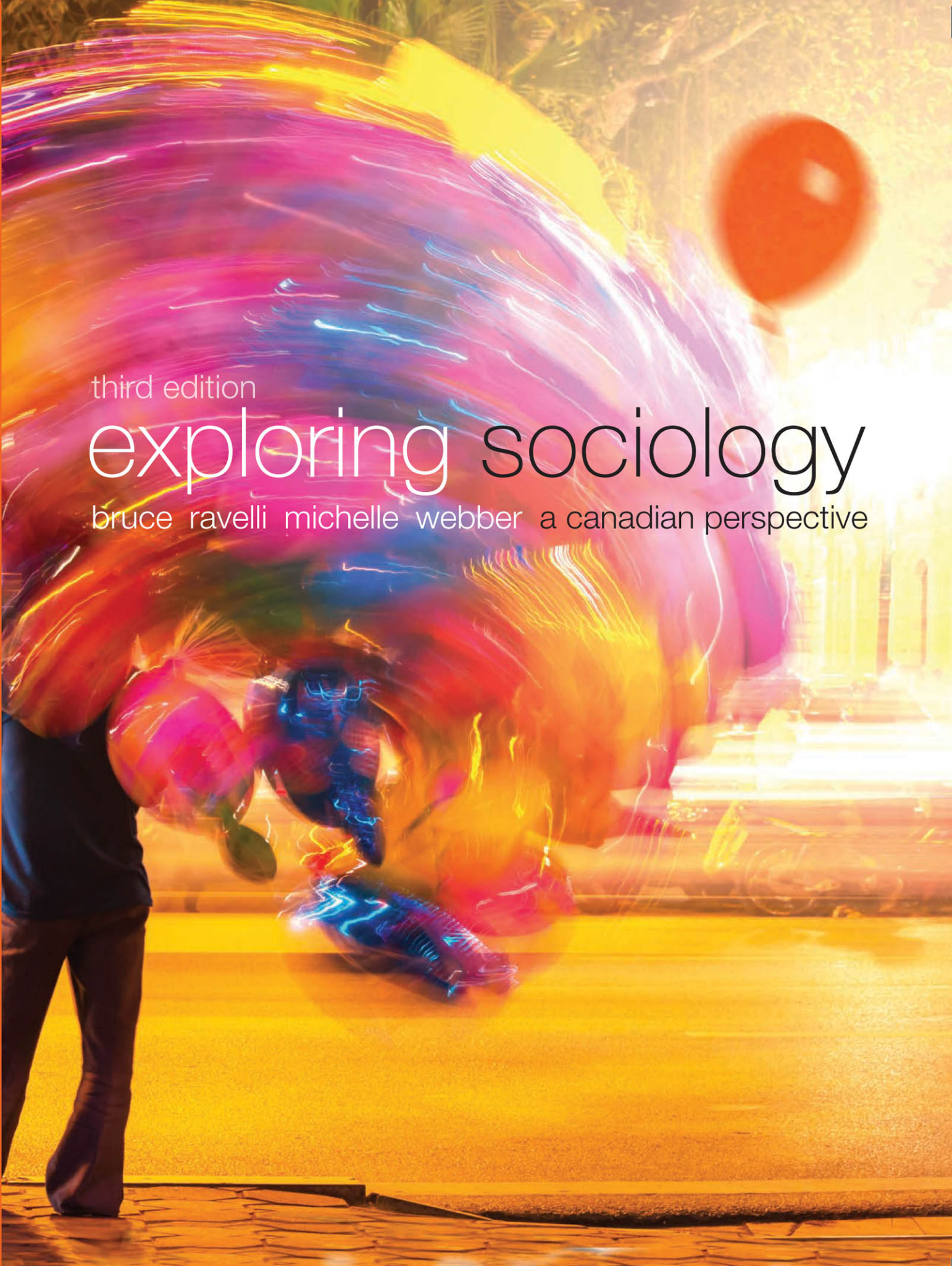
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For John and Lisa

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Preface

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the third edition of *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*. Over the past few years we worked very closely with Pearson to make sure that our review process included anonymous reviews from not only faculty, but also students from across the county. We have also engaged as many users of the text as possible to find out what was working for them and their students and what needed some attention. While the individual suggestions by reviewers are far too detailed to list here, the key recommendations we took away were that, while some felt there was still too much theory, we needed a deeper conversation about symbolic interactionism and some of the opening vignettes needed to be updated. Here is how we have responded to these comments.

