history and social structure—to make sense of our lives and the lives of others against a larger historical and social background and to act in light of our understanding.

Although for many people movies are just entertainment, they often achieve what the sociological imagination aims to accomplish. Therefore, in each chapter of this book, we review a movie to shed light on topics of sociological importance.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Are there parallels between the treatment of racial minorities and women in the 1950s and the treatment of some social groups today?
2. Are historical/social-structural explanations necessarily rivals of emotional/psychological explanations or can the two types of explanations be usefully combined?

BOX 10.3 Sociology On TV

MASTER OF NONE

The postmodern world is characterized by fluidity. In earlier times, social arrangements were clear and binding. Now they are ambiguous and up for negotiation. *Master of None* is a Netflix series that takes a serious and comedic view of postmodern social norms. The series opens with a situation without a standard protocol—what a newly intimate couple should do after a condom breaks. The following episodes explore norms related to different situations, including picking partners, reacting to sexism, texting, and interacting with parents.

The series includes several explorations of racism and related concepts. Racism is given special consideration in an episode called "Indians on TV." In this case, "Indians" refers to persons from the subcontinent of India, not a category of indigenous peoples. The episode opens with a montage of clips from movies and television where Indians are played to stereotype. Then we watch Dev and Ravi, Indians who grew up in North America, audition and compete for television roles for Indian actors.

Incidents of racism abound. A white female producer turns them down for refusing to use an Indian accent in audition. A male white producer finds them both perfect for a show with three male leads, but refuses to hire both under the rationalization that "there can't be two Indians on a show." In a misdirected email chain from a producer, Dev needs that he would have to "curry favour" in order to be selected.



In *Master of None*, Dev Shah discovers that being embraced by friends does not mean that he is fully accepted by society.

As abhorrent as racist incidents are, the fact that they are an institutionalized part of the social order raises serious questions about how they should be managed. A prominent question is "Who's responsible for change?" The white producers may be right when they claim, "I'm not who you think I am" and blame business decisions on public attitudes. On the other side, Dev is continuously caught between moral and utilitarian decision criteria. Should he speak up and confront the preparators of racist incidents and risk not getting work, or stay quiet in hopes of being part of a blockbuster television series?

Master of None shows us that confronting institutionalized racism is neither

simple nor straightforward. Strong individual and organizational interests are invested in the status quo. Finding the right mix of responses in terms of individual choices and social policies is difficult. The fluidity of postmodernity creates opportunities for progressive actions and challenges for institutionalizing them.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What difference does it make if more minorities play non-stereotypical roles in television shows?
2. What public policies and personal practices could be adopted to combat racism?

BOX 10.2 It's Your Choice

SHOULD WE RECRUIT FEWER IMMIGRANTS AND VISIBLE MINORITIES?

Canada has a remarkable record of ethnic and racial openness and tolerance. While there continues to be much room for improvement, we have little of the overt intolerance apparent in the United States and many countries in Europe. However, attitudes toward immigration and immigrants are social constructions and, as such, are prone to change.

The fluidity of public attitudes can be positive. When multiculturalism was as government policy introduced in 1971,

large proportions of the Canadian public were skeptical. They were concerned about ethnic and racial ghettoization and weakened commitments to Canadian identity. Gradually, as multiculturalism policies unfolded, public concern decreased, reaching a low point in 2005.

Since 2005, public opinion has become more mixed. Immigration and visible minorities. Intolerance varies by social status, with more intolerance apparent among older and less educated groups.

Age and education are not organized communities; political parties are. Political party affiliation shows remarkable differences in attitudes about immigration and visible minorities. Fifty-six percent of Conservatives report there are too many

immigrants coming to Canada, compared to 41 percent of Liberal supporters and 38 percent of New Democrats. "Too many visible minorities" was selected by 51 percent of Conservatives, 35 percent of New Democrats and 32 percent of Liberals.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you think that too many immigrants and visible minorities are entering Canada? What reasons do you have for your position?
2. Most Conservatives believe we have too many immigrants and too many visible minorities. What are members of this party trying to "conserve" that makes them significantly different from Liberals and New Democrats?

BOX 19.2 Social Policy: What Do You Think?

A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS ON CANADIAN CAMPUSES

Mental health problems are on the rise. Recall that the epidemiological transition means that chronic and degenerative diseases are becoming more prevalent. Mental illness is one of these conditions, with a fifth of Canadians expected to be diagnosed with a mental illness during their lifetimes. At the same time, efforts to combat the stigma around mental illness are beginning to pay off. In the past, nobody wanted to talk about mental illness. To do so was to invite shame and rejection. But times have changed. Popular media campaigns such as Bell's "Let's Talk" (<http://letstalk.bell.ca>) encourage people to talk about their mental health problems. Consequently, there is greater willingness to seek care.

The problem is that when Canadians go for help, they are often confronted with a system that cares only for those with the most serious mental disorders. In Canada, mental health treatment rendered by a psychiatrist or in a hospital setting is covered by provincial health insurance. Counselling services and psychological counselling are not.

The lack of provincial health-care coverage for mental health services is a

particularly acute problem in Canada's postsecondary institutions. More than half of Canadian postsecondary students have reported experiencing "overwhelming anxiety," almost 30 percent have contemplated suicide (ACHA, 2013). In parallel, there has been an astonishing increase in the number of students seeking crisis and counselling services, overwhelming campus resources.

