EXPLORING SOCIOLOGY

A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

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MICHELLE **WEBBER**

Fifth Edition

Brief Contents

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About This Course

To Our Colleagues

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*. As you will see, we continue to make significant revisions in several important areas.

Indigenous Council

We are fortunate to be able to continue to learn and grow from the advice and support of our Indigenous Council colleagues. At every stage of the revision process they were steadfast in their desire to use our textbook to promote understanding and compassion, and celebrate diverse Indigenous insights and perspectives. There were many times when their comments gave us pause, made us stop and reflect on our own positionality, and by doing so made our writing more informed and, hopefully, less colonial. We remain convinced that by working together we are building bridges to bring all our communities together.

For this edition, we created a series of new "From the Indigenous Council" boxes to highlight issues and topics that were particularly relevant and engaging to them. Topics explored in these boxes include the sexualization of Indigenous women, Indigenous views on traditional family structures, the use of terminology around race, dismantling colonial barriers within education, Indigenous access to health care, and the Idle No More social movement in Canada. We have included a number of "Indigenous Voices" audio files in which the Council members introduce themselves and discuss topics including intergenerational trauma and resilience, the gay liberation movement from an Indigenous perspective, and We'Wha's legacy within the Two-Spirit understanding of gender.

Our work in the fifth edition continues our belief that by working together, as White colonizers and Indigenous Peoples, we can promote understanding and compassion to end Canada's intergenerational, systemic, and institutional racism.

The members of our Indigenous Council are:

Brigitte Benning

Brigitte Benning is a Métis woman from Treaty 8, traditional and ancestral homelands of the Cree, Beaver, Dene, and Métis people—also known as Grande Prairie, Alberta. She graduated in 2018 from the University of Victoria, where she received both her Bachelor and Master of Arts in Sociology. During her graduate studies, she was a Visiting Scholar at Grande Prairie Regional College. This allowed for her to conduct her two-year research project with the On-Campus Friendship Centre regarding Indigenous-based support in postsecondary education. In addition to exploring the ways in which educational institutions are being Indigenized and decolonized, Brigitte is passionate about strength-based research and raising awareness regarding the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit folks +. Currently, Brigitte is the Indigenous Education Coordinator for Peace Wapiti Public School Division. In this position, she is able to work with liaisons, educators, administrators, and the community to ensure that Indigenous students are supported and encouraged, and that all students are learning the true history of Canada. She is grateful to be back in the prairies and humbly growing with her community.

Gina Metallic

Gina Metallic is a Mi'gmaq Two-Spirit womyn from the Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation in Quebec. Gina's graduate training in social work focused on Two-Spirit Identity development, her own coming-in journey, and the intersectionality between being a Queer, Indigenous, and hyper-feminine womyn. Gina is a Registered Social Worker through the Ontario College of Social Workers.

Karen Hall

Karen Edohai Blondin Hall is Sahtúgot'ine (person from Great Bear Lake) and grew up in Somba K'e (Yellowknife) of Denedeh (NWT). Her grandparents are Eliza and Edward Blondin and Hazel and Joseph Hall. She currently works as Senior Advisor, Indigenous Health for the Department of Health and Social Service of the Government of the Northwest Territories. In this role, she is responsible for leading the cultural safety work at the Department. Karen holds a B.Sc. in Health Promotion from Dalhousie University and an M.A. in Studies in Policy and Practice from the University of Victoria, where she focused her studies and research on Indigenous health inequities, Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous health research, and cultural safety.
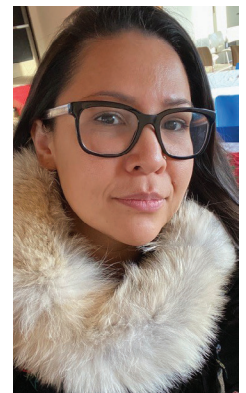
We are delighted to be working with our colleagues on the Council. By bringing together our unique voices we hope to demonstrate our commitment to actively engaging in reconciliation and decolonization processes.

Animals and Human Societies

With this new edition, we have updated or created new Animals and Human Societies boxes that appear in every chapter.

Our interest in highlighting the human–animal dynamic is inspired, in part, by the excellent work being done in the area of Critical Animal Studies, especially in Brock University's Department of Sociology, and we aim to recognize and celebrate the existing and emerging literature in this area of study. Some of the core concerns and questions that sociologists explore can be extended to the consideration of animals. From designer pets to commercial meat production to whether animals have culture, we highlight thought-provoking animal–human issues to help students apply their sociological imaginations to topics that they may not have considered before.

Other Notable Changes

As with our previous editions, we worked closely with Pearson to make sure that our review process included as many anonymous reviewers as possible and did our best to reach out to our existing text users regarding how we could make the text even better. While the individual suggestions from reviewers are far too detailed to list here, we can assure you that we carefully considered each of them and implemented most of them whenever possible and practical.

Beyond these revisions, we made further changes based on our teaching experience with the fourth edition. Some of the more notable changes for this edition include

- finding the most recent statistics available for all topics in all chapters,
- reviewing the most recent sociological literature available (in fact, the fifth edition includes over 580 new references), and
- updating/rewriting theme boxes to ensure they are timely and relevant and include questions to engage the sociological imagination.

In writing the fifth edition, we listened to our colleagues as well as ourselves as teachers to make significant improvements to every chapter. We hope that *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Fifth Edition, continues to help inspire both your own and your students' sociological imagination.

Text Features

Through its distinctive approach to the field, its readability, and its relevance to students' lives, *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Fifth Edition, helps professors develop the sociological imagination in their students by encouraging them to see sociology through multiple lenses. Topics are presented in ways that allow students to engage with the material and to exercise their sociological imaginations.

Students Looking Back Videos

New to this edition are a series of videos created by graduating sociology students, reflecting on concepts from Introduction to Sociology that resonated with them, and why. These videos confirm that the concepts we cover in first year do not end with the final exam but can inspire years of social exploration and personal reflection.

Why Sociology Matters Videos

Also new for the fifth edition are four videos by leading sociologists who speak directly to first-year students on their research and why sociology matters to them. These videos show students that sociology can transcend their classrooms and confirm a lifelong commitment to making the world a better place.

The authors bring over 40 years of experience teaching introductory sociology to a variety of students, in large and small classes, at a variety of colleges and universities. This text, therefore, is the culmination of many years of teaching and an expression of our passion for sociology and our commitment to our students. We created the following pedagogical features to inspire students to be as fascinated by sociology as we are.

Theme Boxes

Each chapter features a selection from four different theme boxes, all of which engage students with topical discussions to foster and to challenge their sociological imaginations.

Why Should We Care?   These boxes explore many of today's pressing social issues, such as honour killings, evolution and social Darwinism, Trans Day of Remembrance, Canada's record on Indigenous children, Syrian refugees in Canada, Black-focused schools, the anti-vaccination movement, discrimination in the criminal justice system, and more.

Issues in a Global Context   These boxes showcase and investigate issues around the world, for example, the Rwandan genocide, anti- and pro-natalist policies around the world, women's literacy, religion and politics in the Middle East, digital black markets, global media ownership, and fresh water as a commodity.

That Was Then, This Is Now   These boxes capture how society changes over time—what the Industrial Revolution can teach us about society today, the commercialization of academic research, soup kitchens in Canada, Viagra and masculinity, corporal punishment of children, credential inflation, being a Muslim in Canada, and Canadians' standard of living in historical perspective.