First, we know that our text has too much theory for some; in fact, we know that we provide more theory than any other book on the market, but we do this intentionally. We believe that theory is the foundation for sociology and that students need to explore both classical and contemporary theory to fully grasp the sociological endeavour. In fact, the third edition actually provides a deeper analysis of symbolic interactionism and the work of Goffman than the second edition. While we appreciate that this may be too much material to cover in your lectures, we are convinced that the theoretical depth that this text provides gives students another vehicle to use to better understand theory.

Second, reviewers also suggested that some of the opening vignettes needed to be revised or updated. We agreed and have replaced or significantly revised almost half of them. We hope the changes make the chapters appear more engaging than they were before. Beyond these revisions to the vignettes, we made further changes based on our experience of teaching with the second 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
- updating/rewriting theme boxes to make sure they are timely and relevant and include questions to engage the sociological imagination

Writing the third edition, we listened to faculty, to students, and to ourselves as educators to make substantial improvements. We hope that *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Third Edition, continues to help you inspire your students' sociological imaginations.

Dear Students:

Welcome! If you are new to your school or program, you are no doubt feeling overwhelmed. You have a number of classes to attend and dozens of assignments to complete, you probably work part-time, and you may also take care of a family. While we are older than the vast majority

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 Facebook profiles, but we remember being broke, not wanting to study on the weekend, being bored in one class but inspired in another, 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 grasp important concepts and succeed in your classes.

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 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 between 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 Aboriginal descent, from wealthy or poor families, young or old, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, or pansexual. 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 of 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.

Here is our challenge to you, and here is the burden that you must now bear.

The challenge: Use the benefits of your education in sociology to improve yourself, your family, and those less fortunate than you.

The burden: You can no longer hide behind the cloak of ignorance to shirk your social responsibilities. From today forward, we hope you become more aware of the political and social world around you and that you take action where and when you see injustices occur.

Remember:

- Being a good sociologist means standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.
- Being a good sociologist means appreciating and supporting human diversity in all its rich and wonderful forms.
- Being a good sociologist means being humble—realizing that every person you meet has something to teach you if you are willing to learn.
- Being a good sociologist means living your life with equal parts passion and compassion.

We believe that the more people who share the sociological imagination, the more likely we are to leave this world in better condition than when we found it.

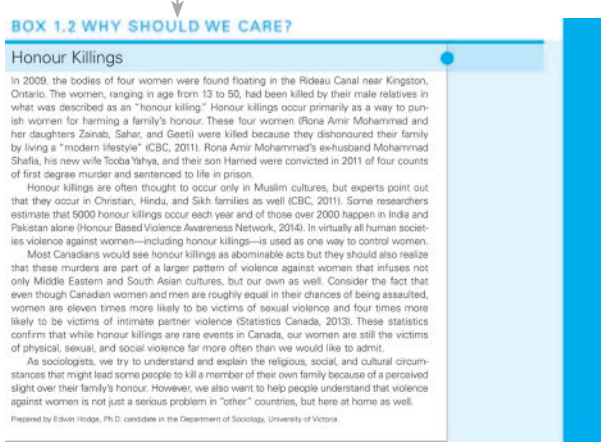
Text Features

Through its distinctive approach to the field, its readability, and its relevance to students' lives, *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Third 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.

The authors bring over 35 years of experience teaching introductory sociology to a variety of students, in large and small classes, at a variety of schools. 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.


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, 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). Some researchers estimate that 5000 honour killings occur each year and of those over 2000 happen in India and Pakistan alone (Honour Based Violence Awareness Network, 2014). 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 our own as well. Consider the fact that even though Canadian women and men are roughly equal in their chances of being assaulted, women are eleven times more likely to be victims of sexual violence and four times more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence (Statistics Canada, 2013). These statistics confirm that while honour killings are rare events in Canada, our 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 a member of their own family because of a perceived slight over their family's honour. However, 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.