For numerous reasons, colleges and universities are at the centre of this emerging crisis. Many mental disorders manifest themselves when people are between 18 and 24 years old, which coincides with the age of most undergraduate students. Moreover, many postsecondary students are living away from home for the first time. It's an opportunity to gain new experiences and experiment with newfound independence. However, not all choices are good ones. Fast-food diets and long nights in front of a computer screen are regular features of university life. Yet such practices, along with binge drinking and risky sexual behaviour, wear down the body's ability to stave off illness and cope with stress. And there is no doubt about it: University life can be stressful. The workload is heavy, there is never enough time. There are constant worries about mounting student debts and what the future holds. And don't forget the pressure to get good marks. Students who can't cope soon feel anxious and depressed. If left unchecked,

these feelings can lead to more serious mental health problems. What have provincial governments done to address unmet mental health-care needs among postsecondary students? Outside of some temporary funding, not much. No provincial government has considered legislation that would cover the costs of counselling and psychological counselling under its provincial health-care plan.

Left to their own devices, postsecondary institutions have implemented their own strategies for addressing mental health problems among students. Some schools have introduced a reading week in the fall semester. Getting time off in the middle of the semester has been wildly popular with students, who see it as an opportunity to catch their breath and recharge. Whether it will be enough to alleviate the mental health crisis on campuses across Canada is doubtful.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does your college or university offer to help students cope with stress? How successful do you think its efforts might be?
2. In 2017, the federal government announced new funding for mental health care. How do you think these funds should be spent?

Sociology at the Movies and **Sociology on TV** offer sociological insights gleaned from current films and popular television shows, and demonstrating sociology's vitality and relevance to students' lives. Accompanying thought-provoking questions encourage students to think critically about the films and TV programs they watch.

Social Policy: What Do You Think? invites students to engage critically with issues related to social policy. **It's Your Choice** teaches students that sociology can have urgent, practical importance—and that they can have a say in the development of public policy.

and subjectivity in sociological research makes the discipline more appealing to students. It shows how research issues are connected to the lives of real flesh-and-blood women and men, and how sociology is related to students' existential concerns. Therefore, in most chapters of *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*, the authors include a personal anecdote that explains how certain sociological issues first arose in our own minds. We often adopt a narrative style because stories let students understand ideas on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. We do so because when we form an emotional attachment to ideas, they stay with us more effectively than if our attachment is solely cognitive. We place the ideas of important sociological figures in social and historical context. We show how sociological methodologies serve as a reality check, but we also make it clear that socially grounded personal concerns often lead sociologists to decide which aspects of reality are worth checking on in the first place. We believe *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* is unique in presenting a realistic and balanced account of the role of objectivity and subjectivity in the research process.

4. ***Diversity and a global perspective.*** It is gratifying to see how much less parochial introductory sociology textbooks are today than they were just a few decades ago. Contemporary textbooks highlight gender and race issues. They broaden the student's understanding of the world by comparing Canada with other societies. They show how global processes affect local issues and vice versa. *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* makes diversity and globalization prominent themes, too. We employ cross-national comparisons between Canada and countries as diverse as India and Sweden. We incorporate maps that illustrate the distribution of sociological variables globally and regionally, and the relationship among variables across time and space. We remain sensitive to gender and race issues throughout. This has been easy for us because we have travelled widely, lived in other countries for extended periods, conducted research on countries other than Canada, and we speak multiple languages. As you will see in the following pages, our backgrounds have enabled us to bring greater depth to issues of diversity and globalization than other textbooks do.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

We have been gratified and moved by the positive response this book has stimulated from numerous readers and reviewers. At the same time, we benefited from their constructive criticisms so generously offered. *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* is a response to many of their suggestions, which are reflected in the main innovations in this edition:

- Throughout, we added new research findings and incorporated data from the most recent Canadian census to keep the book as up to date as possible. This new edition contains more than 80 new and revised figures, as well as 15 new and revised tables.
- We have increased and updated coverage of such timely issues as
 - ✓ ethical requirements for studying Indigenous peoples
 - ✓ virtual culture
 - ✓ feminist approaches to mass media
 - ✓ the flexible self and the Internet
 - ✓ mediated communication
 - ✓ online networks
 - ✓ the medicalization of deviance
 - ✓ the feminization of poverty
 - ✓ centenarians
 - ✓ Deaf culture
 - ✓ terrorism, ISIS, and the al-Nusra Front
 - ✓ online piracy vs. net neutrality
 - ✓ online activism and slacktivism
 - ✓ countermovements, such as Trumpism

- **Sociology at the Movies** is an especially popular feature of this book. Among other movies, we review *Captain Phillips*, *Zootopia*, *The Big Short*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snowden*, *Inside Out*, *Inferno*, *War for the Planet of the Apes*, *Hidden Figures*, *Spotlight*, *The Space Between Us*, *The Zookeeper's Wife*, *Hell or High Water*, and *The Hunger Games*.
- Our **Sociology On TV** boxes identify and explain the sociological significance of such popular TV shows as *The Crown*, *Suits*, *Westworld*, *Better Call Saul*, *Master of None*, *The Real O'Neals*, *You the Jury*, and *Mr. Robot*.
- **It's Your Choice** boxed features cover such timely topics as the need for a reduced workweek, the controversial role of prayer in public events, the consequences of immigration and growing racial diversity for immigrants and Canadian society as a whole, and the vaccination controversy.
- **Social Policy: What Do You Think?** boxed features cover hot topics ranging from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, physician-assisted death, Digital Taylorism, and the mental health crisis on Canadian campuses.

ANCILLARIES

A full range of high-quality ancillaries has been prepared to help instructors and students get the most out of *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*.

SUPPLEMENTS FOR INSTRUCTORS

About the Nelson Education Teaching Advantage (NETA)

The **Nelson Education Teaching Advantage (NETA)** program delivers research-based instructor resources that promote student engagement and higher-order thinking to enable the success of Canadian students and educators. To ensure the high quality of these materials, all Nelson ancillaries have been professionally copyedited.