Canadian Contributions to Sociology   Highlighting sociologists working in Canada and their contributions to

sociology, these boxes showcase John Hagan, Bill McCarthy, Dorothy Smith, Michael Atkinson, William Carroll, Gary Kinsman, Himani Bannerji, Meg Luxton, Sandra Acker, Joel Thiessen, Marshall McLuhan, Mark Stoddart, and Ana Isla.

Animals and Human Societies These boxes explore the classic and new research that investigates how animals and humans interact. These boxes also examine some of the ways that animals interact with social institutions. The topics covered in these boxes are as wide-ranging as we could make them: from exploring the use of animals in the movies to a discussion of animals and our health. Each box is intended to get students to think about their relationship to non-human species from a new perspective.

Teaching Tools

Revel

The fifth edition of *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective* continues to be delivered through Revel. Fully digital and highly engaging, Revel lets students read, practice, and study—anywhere, anytime, on any device. Content is available both online and offline, syncs work across all registered devices automatically, giving students great flexibility to toggle between phone, tablet, and laptop as they move through their day.

Designed to help every student come to class ready to learn, Revel keeps students engaged as they read through each chapter by integrating videos, interactive activities, and assessments directly into the narrative. Thanks to this media-rich presentation of content, students are more likely to complete their assigned reading and retain what they've read.

In addition, embedded assessments such as quizzes and concept checks afford students opportunities to check their understanding at regular intervals before moving on. Assessments in Revel let instructors gauge student comprehension frequently, provide timely feedback, and address learning gaps along the way.

Last but not least, Revel allows educators to indicate precisely which readings must be completed on which dates. This clear, detailed schedule helps students stay on task by eliminating any ambiguity as to which material will be covered during each class. When they understand exactly what is expected of them, students are better motivated to keep up.

Learning Objectives

By outlining the learning objectives for each chapter, students have a roadmap to use throughout to ensure that they stay on track and maximize their reading.

Key Terms

Boldfaced within the text, key terms are accompanied by brief definitions in the margins to provide a visual and efficient means of building and reinforcing sociological vocabulary. The end-of-chapter material includes key terms lists that serve as a quick reference tool.

Reviewing the Concepts

Questions at the end of each chapter help students assess their understanding of the material and serve as good preparation for tests.

Applying Your Sociological Imagination

Found at the end of every chapter, these questions challenge students to flex their sociological imagination muscles through debate, discussion, and reflection.

To Students

Welcome! If you are new to your school or program, you are no doubt feeling overwhelmed. You have several classes to attend and dozens of assignments to complete. You probably work part time, and you may also take care of a family. Though we are older than many of you, we remember what it was like to be a student and to take a class in sociology. We did not have iPads, smartphones, or TikTok accounts but we remember being broke, not wanting to study on the weekend, being bored in one class but inspired in the next, and enduring all-nighters cramming for midterms and finals. We know the pressure you are under, and we tried to write this text in a way that will not only motivate you to take more sociology classes but also give you a wide range of resources to help you succeed in your other classes as well.

You will see in other textbooks and hear in other classes the value of *thinking critically*, of challenging ideas and the social foundations upon which they are built. However, you will discover that the ability to think *sociologically* will be critical to your success in any sociology course and in your life. What does that mean? To think sociologically is to put yourself within a larger social context and appreciate how individuals are influenced by the larger world around them. As sociologists, we are less concerned about whether you remember the definitions for specific terms (although this is certainly important) than we are about your ability to see the world as a sociologist. We wrote and revised this text with the intent of providing you with the tools to help you think *sociologically*, by asking you questions and presenting situations that inspire you to think like a sociologist.

Sociology explores the dynamic connections among individuals, groups, and the larger social world in which we all live. We are all connected to each other in diverse and fascinating ways. Through lectures and by reading this textbook, you will learn how social factors such as income level, gender, and minority status influence who we are and the people we become. You will discover that while it is easy and comfortable to be around people who share similar interests, there is tremendous value in engaging with those who are different from you. For a sociologist, human diversity is inspiring, humbling, fascinating, and challenging. We are diverse because we are female or male, of Asian or

Indigenous descent, from wealthy or poor families, young or old, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, trans, genderqueer, or genderfluid. We are in gangs or church choirs, we are mothers, and we are addicts—all our stories combine to create a rich social fabric that at times holds us together and at other times tears us apart. Every day we navigate our way through this tapestry that can make us feel lonely or loved, admired or despised. Sociology explores all these realities, and our goal in writing this text is to encourage you to begin your own exploration of this exciting and important field.

We hope your education in sociology will inspire you to move beyond our society's fixation with competition and financial success and replace it with a desire to improve the world around you. Sociologists believe that while the world is becoming more economically interdependent and technologically integrated, it may also be becoming less caring and compassionate.

Exploring Sociology and COVID-19

During the final stages of editing this edition, the pandemic struck. As teachers we went from giving lectures, holding office hours, and chatting with colleagues in the halls to moving our classes online, locking our offices, and closing our campuses. As people, we went from going to dinner parties and movies on the weekends to bingeing on Netflix and rarely leaving our homes. As sociologists, we went from reading journal articles about social change from the comfort of our offices to seeing society change right in front of our eyes. The world is a different place today than it was before the pandemic. As students just starting your journey into sociology, we want you to know that sociology as a discipline itself emerged during turbulent times and is designed to explore and explain the social transformations you are living through. There is no chapter in this textbook that is not relevant to understanding the pandemic and its aftereffects.

The pandemic shows how the concepts of racialization and colonialism can explain why Indigenous communities were more at risk from the virus because of systemic health inequities and the unique challenges faced by remote and fly-in communities. The pandemic brought economic inequalities to the forefront when working professionals easily transitioned to working from home while blue-collar workers were laid off or deemed "essential" and forced to work. The pandemic led to increases of interpersonal violence, including violence against women and children. Racialization, colonialism, social inequality, and gender are just a few of the concepts studied by sociologists that you will encounter in *Exploring Sociology*.

We hope you see in the pages and chapters that follow that sociology was designed to understand the world before, during, and after COVID-19.

A Note about the Cover Image

Sociologists uncover realities about the everyday world that often go unnoticed. For example, a sociologist looking at the cover image might be intrigued by the idea of "pulling back the curtain" on contemporary society, or that the person's arm is not White nor male, and that the person is wearing a bracelet with a West Coast Indigenous design. This might inspire them to appreciate that while Vancouver is certainly a beautiful city, the fact remains that it was built upon lands that were taken from the Katzie, Musqueam, Squamish, Stó:lō and Tsawwassen Peoples (to name only a few). Our cover image reveals so much about the need to *Explore Sociology*.

The bracelet in the cover image is the creation of Robert Davidson. Robert Davidson is one of Canada's most respected and important contemporary visual artists. A Northwest Coast native of Haida and Tlingit Descent, he is a master sculptor of totem poles and masks and works in a variety of other media as a printmaker, painter, and jeweler. He has worked as an artist and has produced an internationally acclaimed body of work. His work is found in a number of private and public collections including the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Canadian Museum of History in Hull, Quebec, and the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

About the Authors

BRUCE RAVELLI is an award-winning teacher who has loved teaching for over 30 years. Bruce has published textbooks and readers and written articles and chapters on Canadian culture, cross-national value differences, as well as students' anonymous evaluation of teaching. Bruce also co-developed award-winning free online software that allows teachers to anonymously assess their teaching/ courses at any point during the term (toofast.ca). He has held a number of administrative positions, including being Chair of the university-wide Appointments, Promotions and Tenure Committee (Mount Royal University) and Director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Academic Programs (University of Victoria). Bruce is a Teaching Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria, where he teaches Introductory Sociology and a fourth-year seminar on Applied Sociology using a Community-Engaged Learning model. To learn more about Bruce visit his websites (ravelli.ca and makingsociologymatter.com), or if you have any questions about the text or his teaching, feel free to contact him at bravelli@uvic.ca.