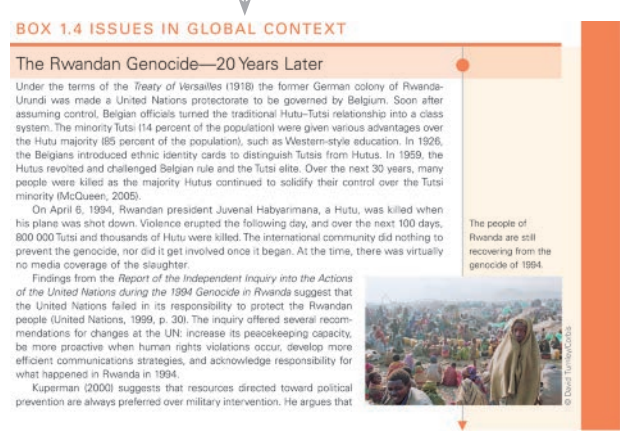
Prepared by Edwin Hodge, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology, University of Victoria.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

These boxes explore many of today's pressing social issues, such as evolution and social Darwinism, Canada's commitment to First Nations peoples, African-centric schools, the 2010 Gulf oil spill, and more.

ISSUES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

These boxes showcase and investigate issues around the world; for example, the Rwandan genocide, defining female beauty, child labour laws, sex trafficking, female circumcision, and religion and politics in the Middle East.


BOX 1.4 ISSUES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

The Rwandan Genocide—20 Years Later

Under the terms of the *Treaty of Versailles* (1918) the former German colony of Rwanda-Urundi was made a United Nations protectorate to be governed by Belgium. Soon after assuming control, Belgian officials turned the traditional Hutu–Tutsi relationship into a class system. The minority Tutsi (14 percent of the population) were given various advantages over the Hutu majority (85 percent of the population), such as Western-style education. In 1926, the Belgians introduced ethnic identity cards to distinguish Tutsis from Hutus. In 1959, the Hutus revolted and challenged Belgian rule and the Tutsi elite. Over the next 30 years, many people were killed as the majority Hutus continued to solidify their control over the Tutsi minority (McQueen, 2005).

On April 6, 1994, Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was killed when his plane was shot down. Violence erupted the following day, and over the next 100 days, 800 000 Tutsi and thousands of Hutu were killed. The international community did nothing to prevent the genocide, nor did it get involved once it began. At the time, there was virtually no media coverage of the slaughter.

Findings from the *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* suggest that the United Nations failed in its responsibility to protect the Rwandan people (United Nations, 1999, p. 30). The inquiry offered several recommendations for changes at the UN: increase its peacekeeping capacity, be more proactive when human rights violations occur, develop more efficient communications strategies, and acknowledge responsibility for what happened in Rwanda in 1994.

Kuperman (2000) suggests that resources directed toward political prevention are always preferred over military intervention. He argues that

The people of Rwanda are still recovering from the genocide of 1994.

© David Turner/Corbis

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

These boxes capture how society changes over time—whether the Industrial Revolution can teach us about society today, the commercialization of academic research, Canada's residential school system, credential inflation, the coexistence of science and religion, and life after the Kyoto Protocol.

BOX 2.3 THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Can the Industrial Revolution Teach Us Anything about the Cybernetic Revolution?

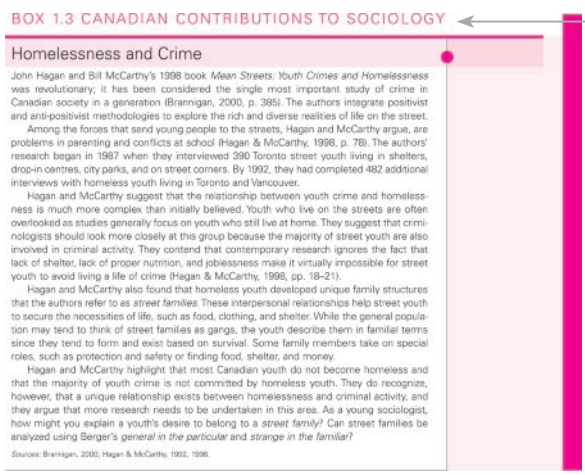
We often focus on the Industrial Revolution's technical developments: the mechanization it introduced and the invention of the steam engine and the printing press. Yet the Industrial Revolution was also "an intensely human experience" (Stearns, 1998, p. 57). We should not be surprised, then, that sociologists were and are interested in exploring its influence on society. In fact, during the period, "[n]o society managed to industrialize without massive social dislocation" (Stearns, 1998, p. 57).