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NETA Test Bank: This resource was written by Darlene Balandin at Western University. It includes over 2200 multiple-choice questions written according to NETA guidelines for effective construction and development of higher-order questions. The Test Bank was copyedited by a NETA-trained editor. Also included are true/false, short answer, and essay questions. Test Bank files are provided in Word format for easy editing and in PDF format for convenient printing, whatever your system.

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.



NETA PowerPoint: Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for every chapter have been created by Darlene Balandin of Western University. There is an average of 30 slides per chapter, many featuring key figures, tables, and photographs from *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*. 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.

NETA Instructor’s Manual: This resource was written by our textbook author Lisa Strohschein at the University of Alberta. It is organized according to the textbook chapters and addresses key educational concerns, such as typical stumbling blocks that students face and how to address them.

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.

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The following readers can be purchased at NELSONbrain.com in ebook or print format:

- *Sociology as a Life or Death Issue*, 4th Canadian edition, is a series of beautifully written essays in which Robert Brym introduces sociology by analyzing the social causes of death. It focuses on hip-hop culture, the social bases of cancer, suicide bombers, gender risk, the plight of hurricane victims in the Caribbean region and on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and the genocide of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. In doing so, it reveals the powerful social forces that help to determine who lives and who dies and demonstrates the promise of a well-informed sociological understanding of the world. This brief and inexpensive volume is an eye-opener, an inspiration, and a guide for students of sociology and for anyone with an inquiring mind and hopes for a better world for future generations.
- *Society in Question*, 7th edition, by Robert Brym, provides balanced coverage of the approaches and methods in current sociology, as well as unique and surprising perspectives on many major sociological topics. All readings have been chosen for their ability to speak directly to contemporary Canadian students about how sociology can enable them to make sense of their lives in a rapidly changing world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anyone who has gone sailing knows that when you embark on a long voyage, you need more than a compass. Among other things, you need a helm operator blessed with a strong sense of direction and an intimate knowledge of likely dangers. You need crew members who know all the ropes and can use them to keep things intact and in their proper place. And you need sturdy hands to raise and lower the sails. On the voyage to complete this book, the crew demonstrated all these skills. We are especially grateful to our publisher, **Leanna MacLean**, who saw this book's promise from the outset, understood clearly the direction we had to take to develop its potential, and on several occasions steered us clear of threatening shoals. We are also deeply indebted to the following crew members:

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PART 1 Foundations

CHAPTER 1

A Sociological Compass

CHAPTER 2

How Sociologists Do Research

1

A Sociological Compass

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Define sociology.
- Identify the social relations that surround you, permeate you, and influence your behaviour.
- Describe how sociological research seeks to improve people's lives and test ideas using scientific methods.
- Summarize sociology's major theoretical perspectives.
- Appreciate how sociology emerged out of the Scientific, Democratic, and Industrial Revolutions.
- Understand the main challenges facing society today.



Introduction

Why You Need a Compass for a New World

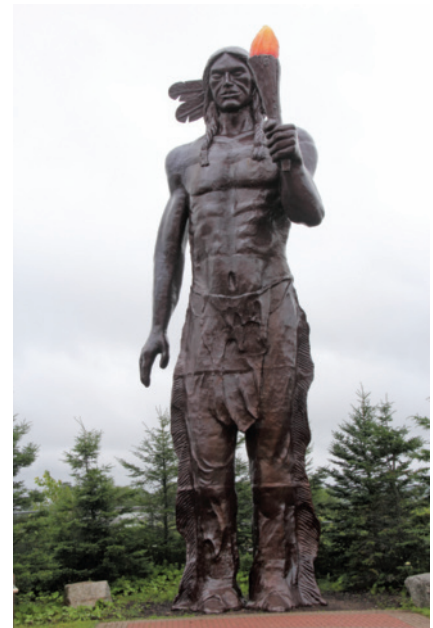
“When I was a small child growing up in New Brunswick in the 1950s, an Indigenous woman would come to our home from time to time, and my mother would serve us lunch,” recalls Robert Brym, one of this book’s authors.

“The woman’s name was Lena White. I was fond of Lena because she told good stories. During dessert, as we sipped tea with milk, Lena would spin tales about Gluskap, the Creator of the world.

“I liked Gluskap because he was mischievous and enormously powerful. He fought giants, drove away monsters, taught people how to hunt and farm, and named the stars. But he also got into trouble and learned from his mistakes. For example, one day the wind was blowing so hard, Gluskap couldn’t paddle his canoe into the bay to hunt ducks. So he found the source of the wind: the flapping wings of the Wind Eagle. He then tricked the Wind Eagle into getting stuck in a crevice where he could flap no more. Now Gluskap could go hunting. However, the air soon grew so hot, he found it difficult to breathe. The water became dirty and began to smell bad, and there was so much foam on it, he found it hard to paddle. When he complained to his grandmother, she explained that the wind was needed to cool the air, wash the earth, and move the waters to keep them clean. And so Gluskap freed the Wind Eagle and the winds returned to Earth. Gluskap decided it was better to wait for good weather and then go duck hunting, rather than to conquer the winds.