MICHELLE WEBBER received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. Her research interests lie in the sociology of higher education, sociology of gender, and labour studies. She has regularly taught introductory sociology over the last 20 years. Michelle has published articles and book chapters on feminist pedagogies, the regulation of academic work, the work of teaching assistants, the experiences of contingent faculty members, and feminist knowledges. She co-edited *Rethinking Society in the 21st Century: Critical Readings in Sociology* (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Editions) with Kate Bezanson. Her current research

project explores contingent faculty at Ontario universities. Michelle is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Brock University in Ontario. She has also served on the Brock University Faculty Association for several years and is currently serving as its President. She can be contacted via email at mwebber@brocku.ca.

Acknowledgments

Dedication

For all our students.

– BR/MW

Chapter 1
Understanding the Sociological Imagination

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students will be able to

1.1 Explain what the sociological perspective is.

1.2 Appreciate how social factors influence the development of self.

1.3 Understand the historical development of sociology.

1.4 Explain microsociology and macrosociology, and identify the leading theorists of each.

1.5 Describe the defining features of Canadian sociology.

1.6 Review the importance of a global perspective.

To a sociologist, everything people do is fascinating. Have you ever waited in line for a movie and watched the people around you? Perhaps one night you notice two people, who are obviously smitten with each other, holding hands. A few minutes later, you see some young men push through the line in front of the couple and snarl "Fags!" as they walk by. You think to yourself, "Why are some people so offended by seeing two people show that they care for each other?" *Hurtful*.

Have you ever driven by homeless people and wondered how they got there and why no one seems to want to help them? *Depressing*.

Have you ever walked by an elementary school in the winter and seen a young boy chasing a girl with a handful of snow, yelling that she needs a "face wash"? You cannot help but chuckle as you notice the young girl screaming with a huge smile on her face. But then you are struck by how young children are when they start believing that it is OK for boys to "chase" girls and all the negative gender stereotypes that result from such a mindset. *Disturbing*.

Have you ever wondered whether new communications technology has changed the nature of our relationships? Today, virtually everyone has a smartphone and an Instagram account, and many have Tinder, Bumble, Glimmer, or Grindr profiles. What influence, if any, do these forms of social media have on today's relationships? *Intriguing*.

All of these scenarios, and your feelings and emotions about them, interest sociologists. These situations illustrate that our entire existence is defined by the fact that we are social beings who live and grow through our interactions with others. Therefore, we cannot hope to understand ourselves, or the world around us, without investigating the interplay between the individual and the social—this is what sociology is all about. Once you can master how sociologists can instantaneously switch their thinking from individual to social, from privileged to nonprivileged, and from Western to global, you are well on your way to appreciating the beauty and uniqueness of the sociological endeavour.

The Sociological Perspective

1.1 **Explain what the sociological perspective is.**

sociology

The systematic study of human groups and their interactions.

sociological perspective

A view of society based on the dynamic relationships between individuals and the larger social network in which we all live.

As an academic discipline, sociology is dedicated to exposing you to a new and unique way of seeing the social world. **Sociology** is the systematic study of human groups and their interactions. To understand the beauty of sociology is to appreciate its distinctive view of the social world, often referred to as the *sociological perspective*. In essence, the **sociological perspective** is the unique way that sociologists see the world and can dissect the dynamic relationships between individuals and the larger social network in which we all live. Many people fail to realize how important social forces are in shaping our lives. As individuals, we feel that we make many decisions every day—for example, what you choose to wear to school or what you decide to eat when you meet your friends at the student centre. However, even these seemingly mundane choices have rich social significance and reveal a great deal about what sociologists find so fascinating about human behaviour. For example, your choices for what you wear or eat are socially defined (e.g., sombreros vs. baseball caps, pizza vs. haggis) and influence the decisions you feel you make on your own.

Charles Wright Mills and the Sociological Imagination

personal troubles

Personal challenges that require individual solutions.

social issues

Challenges caused by larger social factors that require collective solutions.

C. W. Mills was one of the most influential American sociologists of all time. Mills suggested that people who do not, or cannot, recognize the social origins and character of their problems may be unable to respond to them effectively. In effect, failing to appreciate how individual challenges are influenced by larger social forces diminishes a person's ability to understand and resolve them. For Mills, the individual and the social are inextricably linked and we cannot fully understand one without the other.

To explore this connection, Mills highlighted the difference between what he called **personal troubles**, which result from individual challenges, and **social issues**, which are caused by larger social factors. For example, your sociology midterm can be considered a personal trouble because you have to write it. If you study, you should

do well, but if you do not study, you might fail. If the exam is fair and other students did well on it, is anyone else responsible for your poor performance? Clearly, your grade would be considered a personal trouble. However, what if the entire class failed the exam? A low class average may occur because no one studied for the test, but this is unlikely. Instead, low scores would suggest that there is more going on—perhaps there was some confusion over what chapters and topics would be tested or perhaps the scores were tabulated incorrectly by the professor. In any event, a student who failed the exam might think of their score as a personal trouble, and to some extent it is, but once the class understands that everyone did poorly it may become a social issue—it involves a group of people, and collective action is required for the group's concerns to be acknowledged and potentially acted upon. So, once again, what appears to be a unique personal trouble (i.e., a test score) can be understood only if the student takes into account the larger social environment as well (i.e., how other students did, pressure to achieve high grades, etc.).

Charles Wright Mills

According to Mills, many personal troubles never become social issues because people rarely equate what is happening to them personally to the larger society around them. For example, if you receive a failing grade on a test, chances are you will feel embarrassed and upset and will probably stuff the test in your backpack—you might assume that you are one of the only students who failed and not want to draw attention to yourself. When people face situations of personal failure, such as on a midterm, very few ask for help. For Mills, not seeing such failure as partially, or entirely, the result of social forces is to lack what he called the **quality of mind**. The quality of mind has nothing to do with a person's intelligence or level of education; instead, it is the ability to see beyond personal circumstance and into the broader social context. For example, what would happen if no one in your class passed the midterm exam but did not tell anyone about it? No one would know that everyone else had failed; all of the students would think that they had to deal with their failure on their own, and a possible social issue (i.e., an entire class failing a midterm) would never be addressed. Mills (1959/2000) reveals the importance of possessing the quality of mind when he writes that without thinking beyond one's own condition, "much private uneasiness goes unformulated; much public malaise and many decisions of enormous structural relevance never become public issues" (p. 12). Can this concept be applied to the feelings that many students have when they fail a test? Yes, it can.

quality of mind
Mills's term for the ability to view personal circumstance within a social context.

When a student who has failed does not talk to classmates, family members, friends, or the professor about the test, there is little possibility for a social issue to emerge, even if everyone in the class failed. If no one talks about failing the test, then each student has a *trouble* and the class never realizes that there is an *issue*. Mills would say that these students lack the quality of mind because they did not try to understand their individual circumstance from within the larger social context: How did everyone else do? What could I have done better? How could I have studied more effectively? What have I learned from this experience? None of these questions detract from a student's responsibility to be prepared for all tests, but they recognize that the students are willing to think in social terms, even with regards to a specific situation.