The Industrial Revolution began in Western Europe and went on to change virtually every area of life. Massive transformations took place in people's jobs, their family life, and their government. People who had once lived in small, self-reliant farming communities were forced to work in factories, becoming dependent on wages and rarely consuming what they produced (Stearns, 1998, p. 5). As the population moved into cities, new social classes emerged: the ruling elite, who owned the factories, and the workers employed by them (Stearns, 1998, p. 7). Fathers and young children were obliged to leave the home and work in factories or mines to make enough money for their families to survive. However, even with these hardships, the family emerged as an invaluable source of spiritual life and support, a refuge from the stresses of paid labour (Stearns, 1998, p. 61). Government played a more central role in expanding railroads and creating new labour laws in the hope of diminishing child labour. It also provided funding for schools so that young people could be taught how to use the factory owners' equipment.

It is no wonder that some contemporary sociologists look to these insights to help them interpret today's changes. Given that we are experiencing a "cybernetic revolution" (Hansen, 2004, p. 16), the discipline of sociology "has a unique opportunity to provide critical analyses to make this next transition as informed as it can be" (Hansen, 2004, p. 18). Hopefully, some of the lessons learned from the Industrial Revolution will help us understand the immense social changes being inspired by information and communication technology (see Cheng, 2009).

Is it possible that the Internet and computer technology is (1) changing our economies from factories and the processing of raw materials to ones driven by information technology (e.g., the emergence of Google as a multi-billion dollar company), (2) altering the nature of our families and other personal relationships (e.g., increase in online dating services and online pornography), and (3) influencing political decision-making (e.g., impact of former NSA employee Edward Snowden)? What comparisons might we draw between the Industrial and cybernetic revolutions? Can any of the classical theories be applied to the changes brought about by communication technology?

This article is also a peerScholar assignment in MySocLab.



BOX 1.3 CANADIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIOLOGY

Homelessness and Crime

John Hagan and Bill McCarthy's 1998 book *Mean Streets: Youth Crimes and Homelessness* was revolutionary; it has been considered the single most important study of crime in Canadian society in a generation (Brannigan, 2000, p. 385). The authors integrate positivist and anti-positivist methodologies to explore the rich and diverse realities of life on the street.

Among the forces that send young people to the streets, Hagan and McCarthy argue, are problems in parenting and conflicts at school (Hagan & McCarthy, 1998, p. 78). The authors' research began in 1987 when they interviewed 390 Toronto street youth living in shelters, drop-in centres, city parks, and on street corners. By 1992, they had completed 482 additional interviews with homeless youth living in Toronto and Vancouver.

Hagan and McCarthy suggest that the relationship between youth crime and homelessness is much more complex than initially believed. Youth who live on the streets are often overlooked as studies generally focus on youth who still live at home. They suggest that criminologists should look more closely at this group because the majority of street youth are also involved in criminal activity. They contend that contemporary research ignores the fact that lack of shelter, lack of proper nutrition, and joblessness make it virtually impossible for street youth to avoid living a life of crime (Hagan & McCarthy, 1998, pp. 18–21).

Hagan and McCarthy also found that homeless youth developed unique family structures that the authors refer to as *street families*. These interpersonal relationships help street youth to secure the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. While the general population may tend to think of street families as gangs, the youth describe them in familial terms since they tend to form and exist based on survival. Some family members take on special roles, such as protection and safety or finding food, shelter, and money.

Hagan and McCarthy highlight that most Canadian youth do not become homeless and that the majority of youth crime is not committed by homeless youth. They do recognize, however, that a unique relationship exists between homelessness and criminal activity, and they argue that more research needs to be undertaken in this area. As a young sociologist, how might you explain a youth's desire to belong to a *street family*? Can street families be analyzed using Berger's *general in the particular* and *strange in the familiar*?

Sources: Brannigan, 2000; Hagan & McCarthy, 1992, 1998.

CANADIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIOLOGY

Highlighting sociologists working in Canada and their contributions to sociology, these boxes showcase John Hagan and Bill McCarthy, Dorothy Smith, Michael Atkinson, William Carroll, Gary Kinsman, Himani Bannerji, Meg Luxton, Sandra Acker, Marshall McLuhan, Suzanne Staggenborg, and Ana Isla.