“Like the tale of the Wind Eagle, many of the Gluskap stories Lena told me were about the need for harmony among humans and between humans and nature. You can imagine my surprise, therefore, when I got to school and learned about the European exploration of what was called the New World. My teachers taught me all about the glories of the *conquest* of nature—and of other people. I learned that in the New World, an Indigenous population perhaps a hundredth as large as Europe’s occupied a territory more than four times larger. I was taught that the New World was unimaginably rich in resources. European rulers saw that by controlling it, they could increase their power and importance. Christians recognized new possibilities for spreading their religion. Explorers discerned fresh opportunities for rewarding adventures. A wave of excitement swelled as word spread of the New World’s vast potential and challenges. I, too, became excited as I heard stories of conquest quite unlike the tales of Gluskap. Of course, I learned little about the violence required to conquer the New World.”

In the 1950s, I was caught between thrilling stories of conquest and reflective stories that questioned the wisdom of conquest. Today, I think many people are in a similar position. On the one hand, we feel like the European explorers because we, too, have reached the frontiers of a New World. Like them, we are full of anticipation. Our New World is one of instant long-distance communication, global economies and cultures, weakening nation-states, and technological advances that often make the daily news seem like reports from a distant planet. In a fundamental way, the world is not the same place it was just 50 or 60 years ago. On the other hand, we understand that not all is hope and bright horizons. Our anticipation is mixed with dread. Gluskap stories make more sense than



Gluskap

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Sociology is the systematic study of human behaviour in social context.

ever. Scientific breakthroughs are announced almost daily, but the global environment has never been in worse shape, and AIDS is now the leading cause of death among people over the age of 14 in Africa. Marriages and nations unexpectedly break up and then reconstitute themselves in new and unanticipated forms. We celebrate the advances made by women and minority groups only to find that some people oppose their progress, sometimes violently. Waves of people migrate between continents, establishing cooperation but also conflict between previously separated groups. New technologies make work more interesting and creative for some, offering unprecedented opportunities to become rich and famous. But they also make jobs more onerous and routine for others. The standard of living goes up for many people but stagnates or deteriorates for many more.

Amid all this contradictory news, good and bad, uncertainty about the future prevails. That is why my colleagues and I wrote this book. We set out to show undergraduates that **sociology**—the systematic study of human behaviour in social context—can help them make sense of their lives, however uncertain they may appear to be. Five hundred years ago, the early European explorers of North and South America set themselves the task of mapping the contours of the New World. We set ourselves a similar task here. Their frontiers were physical; ours are social. Their maps were geographical; ours are sociological. But in terms of functionality, our maps are much like theirs. All maps allow us to find our place in the world and see ourselves in the context of larger forces. Sociological maps, as the famous American sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote, allow us to “grasp the interplay of [people] and society, of biography and history” (Mills, 1959: 4). This book, then, shows you how to draw sociological maps so you can see your place in the world, figure out how to navigate through it, and perhaps discover how to improve it. It is your sociological compass.

We emphasize that sociology can be a liberating practical activity, not just an abstract intellectual exercise. By revealing the opportunities and constraints you face, sociology can help teach you who you are and what you can become in today’s social and historical context. We cannot know what the future will bring, but we can at least know the choices we confront and the likely consequences of our actions. From this point of view, sociology can help us create the best possible future. That has always been sociology’s principal justification, and so it must be today.

The Goals of This Chapter

This chapter has three goals:

1. The first goal is to illustrate the power of sociology to dispel foggy assumptions and help us see the operation of the social world more clearly. To that end, we examine a phenomenon that at first glance appears to be solely the outcome of breakdowns in *individual* functioning: suicide. We show that, in fact, *social* relations powerfully influence suicide rates. This exercise introduces you to the unique qualities of the sociological perspective.
2. The chapter’s second goal is to show that, from its origins, sociological research has been motivated by a desire to improve the social world. Thus, sociology is not a dry academic exercise but a means of charting a better course for society. At the same time, sociologists use scientific methods to test their ideas, thus increasing the validity of these ideas. We illustrate these points by briefly analyzing the work of the founders of the discipline.
3. The chapter’s third goal is to suggest that sociology can help you come to grips with your century, just as it helped the founders of sociology deal with theirs. Today, we are witnessing massive and disorienting social changes. As was the case 100 or 150 years ago, sociologists now try to understand social phenomena and suggest credible ways of improving society. By promising to make sociology relevant to you, this chapter is an invitation to participate in sociology’s challenge.

Before showing how sociology can help you understand and improve your world, we briefly examine the problem of suicide. This examination will help illustrate how the sociological perspective can clarify and sometimes overturn commonsense beliefs.

The Sociological Perspective

Analyzing suicide sociologically tests the claim that sociology takes a unique, surprising, and enlightening perspective on social events. After all, suicide appears to be a supremely antisocial and non-social act. First, it is condemned by nearly everyone in society. Second, it is typically committed in private, far from the public's intrusive glare. Third, it is comparatively rare: In 2012, there were 11.3 suicides for every 100 000 people in Canada (compared with the world average of about 16 suicides per 100 000 people; see Figure 1.1). And, finally, when you think about why people commit such acts, you are likely to focus on their individual states of mind rather than on the state of society—we are usually interested in the events that caused individuals to become depressed or angry enough to do something as awful as killing themselves. We do not usually think about the patterns of social relations that might encourage or inhibit such actions. If sociology can reveal the hidden social causes of such an apparently non-social and antisocial phenomenon, there must be something to it!