To improve the quality of mind, Mills (1959/2000) argued that sociologists need to expose individuals to what he called the **sociological imagination**, which is the ability to understand the dynamic relationship between individual lives and the larger society. It involves stepping outside of your own condition and looking at yourself from a new perspective—seeing yourself as the product of your family, income level, minority or majority status, and gender. You employ the sociological imagination by asking yourself, *Who am I and why do I think the way I do?* This internal reflection requires us to think about ourselves differently and, by doing so, enables us to become more informed about the social forces that have come together to make us who we

sociological imagination
C. W. Mills's term for the ability to perceive how dynamic social forces influence individual lives.

are. When people can see their own histories in a social context, they cannot help but improve their quality of mind. Mills would suggest that people who judge others without understanding all of the issues involved may lack the quality of mind and thus view the world in black-and-white terms. Mills referred to people who are unable or unwilling to see the social world as it truly exists as **cheerful robots**. However, when people understand themselves and others through the sociological imagination, they appreciate that very few things are black and white. The true beauty in the social world is visible only when one sees the shades of grey.

American sociologist Peter Berger (1929–2017) also explores how how sociologists see the world. In his 1963 book, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective,* he defines the sociological perspective as the ability to view the world from two distinct yet complementary perspectives: seeing the general in the particular and seeing the strange in the familiar.

cheerful robots

People who are unwilling or unable to see the social world as it truly exists.

Peter Berger: Seeing the General in the Particular

According to Berger, seeing the *general* in the *particular* is the ability to look at seemingly unique events or circumstances and then recognize the larger (or general) features involved. For example, think about the last time you saw a street person asking people for spare change. Certainly, this is a specific and particular incident; it occurred at a specific time and place. But to see the general is also to recognize that while you may have seen only one street person, you know that there are many more you do

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BOX 1.1   THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION
Charles Wright Mills

by Kathryn Mills, daughter

C. Wright Mills was born in Waco, Texas, and graduated from a public high school in Dallas. He studied sociology and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin, where he was awarded his B.A. and M.A. in 1939. Mills obtained his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and began his teaching career at the University of Maryland, College Park, before moving to Columbia University, where he remained on the faculty until his death at the age of 45.

Mills's books are informed by his unique blend of progressive populism, classical social theory, intellectual and political muckraking, and advocacy of vigorous social responsibility combined with a strong respect for individual freedoms. He strove to create what he called sociological poetry in his empirically based works on American society, most notably *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951) and *The Power Elite* (1956). President Eisenhower's famous speech in January 1961, which outlined the dangers of the military–industrial complex, echoed Mills's warnings in *The Power Elite*.

Many people who followed Mills into the social sciences were persuaded to do so by his description of the promise of the sociological imagination and intellectual craftsmanship in his book *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). His writings in periodicals and his widely read short books, which he referred to as pamphlets—*The Causes of World War Three* (1958) and

Listen Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba (1960)—led many to refer to him as the father of the New Left in the United States.

Mills spent most of his adult life in New York and periodically lived abroad as a visiting professor in Copenhagen, Mexico, and London, but he stayed connected to his Texan and rural roots. He discussed his grandfather's cattle ranch in Texas, his Irish immigrant heritage, and the impact of his international travels on his thinking in his autobiographical writings, published posthumously in *C. Wright Mills: Letters and Autobiographical Writings*, edited by Kathryn Mills with Pamela Mills (2000).

Mills's major works have been translated into more than a dozen languages and are now available in editions with new introductions or afterwords by Todd Gitlin, Russell Jacoby, Nelson Lichtenstein, and Alan Wolfe. Each year the Society for the Study of Social Problems chooses one book to recognize with the C. Wright Mills Award, so named to honour Mills's "search for a sophisticated understanding of the individual and society" (see: www.sssp1.org).

As Dan Wakefield wrote in his introduction to the collection of Mills's letters and autobiographical writings, C. Wright Mills "addressed the world through his books and ideas, which shook up and energized the gray flannel 1950s and gave grounding and voice to the radicals of the 1960s. His work continues to illuminate, inspire, and challenge those who hope to understand and even to ameliorate the circumstances in which we live."

Source: Reproduced by permission of Kathryn Mills © 2008.

not see. To appreciate an individual circumstance like this and broaden your perspective to the larger social patterns that create and perpetuate homelessness in one of the richest nations in the world is to employ the sociological perspective. Indeed, the ability to move from the particular to the general and back again is one of the hallmarks of the sociological perspective. Our experience suggests that some students have difficulty switching from the general to the particular, but if you take your time and work through your own examples of both approaches, you will be able to do so more quickly and accurately with practice.

Peter Berger

Seeing the Strange in the Familiar

According to Berger, sociologists also need to tune their sociological perspective by thinking about what is *familiar* and seeing it as *strange*. For example, as you read this text, everything seems as it should be. Chances are that you are sitting at home or listening to it on the bus, doing your best to stay interested and take notes on the text so that you will do well on your exam. However, while all of this seems familiar and normal, if you really think about it, studying for exams is still strange.

Thinking Sociologically

Use Berger's two concepts to explore why people use Tinder or binge drink on campus, or why eating cows in Canada is considered OK while eating dogs is not.

Everyone, even those who have never attended university or college, understands that students need to go to class, memorize material, and pass tests in order to do well in school. But, why? Granted, professors need you to learn material by memorizing some fundamental concepts and definitions so you can demonstrate your command of the material on an exam; after all, they need something from you to justify your grade. But have you ever considered why students are graded in the first place? Is a student who gets an A in a course smarter than someone who receives a C? Do grades measure intelligence or command of course material, or do they simply demonstrate that someone is willing to memorize content? (See Galla et al., 2019.) In fact, many researchers question the value of grading student work (Tannock, 2015). Asking questions about grading suggests that the person is looking at what appears normal and familiar and starting to see grades as peculiar and strange—evidence of the sociological perspective, of having the quality of mind, and of beginning to develop the sociological imagination.

Sociologists understand that seeing one homeless person means there are many more we do not see.

The ability to see the general in the particular and the strange in the familiar is the cornerstone of the sociological perspective. As you will learn, sociology is less about remembering details and specifics than about seeing the social world from a unique position—one that allows us to understand social context and to appreciate the position of others. Clearly, the works of C. W. Mills and Peter Berger are complementary and speak to the essence of the sociological perspective.

Students study their course materials as one way to learn content and improve their grades.

What Makes You, You? Engaging the Sociological Imagination

1.2 Appreciate how social factors influence the development of self.

We all understand that we are individuals who think and feel independently of everyone else. Each of us, to some extent at least, has what some sociologists refer to as **agency**: the assumption that individuals have the ability to alter their socially constructed lives (Hvinden & Halvorsen, 2017). However, sociologists also stress the important role that structure plays in a person's life. Sociologists use the term **structure** to refer to opportunities and constraints that exist within a network of roles, relationships, and patterns that are relatively stable and persistent over time. For example, being employed as a receptionist in a large multinational corporation influences that person's life and their opportunities and challenges. However, structure refers not only to large social parameters like occupation, minority status, or education level but also to small interactions between individuals (Alwin, 2008, p. 423). For example, interracial or gay couples' relationships are in part defined by the larger society's views on race and the heteronormative ideal (McClintock, 2010; Naugler, 2010). These contrasting perspectives highlight the classic structure-versus-agency debate in social theory (Connor, 2011), which revolves around whether individuals behave autonomously or are the expressive agents of the social structure (Brey, 2008, p. 71).