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE TEXT

We believe that theory is the foundation for sociology. *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Third Edition, is the only Canadian textbook to devote an entire chapter each to classical and contemporary theories, respectively. Providing students and professors with a more complete discussion of theory will allow more opportunity for discussion, reflection, and debate about the strengths and weaknesses of various sociological insights. All chapters apply relevant sociological theories to the topics throughout each chapter. And *Exploring Sociology* remains the *only* textbook to incorporate post-structural theory throughout.

We also devote chapters to gender and sexualities, respectively, and integrate a complete discussion of racialization and post-colonialism into our analysis of minority populations. This approach is inspired by each of our complementary sociological backgrounds and training. By building upon our differences, we are able to present an even-handed yet challenging review of the sociological landscape.

Teaching Tools

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

Each chapter begins with a brief overview of the key topics to be covered, allowing students to focus their reading and to integrate material from one chapter to the next.

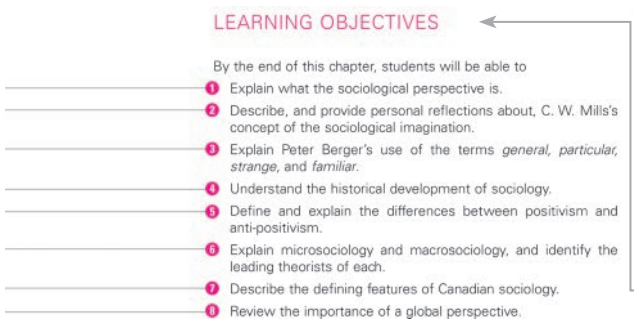
To a sociologist, everything people do is fascinating. Have you ever waited in line for a movie and watched the people around you? One night, you notice two people, who are obviously smitten with each other, holding hands. A few minutes later, you see some young men push through the line in front of 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. You remember that boys and girls at that age show who they like by acting as though they don't. *Interesting.*

Have you ever wondered whether new communications technology has changed the nature of our relationships? Today, virtually everyone has a cellphone, many have a Facebook profile, and perhaps a few even have a cottage in High Fidelity. What influence, if any, do these forms of communication have on today's relationships? *Intriguing.*

All of these scenarios, and your feelings and emotions about them, are of interest to sociology. These situations illustrate that our entire existence is defined by the reality 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.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

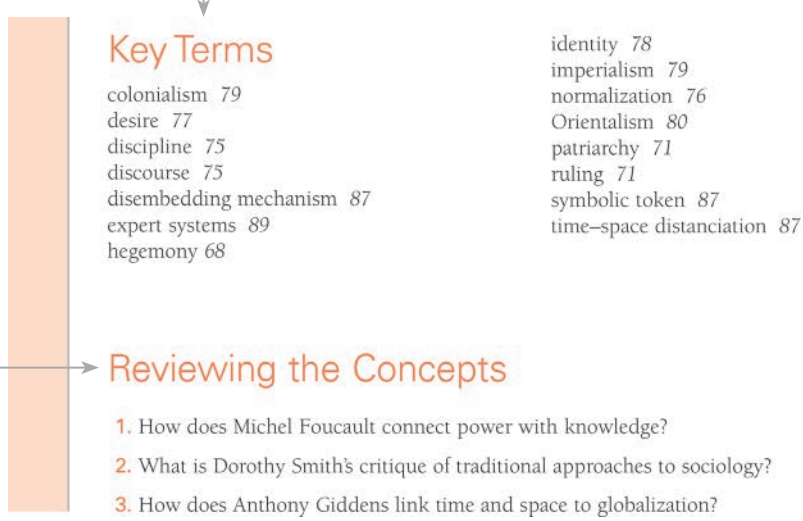
1. Explain what the sociological perspective is.
2. Describe, and provide personal reflections about, C. W. Mills's concept of the sociological imagination.
3. Explain Peter Berger's use of the terms *general, particular, strange,* and *familiar.*
4. Understand the historical development of sociology.
5. Define and explain the differences between positivism and anti-positivism.
6. Explain microsociology and macrosociology, and identify the leading theorists of each.
7. Describe the defining features of Canadian sociology.
8. Review the importance of a global perspective.

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, organized alphabetically, which serve as a quick reference tool.