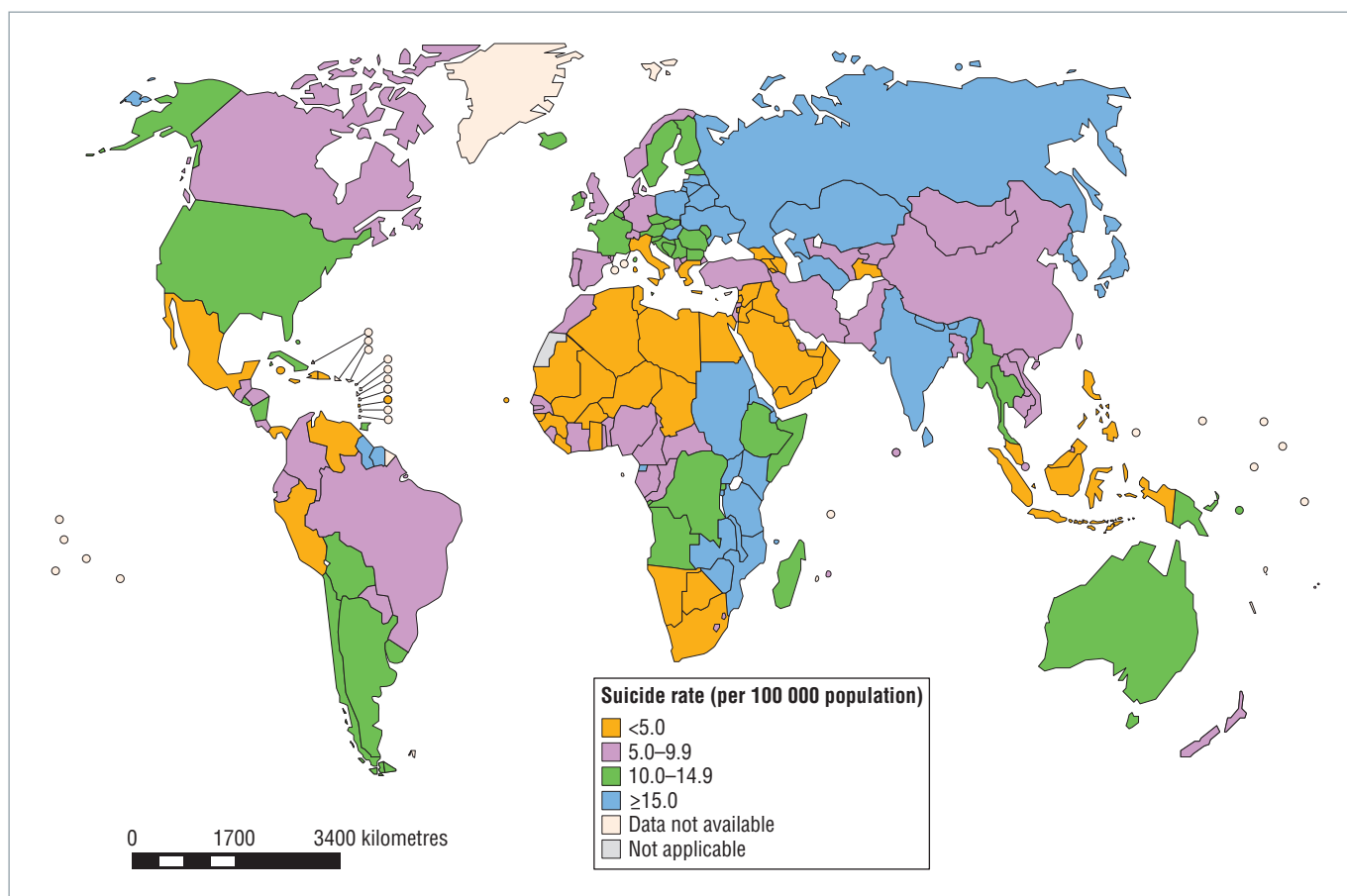
The Sociological Explanation of Suicide

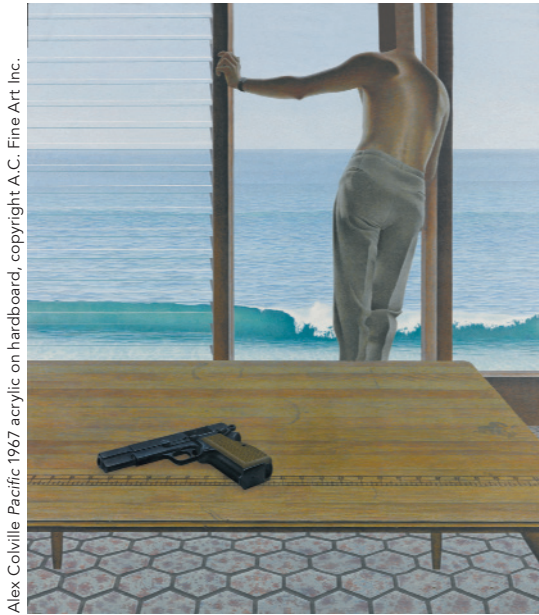
At the end of the nineteenth century, Émile Durkheim (1951 [1897]) demonstrated that suicide is more than just an individual act of desperation that results from a psychological

FIGURE 1.1

Map of Suicide Rates (per 100 000; most recent year available, 2012)

Source: Adapted from "Age-standardized suicide rates (per 100 000 population), both sexes, 2012." Copyright © World Health Organization 2014. http://gamapserver.who.int/mapLibrary/Files/Maps/Global_AS_suicide_rates_bothsexes_2012.png?ua=1 (retrieved 24 October 2016).





Alex Colville's *Pacific* 1967 acrylic on hardboard, copyright A.C. Fine Art Inc.

Alex Colville's *Pacific* (1967)
acrylic on hardboard

Social solidarity refers to (1) the degree to which group members share beliefs and values, and (2) the intensity and frequency of their interaction.

FIGURE 1.2

Durkheim argued that, as the level of social solidarity increases, the suicide rate declines—and then, beyond a certain point, starts to rise.