Using some of the ideas and concepts of Mills and Berger, how would you attempt to explain who you are and why you see the world the way you do? Working through this process will help you to understand that, while we are all individuals, we are also the culmination of many social forces. Let's investigate *you* using five social factors and see which ones were the most influential in defining the person you have become.

Minority Status

Canadian sociological research suggests that people who are members of visible minority groups (Grady, 2016; Sethi, 2016), who have a physical disability (Branscombe, Daley, & Phipps, 2016; Jacobs, 2016) or a mental disability (McColl et al., 2016), or who are lesbian, gay, queer, or non-binary (Fredericks, Harbin, & Baker, 2017) face various

agency

The assumption that individuals have the ability to alter their socially constructed lives.

structure

The network of relatively stable opportunities and constraints influencing individual decisions and behaviours.

forms of discrimination. As a budding sociologist, ask yourself whether being a member of any of these groups would influence a person's view of themselves and/or the world in general. If you identify with a minority group, how does this affect you? Does your minority status influence how you relate to others or how you view other minorities? If you are a White person who has never been diagnosed with a mental disability and who is able-bodied and cis-gendered, you have experienced social advantage in Canadian society and are likely to have a positive and healthy self-image. However, can you appreciate how it might feel if you were a member of one of these disadvantaged groups? What might it feel like if others treated you as a second-class person, avoided eye contact, or, conversely, stared at you from across a room? Is it possible that these social experiences would influence the person you would become? By thinking about how you would react to these experiences, you are starting to apply your sociological imagination.

Gender

As we will explore in the chapters on Gender and Sexualities, society treats men and women differently. Canada, like virtually all human societies, remains a **patriarchy**—a system of rule that translates to "rule by the father" in which men control the political and economic resources of society. For example, Figure 1.1 shows the gender wage gap between 1998 and 2018. The graph clearly demonstrates that the gap is diminishing but still has a way to go. Why do you think equal pay for women is taking so long to achieve? If we think in terms of the general and the particular, you might argue that you know some women who make a lot more than some of the men you know. This may be true, but it does not diminish the importance of the overall trend, which is that on average, men still earn a lot more than women. If you also consider that many students probably believe that they live in a more equitable society than these numbers suggest, you might think that this is somewhat *strange*. Why do people believe in something that so clearly is not the case?

patriarchy

A pervasive and complex system where men control the social, political and economic resources of society.

Socioeconomic Status

As you consider the other students in your sociology class, are you aware of the different socioeconomic classes they represent? **Socioeconomic status (SES)** is a term used to describe a combination of variables to classify or rank people on criteria such as income level, level of education achieved, occupation, and area of residence. Would you agree that children from wealthier families whose parents are well educated, have

socioeconomic status (SES)

A combination of variables (income, education, occupation, etc.) used to rank people into a hierarchical structure of social status.

Figure 1.1 Gender Wage Gap among Employees Aged 25 to 54, 1998 to 2018

percent
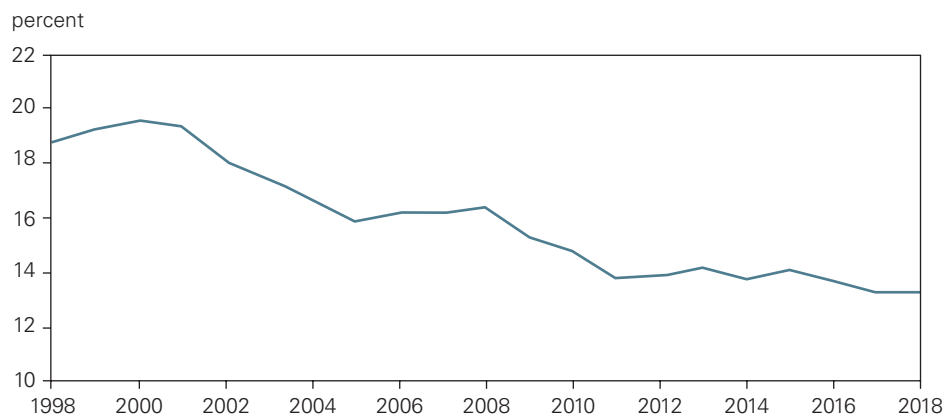
Note: The differences between men's and women's average wages was found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level in all years.

ascribed status

Attributes (advantages and disadvantages) assigned at birth (e.g., income level).

achieved status

Attributes developed throughout life as a result of effort and skill (e.g., course grades).

good jobs, and live in a nice part of town have an advantage over children who do not share the same level of prosperity? While wealth and opportunity are certainly *familiar*, it is also *strange* when you consider how lucky these people were to be born into the families they were. Sociologists use the term **ascribed status** to define a situation in which a person is assigned advantage or disadvantage simply through birth. For example, being born to a wealthy family has nothing to do with an infant's individual qualities, and being born rich usually means a person will have opportunities for postsecondary education and material pleasures. However, some people who are born to families with little money also achieve great wealth. For example, Guy Laliberté (creator of Cirque du Soleil), Garrett Camp (co-originator of Uber) and Jim Balsillie and Mike Lazaridis (creators of BlackBerry) all had humble beginnings and are now billionaires. Sociologists refer to this situation as **achieved status**, meaning the status a person has been able to gain through personal attributes and qualities. For example, while your parents "assigned" your income level (an ascribed attribute), your grades are the result of your effort and skill (an achieved attribute).

Thinking sociologically is to realize how people's beginnings influence what they can become. While many people can transcend their low socioeconomic status, they are the exception rather than the rule; sociology teaches us that the majority of those born poor remain poor (Keister, 2007).

Family Structure

As we have seen, socioeconomic status does influence a person's opportunities. Children's well-being appears to be almost always associated with their family's household income, according to a study by Statistics Canada (Phipps & Lethbridge, 2006). The study found that regardless of a child's age, higher income tends to be related to better physical, social/emotional, cognitive, and behavioural well-being.

BOX 1.2   WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Honour Killings

In 2009, the bodies of four women were found floating in the Rideau Canal near Kingston, Ontario. The women, ranging in age from 13 to 50, had been killed by their male relatives in what was described as an "honour killing." Honour killings occur primarily as a way to punish women for harming a family's honour. These four women (Rona Amir Mohammad and her daughters Zainab, Sahar, and Geeti) were killed because they dishonoured their family by living a "modern lifestyle" (CBC News, 2011). Rona Amir Mohammad's ex-husband Mohammad Shafia, his new wife Tooba Yahya, and their son Hamed were convicted in 2011 of four counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.

Honour killings are often thought to occur only in Muslim cultures, but experts point out that they occur in Christian, Hindu, and Sikh families as well (CBC, 2011). Researchers estimate that over 5000 honour killings occur each year and, of those, over 2000 happen in India and Pakistan alone (Honour Based Violence Awareness Network, 2017). In virtually all human societies, violence against women—including honour killings—is used as one way to control women.

Most Canadians would see honour killings as abominable acts, but they should also realize that these murders are part of a larger pattern of violence against women that infuses not only Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures but Canadian culture as well (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). Consider the fact that in 2017, 80 percent of all police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada was against women (Burczycka, 2018). While statistics indicate that honour killings are rare events in Canada, Canadian women are still the victims of physical, sexual, and social violence far more often than we would like to admit.