Key Terms

colonialism *79*
desire *77*
discipline *75*
discourse *75*
disembedding mechanism *87*
expert systems *89*
hegemony *68*
identity *78*
imperialism *79*
normalization *76*
Orientalism *80*
patriarchy *71*
ruling *71*
symbolic token *87*
time–space distanciation *87*

Reviewing the Concepts

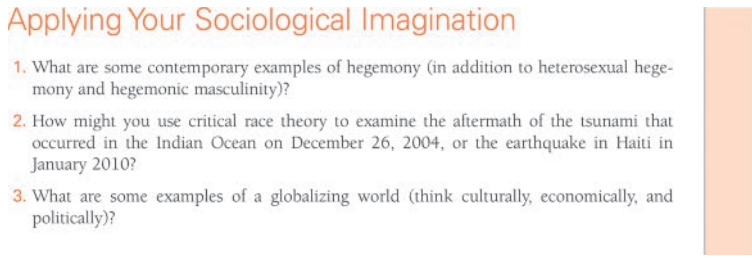
1. How does Michel Foucault connect power with knowledge?
2. What is Dorothy Smith's critique of traditional approaches to sociology?
3. How does Anthony Giddens link time and space to globalization?

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.


Applying Your Sociological Imagination

1. What are some contemporary examples of hegemony (in addition to heterosexual hegemony and hegemonic masculinity)?
2. How might you use critical race theory to examine the aftermath of the tsunami that occurred in the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004, or the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010?
3. What are some examples of a globalizing world (think culturally, economically, and politically)?

For the Instructor

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

The following instructor supplements are available for downloading from a password-protected section of Pearson Canada's online catalogue (www.pearsoned.ca/highered). Navigate to your book's catalogue page to view a list of supplements that are available. See your local sales representative for details and access.

Instructor's Resource Manual This useful teaching aid provides two complementary resources for each chapter: One offers an overview of the key terms and material within the chapter and the other features chapter and issue overviews, student assignments, and more.

PowerPoint® Presentations PowerPoint slides consist of graphics and text to provide pre-made lecture slides.

Image Library The image library showcases the figures and tables that appear in the text, allowing professors to incorporate the images easily into their lectures.

Test Item File The Test Item File provides more than 2000 multiple choice, true-false, short answer, and essay questions. This question bank is available in both Word® and MyTest formats.

MyTest With MyTest, a powerful assessment generation program, professors can easily create and print quizzes, tests, and exams online, allowing flexibility and the ability to manage assessments at any time and from anywhere.

ClassPrep ClassPrep is a dynamic database of all the instructor resources that accompany Pearson's leading Canadian introductory sociology textbooks. This powerful tool allows professors to search that database by topic, then view and select material from PowerPoint, image libraries, lecture outlines, classroom activities, and more. Professors can access MyClassPrep through the MySocLab that accompanies *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Third Edition.

Multimedia Guide This teaching guide that can accompany any Pearson introductory sociology text helps professors bring sociological concepts to life in the classroom with material to which students relate. Featuring 20 scenes from Hollywood feature films, documentaries, and TV episodes, and over 30 songs, this guide provides

- a synopsis of the film, documentary, or TV episode and the relevant scene, the scene location on the DVD, and an explanation of how the selection relates to sociology
- the cultural context of the album and song as well as an explanation of how the song relates to sociological issues
- 5–10 discussion questions and one assignment follow each scene and song

NOTE: Pearson Canada does not provide the films, documentaries, television episodes, or songs.

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STUDENT RESOURCES

MySocLab

The moment you know.

Educators know it. Students know it. It's that inspired moment when something that was difficult to understand suddenly makes perfect sense. Our MyLab products have been designed and refined with a single purpose in mind—to help educators create that moment of understanding with their students.

MySocLab delivers **proven results** in helping individual students succeed. It provides **engaging experiences** that personalize, stimulate, and measure learning for each student. And, it comes from a **trusted partner** with educational expertise and an eye on the future.

MySocLab can be used by itself or linked to any learning management system. To learn more about how MySocLab combines proven learning applications with powerful assessment, visit **www.mysoclab.com**.