Durkheim called suicide in high-solidarity settings altruistic. Soldiers who knowingly give up their lives to protect comrades commit altruistic suicide. Suicide in low-solidarity settings is egoistic or anomic. Egoistic suicide results from the poor integration of people into society because of weak social ties to others. For instance, someone who is unemployed has weaker social ties, and is thus more likely to commit suicide than someone who is employed. Anomic suicide occurs when vague norms govern behaviour. Thus, the rate of anomic suicide is likely to be high among people living in a society lacking a widely shared code of morality.

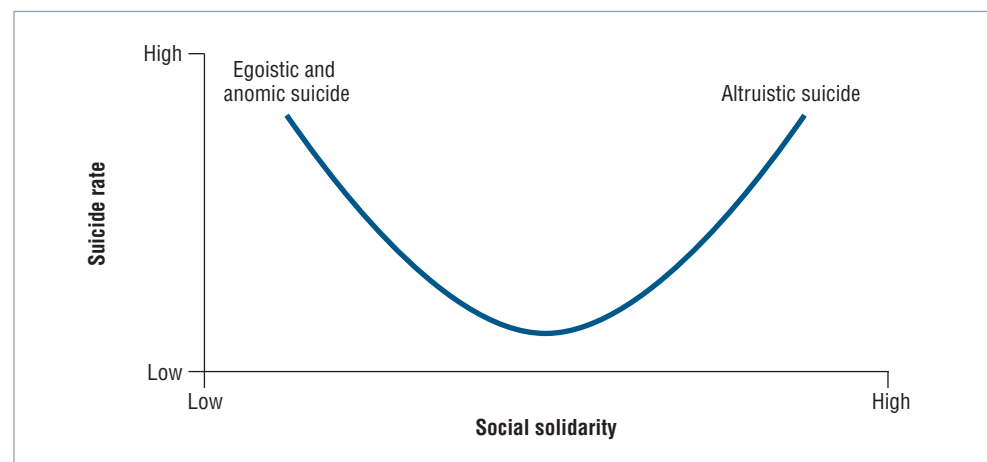
Source: Robert Brym

disorder, as was commonly believed at the time. Social forces, he showed, strongly influence suicide rates.

Durkheim made his case by examining the association between rates of suicide and rates of psychological disorder for different groups. The idea that psychological disorder causes suicide is supported, he reasoned, only if suicide rates tend to be high where rates of psychological disorder are high and low where rates of psychological disorder are low. However, his analysis of European government statistics, hospital records, and other sources revealed nothing of the kind. For example, he discovered that insane asylums housed slightly more women than men, but there were four male suicides for every female suicide. Among the major religious groups in France, Jews had the highest rate of psychological disorder, but also the lowest suicide rate. Durkheim also found that psychological disorders occurred most frequently when a person reached adulthood, but suicide rates increased steadily with age.

Clearly, suicide rates and rates of psychological disorder did not vary directly. In fact, they often appeared to vary inversely. Why? Durkheim held that suicide rates varied because of differences in the degree of **social solidarity** in various categories of the population. According to Durkheim, the more a group's members share beliefs and values, and the more often and strongly they interact, the greater their group's social solidarity. In turn, the greater the group's social solidarity, the more connected members are to society, and the less likely they are to take their own life if adversity strikes. In other words, Durkheim expected high-solidarity groups to have lower suicide rates than low-solidarity groups—at least up to a point (see Figure 1.2).

To support his argument, Durkheim showed that married adults are half as likely as unmarried adults to commit suicide. That is because marriage creates social ties and a sort of moral cement that connect individuals to society. Similarly, he noted that women are less likely to commit suicide than men are because women tend to be more involved in the intimate social relations of family life. He also wrote that Jews are less likely to commit suicide than Christians are because centuries of persecution have turned them into a group that is more defensive and tightly knit. And the elderly are more likely than the young and the middle-aged to take their own lives when they encounter hardship because they are most likely to live alone, to have lost a spouse, and to not work or have a wide network of friends. In general, Durkheim wrote, “suicide varies with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part” (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]: 209). Note that his generalization tells us nothing about why a particular *individual* may take his or her life. That explanation is the province of psychology. But



it does tell us that a person's likelihood of committing suicide decreases with the degree to which he or she is anchored in society. And it says something surprising and uniquely sociological about how and why the suicide rate varies across groups.

Suicide in Canada Today

Durkheim's theory is not just a historical curiosity; it sheds light on the factors that account for variations in suicide rates today. Consider Figure 1.3, which shows suicide rates by age and sex in Canada. Comparing rates for men and women, we immediately see that, as in Durkheim's France, men are three times more likely than women are to commit suicide. However, in other respects, Canada today differs from France more than a century ago. For example, in Durkheim's time, suicide was rare among youth. In Canada today, youth suicide is more common, having increased substantially since the 1960s.

Although the rate of youth suicide was low in Durkheim's France, his theory of social solidarity helps us understand why the youth suicide rate has risen in Canada. In brief, shared moral principles and strong social ties have eroded since the early 1960s, especially for Canadian youth. Consider the following facts:

1. More than half of Canadians attended religious services weekly in the 1960s. Today, the figure is less than one-third, and it is only one-sixth for people born after 1960.
2. While unemployment rose from around 3 percent in the 1960s to 7 percent in 2016, it was nearly twice as high for Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 in June 2016.
3. The divorce rate has increased sixfold since the early 1960s and out-of-marriage births are more common, so children now enjoy less frequent and intimate social interaction with parents and less adult supervision.