As sociologists, we try to understand and explain the religious, social, and cultural circumstances that might lead some people to kill members of their own family because of a perceived slight to the family's honour. We also want to help people understand that violence against women is not just a serious problem in "other" countries, but here at home as well.

Source: Prepared by Edwin Hodge, Ph.D. Department of Sociology, University of Victoria. Used with permission.

Table 1.1 Persons Living Below Canada's Official Poverty Line (Market Basket Measure), 2013 to 2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	thousands					% of all persons				
All persons	**4167**	**3910**	**4238**	**3739**	**3412**	**12.1**	**11.3**	**11.3**	**10.6**	**9.5**
Persons under 18 years[1]	974	836	900	755	622	14.5	12.4	13.3	11.0	9.0
In two-parent families	598	467	585	429	386	10.8	8.3	10.3	7.6	6.8
In female lone-parent families	310	292	252	288	185	41.2	41.9	36.4	37.3	27.1
Persons 18 to 64 years	2974	2831	3049	2701	2553	13.3	12.6	13.4	11.9	11.1
In economic families	1667	1522	1622	1342	1307	9.0	8.2	8.7	7.2	6.9
Not in an economic family	1307	1309	1427	1359	1246	33.4	33.0	35.8	33.8	31.3
Persons 65 years and older	219	242	289	284	238	4.2	4.5	5.1	4.9	3.9
In economic families	79	92	96	111	97	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.2
Not in an economic family	140	151	193	172	141	9.7	10.3	12.7	11.0	8.4

[1]Data do not add up to the total, as some components have been excluded.

Table 1.1 demonstrates that between 2013 and 2017, the percentage of all people living below Canada's official poverty line decreased from 12.1 to 9.5 percent. Further, the proportion of persons under 18 living in female lone-parent families has declined from 41.2 to 27.1 percent, which means that while the incidence of persons under 18 years in female lone-parent families living in poverty is decreasing, it is almost three times higher than the national average and four times higher than the number of two-parent families living in poverty. However, we should note that the overall downward trend is certainly a positive sign. As a sociologist, why do you think higher family income levels are so closely associated with children's well-being? As you consider your answer, are you reflecting on the structure of your own family and how it may influence your view of yourself and those around you?

Therefore, family structure influences a child's development to the extent that female lone-parent families tend to have lower incomes than two-parent family structures. As we will discuss in the Families chapter, there are many new types of families today, but they appear united by a consistent theme that suggests loving parents with adequate incomes generally raise productive and well-adjusted children.

Urban–Rural Differences

No doubt some of you reading this text were raised in small towns, while others grew up in cities. Do you think that where you grew up influences you? People who live in small towns report that they are distinct from urban dwellers and that their rural connections are an important defining feature (McGrane, Berdahl, & Bell, 2017). Bonner (1998) suggests that sociologists have been trying to explain and understand urban–rural differences since the Industrial Revolution. While structural differences between small towns and large cities certainly exist (e.g., access to health care, diversity in entertainment and cultural events), the nature of growing up in either location is more subtle and contextual. For instance, if you grew up in a city, do you ever notice subtle differences when talking to friends who grew up in small towns? Conversely, if you grew up in a small town, do you notice any differences when talking to friends from a city? Is it possible that where you grow up also influences how you view the world?

Thinking Sociologically

Use your sociological imagination to explore the following quote by American sociologist Peggy McIntosh (1990, p. 33): "As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had not been taught to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege."

As you can see from this brief analysis, our perceptions of ourselves and others are the product of many factors. As sociologists, our job is to try to view the world using the sociological perspective—to understand our own biases and investigate the social world by seeing the general, the particular, the strange, and the familiar.

Now that we have considered the sociological perspective and the relationship between social forces and personal social identity, we will explore how the discipline of sociology began and evolved.

The Origins of Sociology

1.3 **Understand the historical development of sociology.**

People have been pondering their place in the universe and their relationships with each other for thousands of years. The Chinese philosopher K'ung-fu-tzu (known today as Confucius, 551–479 BCE[1]) and the ancient Greeks engaged in elaborate discussions and writings about society in general and the role of the individual citizen in particular. In ancient Greece (circa 400 BCE), a group of educators called the Sophists (who were the first paid teachers) travelled the country and catered to the rich, who wanted to learn how to live well and be happy (Jones, 1969). The Sophists were the first thinkers to focus their efforts on the human being, in contrast to the earlier tradition that concentrated on understanding the physical world.

Later philosophers, notably Socrates (469–399 BCE) and his student Plato (427–347 BCE), challenged the virtue of being paid for one's knowledge and advocated the necessity of deeper reflection on the human social condition. Plato's *The Republic* is one of the most important works in Western philosophy, as it asks what social justice is and what the characteristics of a just individual are. Plato writes, "[o]ur aim in founding the State is not the disproportionate happiness of any one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole; we thought that in a State which is ordered with a view to the good of the whole we should be most likely to find justice" (Jowett, 1892, as cited in Abelson, Friquegnon, & Lockwood, 1977, p. 575).

After the Greeks, Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180), Muslim philosopher and scientist Al Farabi (870–950), Italian theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), British playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616), and English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) all explored the role of the individual in society.

The ideas that form the foundation of sociology, then, have been around for a long time. Although Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) is recognized as the first social philosopher working from the sociological perspective (see Zahoor, 1996), it was not until 1838 that the term *sociology* was coined by Auguste Comte (Périer, 1998, p. 343). For his naming of the discipline, Comte is often referred to as the father of sociology.

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[1] BCE means "before common era" and has become the dating convention to recognize religious diversity. It replaces the previous notation of BC, "before Christ."

BOX 1.3   ANIMALS AND HUMAN SOCIETIES
Critical Animal Studies at Brock University

Critical Animal Studies (CAS) is a rapidly growing field of research that aims to dismantle the existing systems of animal exploitation, domination, and oppression, while also deconstructing the human/animal binary. CAS rejects the speciesism and anthropocentrism that some argue forms the foundation of sociology (Carter & Charles, 2016). It first emerged in 2001 with the launch of the Centre for Animal Liberation Affairs and later became The Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) in 2007. CAS and ICAS now have active branches all over the world, including North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Europe.

Differing from Animal Studies (AS) or Mainstream Animal Studies (MAS), CAS emphasizes total liberation and uses an intersectional approach that advocates for the liberation of all oppressed groups, whether animal or human, and opposes all forms of hierarchy, discrimination, and domination (Best, 2009). A core focus of CAS is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and it advocates for a more public sociology, highlighting the relationship between academia and activism as an important force of social change.

Brock University was one of the first universities in Canada to offer courses examining animals and society. Dr. John Sorenson first taught "Animals and Human Society" in 1997. Today, Brock offers both a concentration and a minor in Critical Animal Studies to help students interrogate the animal–human relationship and how it operates at both personal and

Meet Darla. Darla is a Rhesus macaque who was rescued from Queens University in 2005 and now lives at the Fauna Foundation sanctuary. As you can see by the tattoos on her chest, she was subject to experiments in a lab setting. Darla is now the face of Critical Animal Studies at Brock University.

societal levels. Students at Brock can also study CAS at the graduate level in both the M.A. in Critical Sociology and M.A.

in Social Justice and Equity Studies programs. Brock's program focuses on progressive and emancipatory social change with faculty in the department exploring animal exploitation as patterns of inequality comparable to those related to age, ability, gender, sexuality, race, environment, and social class (Brock, 2010).