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Acknowledgments

Because of the monumental effort by the editors and staff of Pearson Canada, *Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective*, Third Edition, reflects the highest standards of textbook publishing in all its phases. Pearson provided us with the peer reviews, editorial comments, and suggestions for reorganizing and updating material that supported our desire to communicate our ideas to students and that nurtured our own creativity as authors. We would like to thank Johanna Schlaepfer for her enthusiasm and wonderful organizational skills, Matthew Christian for continuing to listen to our ideas and helping make them a reality, and Marissa Lok who pulled it all together. We were also fortunate to work with Madhu Ranadive, our Program Manager, and Lila Campbell, whose editorial guidance and support was second to none. We also appreciate the efforts of Edwin Hodge, our research assistant, for his ability to work within tight deadlines but also for his passion for teaching. Finally, we would like to thank our friends and families for their encouragement and support.

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Devanshi Mehta
Donna Richard
Alexis Small

About the Authors

Bruce Ravelli is an award winning teacher who received his Ph.D. from the University of Victoria in 1997. He has taught introductory sociology for over 25 years, and receives strong teaching evaluations from his students because of his passion for sociology, his dedication to teaching, and his commitment to high academic standards. Bruce has published various textbooks, readers, articles, and book chapters on Canadian culture and cross-national value differences as well as students' evaluation of teaching. Bruce is the co-developer of award-winning free online software that allows teachers to anonymously assess their teaching/courses at any point during the term (**www.toofast.ca**). He offers workshops and presentations on the software and on anonymous student assessment across North America. Bruce teaches in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria. If any students or colleagues have questions or comments about the text, please feel free to contact him by email at bravelli@uvic.ca.

Michelle Webber received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. Her research interests lie in the sociology of education and sociology of gender. She has regularly taught introductory sociology over the last 10 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 has co-edited *Rethinking Society in the 21st Century: Critical Readings in Sociology* (First, Second, and Third Editions) with Kate Bezanson. Her current research projects are both funded by SSHRC: 1. an investigation of accountability governance and its effects on the production of academic knowledge and subjectivities (with Sandra Acker, Co-Investigator, University of Toronto) and 2. faculty associations and the politics of accountability governance (Larry Savage, Principal Investigator, and Jonah Butovsky, Co-Investigator—both at Brock University). Michelle is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Brock University in Ontario. She can be contacted via email at mwebber@brocku.ca.

third canadian edition

exploring sociology

a canadian perspective

Leland Bobbe/The Image Bank/Getty Images

1 Understanding the Sociological Imagination

To a sociologist, everything people do is fascinating. Have you ever waited in line for a movie and watched the people around you? 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*.

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6. Explain microsociology and macrosociology, and identify the leading theorists of each.
7. Describe the defining features of Canadian sociology.
8. Review the importance of a global perspective.

Look for the Explore, Watch, Practise, and Listen icons throughout this text . . . these symbols lead you to online material on MySocLab (www.mysoclab.com) to enhance and to complement your textbook experience.

The Sociological Perspective

1

Look for the Learning Objective numbers next to some headings throughout the text. These numbers let you know where the objective is covered in the chapter.

Watch

Social Psychology vs. Sociology

Explore

Sociological Tour through Cyberspace

As an academic discipline, sociology is dedicated to exposing you to a new and unique way of seeing our 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 in which sociologists see our 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 (Babbie, 1994; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996). As individuals, 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. Even these seemingly mundane choices have rich social significance and reveal a great deal about what sociologists find so fascinating about human behaviour.

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.

2 CHARLES WRIGHT MILLS AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

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

Charles Wright Mills

Fritz Goro/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

to understand and resolve them. For Mills, the individual and the social are inextricably linked and we cannot fully understand one without the other.

personal troubles
Personal challenges that require individual solutions.

social issues
Challenges caused by larger social factors that require collective solutions.

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 that his or her score is 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., test score) can only be understood if the student takes into account the larger social environment as well (i.e., how other students did, pressure to achieve high grades, etc.).

Watch

The Sociological Imagination and the Legacy of C. Wright Mills

According to Mills, many personal troubles never become social issues because people rarely equate what is happening to them with the larger social worlds in which they exist. For example, if you receive back a test that you have failed, chances are you will feel embarrassed and upset and will probably stuff it in your backpack—you assume that you are one of the only students who failed and do 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**, which has nothing to do with a person's intelligence or level of education; instead, it is the ability to look beyond personal circumstance and into social context. For example, what would happen if none of the students in the class passed but no one said anything about it? No one would know that everyone else had failed; all of the students in that class would think that they had to deal with their failure on their own, and a possible social issue 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 defer 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 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, race, 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 are. When people can see their own histories in a social context, they cannot help but improve their

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

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 honor 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 1950's and gave grounding and voice to the radicals of the 1960's. His work continues to illuminate, inspire, and challenge those who hope to understand and even to ameliorate the circumstances in which we live."