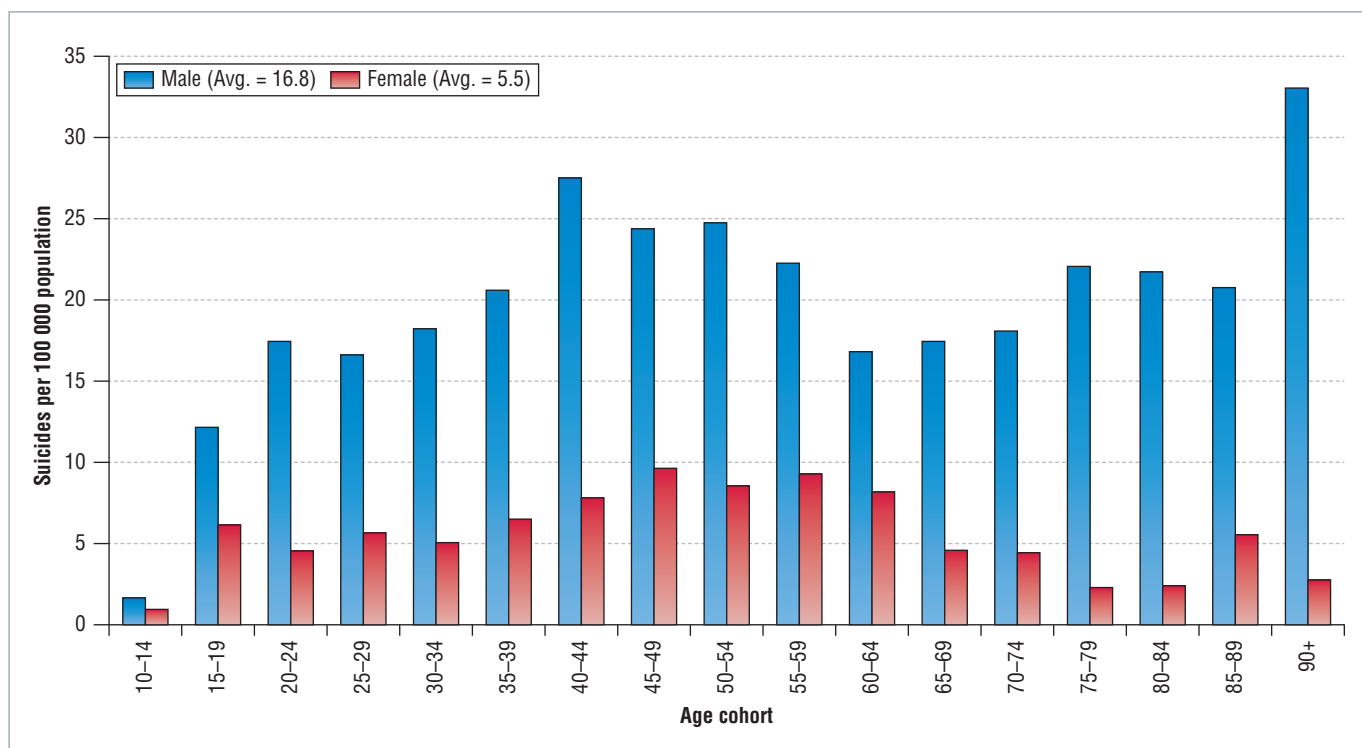


Dragon Images/Shutterstock.com

Strong social bonds decrease the probability that a person will commit suicide when adversity strikes.

FIGURE 1.3
Suicide by Age and Sex, Canada

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada. 2015. Suicides and suicide rate, by sex and by age group. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/hlth66a-eng.htm> (retrieved 24 October 2016).



4. Since the 1960s, an increasingly large proportion of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals have come “out of the closet” and are prone to being bullied, terrorized, and socially excluded in school. Consequently, a high proportion of youth suicides are committed by members of sexual minorities (Carole, 2011).
5. The Canadian government and major Canadian churches did much to destroy the social fabric of Indigenous communities in the twentieth century, resulting in extraordinarily high levels of unemployment, substance abuse, cultural disorientation, and suicide (see Box 1.1, It’s Your Choice, and Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). Today, Indigenous youth suffer from an extraordinarily high rate of suicide.

In sum, the figures cited above suggest that the level of social solidarity is now lower than it was just a few decades ago, especially for young people. Less firmly rooted in society, and less likely to share moral standards, young people in Canada today are more likely than they were half a century ago to take their own lives if they happen to find themselves in a deep personal crisis (see Box 1.1).

From Personal Troubles to Social Structures

You have long been aware that you live in a society. But until now, you may not have fully understood that society also lives in you. In other words, patterns of social relations influence your thoughts and feelings, affect your behaviour, and therefore help shape who you are. As we have seen, one such pattern of social relations is the level of social solidarity characteristic of the various groups to which you belong.

Sociologists call relatively stable patterns of social relations **social structures**. One of the main goals for sociologists is to identify and explain how an individual’s personal troubles are connected to the social structures in which the individual lives. This task is harder than it may seem at first. In everyday life, we usually see things mainly from our own point of view. Our experiences seem unique to each of us. If we think about them at all, social structures may appear remote and impersonal. To see how social structures influence us, we require sociological training.

An important step in broadening our sociological awareness involves recognizing that three levels of social structure surround and permeate us. You can think of these structures as concentric circles that radiate outward from individuals.

Social structures are relatively stable patterns of social relations.

Microstructures are the patterns of relatively intimate social relations formed during face-to-face interaction. Families, friendship circles, and work associations are examples of microstructures.

Macrostructures are overarching patterns of social relations that lie outside and above a person’s circle of intimates and acquaintances. Macrostructures include classes, bureaucracies, and power systems, such as patriarchy.