Credit: Courtesy of Karol Orzechowski.

Three Revolutions: The Rise of Sociology

In general terms, the emergence of sociology was a product of the time. So many striking changes were occurring in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe that people realized that a new science was necessary in order to understand and manage social change. Three revolutionary events inspired the rise of sociology: the scientific revolution, the political revolution, and the Industrial Revolution.

The Scientific Revolution

Auguste Comte

With the emergence of the Renaissance in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, the insights by thinkers such as Galileo, Newton, and Copernicus began to gain wider acceptance despite resistance from the Church. The development of the scientific method during the Enlightenment period that followed (circa 1650–1800) facilitated the pace of social change.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) considered himself a scientist and believed that the techniques used in the hard sciences (physics, chemistry, etc.) to explain the physical world should be applied to the social world as well. He believed that to really understand the inner workings of society, one needed to understand how human thinking has changed through time. Comte is well known for his Law of Three Stages, which defines how advances of the mind created three different types of societies (Udefi, 2009).

Many societies have used mythological beings to explain the world.

Comte called the first stage the *theological stage*. It was the longest period of human thinking, beginning with our earliest human ancestors and ending during the Middle Ages (roughly 1300). This stage is characterized by a religious outlook that explains the world and human society as an expression of God's will and views science as a means to discover God's intentions (Zeitlin, 1994). During this stage, people would explain what they could see through the actions of spiritual or supernatural beings. For example, how might early humans have explained where the sun went every night? They would not have been able to comprehend the idea of a solar system or that they were travelling through space on a planet. Instead, they might have argued that there were two gods responsible for taking care of them: the Sun God and the Moon God. The Sun God was there to light their world and help keep them warm. When it was time to sleep, however, the Moon God took over and looked after them until it was time to wake up and start hunting for food. Perceptions like these helped early peoples to explain the world and their place in it.

The theological stage concluded with the emergence of the Renaissance and later the Enlightenment, when science, not religion, was used to explain the world. Comte called this next stage of intellectual development the *metaphysical stage*. The metaphysical stage (metaphysics, or "beyond physics," is a field of philosophy dedicated to an understanding of truth and the relationship between mind and matter) was a period during which people began to question everything and to challenge the power and teachings of the Church. It was characterized by the assumption that people could understand and explain their universe through their own insight and reflection.

To explore what it meant to be a conscious being, people tried to experience and understand their world through abstractions such as emotion and beauty. Artists, musicians, and poets all attempted to inspire or capture some insight into the human condition through images, sounds, and words. These abstractions can be very powerful. For example, do certain smells remind you of your childhood? Do you remember how you felt when you were asked to stay home to protect the health of others during the COVID-19 pandemic? These smells and personal experiences are abstractions, but they may inspire powerful emotional reactions—feelings, passions, and fears that were explored during the metaphysical stage as an attempt to understand ourselves better.

Comte referred to the final stage as the *positive stage* (Westby, 1991, p. 137). During this period, which began to emerge during Comte's lifetime, he believed that the world would be interpreted through a scientific lens—that society would be guided by the rules of observation, experimentation, and logic. Comte argued that sociologists would be ideal leaders for this emerging society because they would be trained in the science of society: sociology.

The Law of Three Stages is an interesting way of looking at history, but sociologists today do not grant much credibility to Comte's ideas for two main reasons. First, the idea of having only three stages is difficult, as it assumes that human thinking is currently as good as it will ever get. Second, the idea that the third (and final) stage was just emerging during Comte's lifetime is somewhat self-serving. However, even with these limitations, Comte's commitment to a positivistic approach to the social world is worth exploring in more detail.

The scales of justice signify that everyone should be treated equally under the law. This view is consistent with Enlightenment thinking.

POSITIVISM **Positivism** is a theoretical approach that considers all understanding to be based on science (Hollinger, 1982). A positivist approaches the world through three primary assumptions (Bowie, 1990; Rhoads, 1991):

1. *There exists an objective and knowable reality.* Positivists assert that the physical and social worlds can be understood through observation, experimentation, and logic. This suggests that reality is objective and beyond individual interpretation or manipulation. For example, objective reality suggests that a chair is, in fact, a chair. While one could argue that the chair can also have objects placed on it, and in this sense can be seen as having table-like properties, one could not argue that the chair is actually a puppy. That interpretation and observation is obviously wrong; therefore, objectivity is an absolute. Conversely, subjectivity is the attribution of emotional or subjective interpretations. While a chair is a chair, could a person not have a favourite chair? If so, that person is deciding that there is more to a chair than its function, thereby making subjective interpretations that go beyond what is logical or defensible.

   The positivistic belief that we can understand our objective world is also grounded in the premise that we have the capacity to do so—that our physical and social existence is knowable. This sounds easier than it is. For example, theories try to explain the size of our universe (Alfonso-Faus, 2006). This seems fine, but can the universe actually end—and if so, what is just beyond it? Because of the overwhelming nature of the universe, we often say that it is infinite, but is that a valid answer or simply a reflection of the fact that we cannot explain how big the universe actually is? Positivists believe that we have the capacity to understand our universe and, thus, believe that it is knowable and that we can handle the answers that science will provide. Further, because these answers are objective and based on science, there is no room for subjective interpretation of the results.

2. *Since all sciences explore the same, singular reality, over time all sciences will become more alike.* Positivists assert that since there is only one correct explanation for the physical and social worlds, discipline and scientific boundaries will fall away as we progress in our studies and realize that all science is investigating the same reality. Thus, in the future there may only be one science instead of the divisions we see today (e.g., biology, chemistry, philosophy). As a student, have you ever noticed that some of the lecture materials in different courses overlap?

3. *There is no room in science for value judgments.* Since all science explores the same reality, only from different perspectives, there is no good or bad science. Searching for a vaccination to the HIV virus certainly may seem more socially valuable than investigating how to shrink the size of the hydrogen bomb so that anyone can carry one around, but positivists would argue that the science for both is equally valuable for furthering our understanding of the world. This is not to say that positivists would promote potentially destructive behaviour, but they would argue that the decision to explode a new bomb is a social one and should not be used as an excuse to avoid scientific exploration on how to shrink the bomb.

ANTI-POSITIVISM In stark contrast to the positivistic tradition is **anti-positivism**, which is a theoretical approach that considers knowledge and understanding to be the result of human subjectivity. Anti-positivists would challenge each of the positivist assumptions.

1. *While hard science may be useful for exploring the physical world, the social world cannot be understood solely through numbers and formulas.* Anti-positivists assert that the formulas that positivists use to explain the universe have

Positivists assert that science allows us to shine a new light on any question of human interest.

positivism

A theoretical approach that considers all understanding to be based on science.

anti-positivism

A theoretical approach that considers knowledge and understanding to be the result of human subjectivity.

meaning only when we collectively assign social value to them—that is, numbers have only relative importance. For example, you would probably feel gratified by an 89 percent on your midterm sociology exam. However, what if the class average turns out to be 96 percent? Your score has not changed, but your feelings about it probably would.

2. *All sciences will not merge over time, and no single methodological approach (i.e., science) can reach a complete understanding of our world.* Science has been able to teach us a great deal about our physical world, but anti-positivists suggest that to truly understand the human condition we need to appreciate and validate emotions, values, and human subjectivity. In fact, as we begin to understand more about our world, scientists are finding entirely new areas to research, and in this sense our sciences are becoming more unique over time.