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quality of mind. Mills would suggest that people who judge others without understanding all of the issues involved may lack 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 can see all shades of grey.

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

American sociologist Peter Berger builds on 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.

3 PETER BERGER: SEEING THE GENERAL IN THE PARTICULAR

Peter Berger
The Canadian Press/STRRNS

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 not see. To appreciate an individual circumstance like this and broaden your perspective to the larger social patterns that create and perpetuate people's living on the streets 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 over time.

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 perhaps at your school's library, 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, it is truly strange.

>>> Thinking Sociologically

Use Berger's two concepts to explore who should pay for dinner on a first date, binge drinking on campus, and why social media have become so popular.

Everyone, even those who have never attended university, understands that for students to do well they need to go to class, memorize material, and write tests. But, why? Granted, your professor needs you to learn material by memorizing some fundamental concepts and definitions and to demonstrate your command of the material on an exam; after all, he or she must receive 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 acknowledge that someone is willing to work hard? (See Preckel, Holling, & Vock, 2006.) Asking these questions suggests that someone is looking at what appears normal and familiar and seeing it as peculiar and strange—evidence of the sociological perspective, of having quality of mind, and of beginning to develop the sociological imagination.

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

Masterfile

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 work of both C. W. Mills and Peter Berger is complementary and speaks to the essence of the sociological perspective.

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

What Makes You, You? Engaging the Sociological Imagination

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 (Graham & Bruce, 2006). 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 the opportunities and challenges he or she faces. However, structure not only refers 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 or not individuals behave autonomously or are the expressive agents of the social structure (Brey, 2008, p. 71).

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 behaviours.

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 (Nakhaie, Lin, & Guan, 2009; O'Connell, 2010), who have a physical disability (DiGiorgio, 2009; Prince, 2010) or a mental disability (Corman, 2009; Leach Scully, 2010),

or who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Dafnos, 2007; Ross, Epstein, Goldfinger, & Yager, 2009) face various 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 him- or herself or the world in general. If you personally 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 Caucasian person who has never been diagnosed with a mental disability and who is able-bodied and heterosexual, 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 it must feel like when people treat you as a second-class person, avoid eye contact, or, conversely, stare 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

patriarchy A system where men control the political and economic resources of society.

As we will explore in Chapters 8 and 9, 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, Table 1.1 shows earning ratios between 2002 and 2011 and clearly demonstrates that full-time working women earn significantly less than men. Why do you think this is the case? 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 men earn about 35 percent 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?

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

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

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

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TABLE 1.1 Average Earnings by Sex and Work Pattern

	All earners		
Year	*Women*	*Men*	*Earnings Ratio*
	$ constant 2011		%
2002	29 300	46 700	62.8
2003	29 000	46 000	62.9
2004	29 400	46 200	63.5
2005	30 000	46 900	64.0
2006	30 500	47 100	64.7
2007	31 300	47 800	65.5
2008	31 700	49 300	64.3
2009	32 600	47 400	68.6
2010	32 600	47 800	68.1
2011	32 100	48 100	66.1

Source: Statistics Canada. 2013. Average earnings by sex and work pattern (All earners) [online]. Last modified May 9, 2014, from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor01a-eng.htm

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, 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). Some researchers estimate that 5000 honour killings occur each year and of those over 2000 happen in India and Pakistan alone (Honour Based Violence Awareness Network, 2014). 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 our own as well. Consider the fact that even though Canadian women and men are roughly equal in their chances of being assaulted, women are eleven times more likely to be victims of sexual violence and four times more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence (Statistics Canada, 2013). These statistics confirm that while honour killings are rare events in Canada, our 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 a member of their own family because of a perceived slight over their family's honour. However, 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.

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wealthier families whose parents are well educated, have 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 a 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), and Jim Balsillie and Mike Lazardis (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 sex (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).

ascribed status
Attributes (advantages and disadvantages) assigned at birth (e.g., sex).

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