Patriarchy is the traditional system of economic and political inequality between women and men in most societies.

1. **Microstructures** are patterns of close social relations formed during the course of face-to-face interaction. For example, families, groups of friends, and work associates all form microstructures.

Understanding the operation of microstructures can be useful. Let’s say you are looking for a job. You might think you would do best to ask as many close friends and relatives as possible for leads and contacts. However, sociological research shows that people you know well are likely to know many of the same people. After asking a couple of close connections for help landing a job, you would do better by asking more remote acquaintances for leads and contacts. People to whom you are weakly connected (and who are weakly connected among themselves) are more likely to know different people. Therefore, they will give you more information about job possibilities and ensure that word about your job search spreads farther. You are more likely to find a job faster if you understand “the strength of weak ties” in microstructural settings (Granovetter, 1973).

2. **Macrostructures** are patterns of social relations that lie outside and above your circle of intimates and acquaintances.¹ Macrostructures include class relations and **patriarchy**, the traditional system of economic and political inequality between women and men in most societies (see Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification).

Understanding the operation of macrostructures is useful. Consider, for example, that when a marriage dissolves, partners commonly blame themselves and each other for their troubles. They tend to ignore the fact that, in our society, most married women who work full-time in the paid labour force are responsible for more housework, child care, and care for seniors than their husbands are. In most of Canada and in many other

BOX 1.1 It's Your Choice

SUICIDE AND THE INNU OF LABRADOR

The Canadians with the highest suicide rate are Indigenous peoples. Among them, the Innu of Labrador have the highest suicide rate. They are probably the most suicide-prone people in the world. Among the Innu, the suicide rate is nearly 13 times the rate for all Canadians (Rogan, 2001; Samson, Wilson, and Mazower, 1999).

Durkheim's theory of suicide helps explain the Innu people's tragic propensity to commit suicide. Over the past six decades, the Innu's traditional norms and values have been destroyed. Moreover, the Innu were prevented from participating in stable and meaningful patterns of social interaction. In other words, social solidarity among the Innu has been cut to an abysmally low level.

How did this change happen? Historically, the Innu were a nomadic people who relied on hunting and trapping for their livelihood. However, in the mid-1950s, shortly after Newfoundland and Labrador became part of Canada, the provincial and federal governments were eager to gain more control of traditional Innu land to encourage economic development. Government officials reasoned that to accommodate new roads, mines, lumber operations, hydroelectric projects, and low-level flight-training facilities for NATO air forces, the Innu would need to be concentrated in settlements. Furthermore, government officials believed that, to function in these new settlements, the Innu would need to learn practical and cultural skills associated with a modern industrial society. Consequently, governments put tremendous pressure on the Innu to give up their traditional way of life and settle in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu.

In the new communities, Canadian laws, schools, and churches strongly discouraged the Innu from hunting, practising their religion, and raising their children in the traditional way. For example, Canadian



Sniffing gasoline in Davis Inlet

hunting regulations limited Innu access to their age-old livelihood. Priests are known to have beaten children who missed church or school to go hunting, thus introducing interpersonal violence in a culture that formerly knew none. Teachers introduced North American and European skills and culture, often denigrating Innu practices. At the same time, few alternative jobs existed in the new communities. Most Innu wound up living in despair and on welfare. In the absence of work and lacking the stabilizing influence of their traditional culture, a people long known for their nonviolence and cooperative spirit became victims of widespread family breakdown, sexual abuse, drunkenness, and alcohol-related illness. In Sheshatshiu in 2001, at least 20 percent of the children regularly got high by sniffing gasoline. In Davis Inlet, the figure was nearly 60 percent.

In 2002, the federal and provincial governments decided to move the people of Davis Inlet, creating a safer community for them in Natuashish, 15 km away. The new community voted to abolish alcohol in 2008, but it is still smuggled into town, where a bottle of rye can sell for \$350. Some local mothers openly denounce people who supply alcohol and drugs, but substance abuse is still widespread and

anti-abolitionists may still be found in the local government (Moore, 2010).

What can be done about the tragedy of the Innu? A 1984 study showed that a movement among the Innu to return to the land and to traditional hunting practices for up to seven months a year led to a dramatic improvement in health. Participants in the movement led a vigorous outdoor life. Alcohol abuse stopped. Diet improved. Their emotional and social environments stabilized and became meaningful. Suicide was unknown (Samson, Wilson, and Mazower, 1999: 25).

However, it is doubtful that most Innu want to return to their traditional lifestyle. And even if they did, a big political obstacle would stand in their way: The governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador would not allow it. A widespread Innu return to the land would conflict with government and private economic development plans. For instance, the Lower Churchill Project (the second-biggest hydroelectric project in the world) and the Voisey's Bay nickel mine (the world's biggest deposit of nickel) are located in the middle of traditional Innu hunting and burial grounds.

The Innu are vigorously attempting to regain control of their land. They also want to be able to decide on their own when and how to use Canadian health services, training facilities, and the like. Whether some compromise can be worked out between government and private plans for economic development and the continuity of the Innu people is unclear. What is clear is that, as a Canadian citizen, the outcome is partly your choice.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways have European colonization and settlement been responsible for the plight of the Innu people?
2. Public opinion polls show that most Canadians tend to blame Indigenous Canadians themselves for their own problems. Why?

countries, governments and businesses support this arrangement insofar as they provide little assistance to families in the form of affordable and accessible daycare facilities, after-school programs for children, and the like. When spouses share domestic responsibilities equally, their marriages tend to be happier and divorce is less likely, but the unequal division of work in the household—an aspect of patriarchy—is a major