3. *Science cannot be separated from our values.* Sociologists define **values** as those cultural assessments that identify something as right, desirable, and moral. As we have seen, positivists argue that all sciences are equal and should not be tainted by value judgments; after all, science is science. However, anti-positivists suggest that what we choose to study is also a social expression. Would any society consider the shrinking of the hydrogen bomb as worthy as finding a vaccine for the novel coronavirus?

values

Cultural beliefs about ideal goals and behaviours that serve as standards for social life and that identify something as right, desirable, and moral.

quantitative sociology

The study of behaviours that can be measured (e.g., income levels).

qualitative sociology

The study of nonmeasurable, subjective behaviours (e.g., the effects of divorce).

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SOCIOLOGY Reviewing the positivism–anti-positivism debate is an important grounding for an understanding of quantitative and qualitative sociology. The positivists' belief that science and experimentation will grant us the greatest insights into our world is in keeping with quantitative sociology. **Quantitative sociology** focuses on behaviours that can be measured—for example, the number of divorces per capita, crime rates over time, and the incidence of homelessness in Canadian cities. Conversely, anti-positivists' exploration of the world through human engagement, and their understanding that what is important is what we decide is important, is consistent with qualitative sociology. **Qualitative sociology** is the study of behaviours that cannot be counted so readily but still teach us a great deal about ourselves—for example, the emotional effects of going through a divorce, people's fears of living in what they think is an increasingly violent society (which is not the case, as will be explored in the chapter Crime, Law, and Regulation), and the social factors that influence a person's likelihood of becoming homeless. As you can see, quantitative and qualitative sociology can explore the same things, but they do so from different perspectives. Neither approach is better than the other; in fact, good sociology integrates components of both (to be discussed in the chapter on Research, Methodology, and Ethics).

The Political Revolution

The Renaissance and, later, the Enlightenment inspired a great deal of social and scientific change. With a new view of the world as separate from the teachings of the Church, society evolved to endorse democratic principles.

Renaissance thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), René Descartes (1596–1650), and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) challenged social convention and inspired new ways of understanding the social world. For example, Machiavelli's famous work *The Prince* (1513) suggests that human behaviour is motivated by self-interest and an insatiable desire for material gain (Zeitlin, 1994, p. 224). This was a controversial position at the time because those who had ascended to power were considered to have done so by divine right and thus should be followed. Machiavelli's assertion that anyone could become a prince—that nobility and power were not a birthright and that one could take power if and when the opportunity presented itself—challenged the establishment of the time. In fact, *The Prince* was considered

so revolutionary that it was placed on a list of prohibited books (*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*) in 1564 by Pope Pius IV.

René Descartes is most famous for his commitment to the idea that we are thinking beings, as captured in his famous phrase *Cogito ergo sum,* or "I think, therefore I am." This assertion seems obvious to us today, but at the time it was a liberating position to think that human beings were able to understand their world through rational reflection (a position that allowed for the emergence of Comte's positivism, discussed earlier). The idea that we are the masters of our own destiny was inherently revolutionary.

This position was also reflected in the works of Thomas Hobbes, who believed that people were driven by two primary passions: fear of death and the desire for power. This perspective led Hobbes to his infamous observation that our lives are "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Piirimäe, 2006, p. 3). According to Hobbes, the true nature of humankind is therefore self-preservation, and he argued that long-term stability can be achieved only when citizens join together and agree to forgo their individual power to the gains achieved within a collective. We will elaborate on Hobbes's theories in the Classical Social Theories chapter.

Many of the philosophical and social trends that began during the Renaissance continued to develop through the Enlightenment. Two of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers in the development of sociology were John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).

John Locke is perhaps most famous for his assertion that ideas are not innate and that all knowledge is the result of experience (Zeitlin, 1994, pp. 4–5). The belief that people are born as *blank slates* is one of the defining features of the sociological perspective. Locke argued that the only way to increase our knowledge is to gather more information about the material world through science and experimentation. Once again, we can see how these ideas challenged the primacy of the Church and a belief system based on faith rather than on objective facts.

While not as supportive of objective science, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings also contributed to the emergence of sociology. His greatest contribution to social theory was his challenge to the true nature of social life. Rousseau suggested that, prior to organized society, human beings existed in a *natural state* whereby an individual's desire was solitary and self-centred. (In this sense, his approach is consistent with the earlier writings of Thomas Hobbes.) As society developed, these early beings began to see the benefits they could achieve when they agreed to work together (i.e., the social contract). At its essence, the social contract is the acknowledgment that we achieve more by working together than apart; while we lose some of our independence, the benefits we assume (e.g., government, libraries, hospitals) far outweigh the costs (e.g., loss of autonomy, privacy, independence) (Westby, 1991).

From Machiavelli to Rousseau, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, philosophers and social activists promoted novel ideals such as individual rights and social responsibility, equality of opportunity, and the political ideology of democracy. These ideas challenged tradition and nobility, inspired great debate and reflection, and ultimately led to the American and French Revolutions. While we take these ideas for granted today, this transformation of how we saw ourselves, each other, and our entire society led to a restructuring of everything we knew, and it was into this period of tension and re-examination that sociology was born.

The Industrial Revolution

Our human ancestors subsisted through gathering and hunting activities for millions of years. Then, 10,000 years ago, everything changed. Virtually overnight, people decided to settle in one area to raise crops and domesticate animals (O'Neil, 2006). This change must have had extraordinary ramifications for early humans. Only

Many workers, including women and children, worked in deplorable conditions during the Industrial Revolution.

a few thousand years later, everything changed again. Around 1750, the Industrial Revolution saw industry replace agriculture as our dominant means of supporting ourselves and our families (Hooker, 1996).

The Industrial Revolution changed virtually every aspect of life: family structures (Bengtson, 2001), how people made a living (Delamotte & Walker, 1976), and even people's thoughts, dreams, and aspirations (Boxer, 2007). While many associate the Industrial Revolution with technological advancements (e.g., steam power, the cotton gin, electricity), what really inspired it were the profound social changes occurring at the time. Moving from an agricultural and rural economy to a capitalist and urban one has left a legacy that some would argue we are still trying to deal with today (Dawley & Faler, 1976; Rosenthal, 1992).

An agricultural economy is one based on local food production for local consumption. This means that farmers produce the food they require to survive without the need to compile vast surpluses for trade. Most nonagricultural goods (clothing, blacksmithing products, ceramics) were produced by individual families that specialized in manufacturing certain goods. Thus, most capitalist activity focused on mercantile activity rather than on production (Hooker, 1996). In these areas, then, the economy was local and people knew the makers of virtually all goods and services. Think of how this differs from life today. How many people today grow their own food or know the people who produce the things they consume? The movement from local production and consumption to regional and national distribution networks was largely the result of mechanization and industrialization. New production techniques created huge amounts of cheap goods that needed to be traded through larger and larger networks. Ultimately, the European economy became a global one. This expansion of trading networks for European goods drove the conversion from an agricultural to an industrial economy.

The emergence of the steam engine as a cheap means of power and locomotion was also instrumental in facilitating the rise of the Industrial Revolution. Millions of farmers abandoned traditional village life and moved into the rapidly growing cities in search of factory jobs (Hedley, 2002). The move from a rural to an urban environment led to a new series of social problems, including child labour in factories, crushing poverty, malnourishment, and exploding crime rates. Disturbed by these developments, early sociologists began to try to understand what was causing these conditions and what could be done to address them (Lindsey, Beach, & Ravelli, 2009).