CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

Global Citizenship:

FROM SOCIAL ANALYSIS TO SOCIAL ACTION (GNED 500)



Land Acknowledgement

Centennial College is proud to be a part of a rich history of education in this province and in this city. We acknowledge that we are on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and pay tribute to their legacy and the legacy of all First Peoples of Canada, as we strengthen ties with the communities we serve and build the future through learning and through our graduates.

Today, the traditional meeting place of Toronto is still home to many Indigenous People from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the communities that have grown in the treaty lands of the Mississaugas. We acknowledge that we are all treaty people and accept our responsibility to honour all our relations.

Statement of Diversity

Centennial College and its Board of Governors value and embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as fundamental to our mission to educate students for career success within a context of global citizenship and social justice.

We recognize that historical and persistent inequities and barriers to equitable participation exist and are well documented in society and within the college.

We believe individual and systemic biases contribute to the marginalization of designated groups. These biases include race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, colour, ethnicity, culture, linguistic origin, citizenship, creed (religion, faith), marital status, socio-economic class, family status, receipt of public assistance or record of offence. We acknowledge that resolving First Nations sovereignty issues is fundamental to pursuing equity and social justice within Canada.

We acknowledge the richness and diversity of the community we serve. As our community has evolved, and our staff and student population have changed, we have implemented policies and practices to address issues of inclusion. In moving forward, we will build on this work to embed commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in every aspect of what we do.

Our Guiding Principles

We believe social justice requires that we value diversity, equity and inclusion. We believe that the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion strengthen the social and economic development, growth and well-being of our student population, our employees, and our local and international communities.

We uphold our social responsibility to contribute to a society that is equitable, fair and just. In accordance with our mission, vision and values, we will demonstrate leadership in eliminating barriers, and implementing and promoting diversity through our Academic Framework, policies, special initiatives and proactive measures.

We are committed to eliminating all forms of harassment and discrimination. We will prevent, remedy and redress these inequities. We will create an environment of inclusion in teaching, learning, employment and support services so we can fully serve our communities and prepare students to excel in the workplace and in society.

We will be accountable for the changes we need to make. We will continue to comply with existing federal and provincial legislative requirements. We will continue to develop and implement goals, policies, competencies and special initiatives founded upon principles of social justice to promote equity and inclusion. We will collect data to track progress and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives we undertake, and we will communicate the outcomes to our community.

Our Commitment

A safe, secure, inclusive and accessible environment for learning, teaching and working

Centennial College will be free from discrimination, harassment and hate. We will fully support the right of everyone to study, participate and work with dignity in an environment of mutual respect. We will include and respect the abilities, experiences, perspectives and contributions of our students, our employees, our partners and our communities.

Curriculum and instruction that reflect diversity and promote equity and inclusion

Our curriculum and instruction will draw on a variety of knowledge, perspectives and experiences. Our teaching and learning will help students recognize different forms of discrimination and understand the factors that cause inequity in society. Through our commitment to global citizenship and social justice, we will prepare students with the skills and knowledge to challenge unjust practices and build positive human relationships in an increasingly diverse society.

Equitable and accessible opportunities for student success

We will identify and remove institutional barriers that prevent access and impede student success. Our teaching and support services will demonstrate equity and inclusion. We will provide transformative and inclusive curriculum that will help students attain academic excellence and positive social and career outcomes.

Building knowledge and evaluating effectiveness

We will ensure we are knowledgeable about diversity, equity and inclusion. We will critically analyze and research current practices. We will evaluate our effectiveness by tracking our progress, analyzing what is working well and determining how we can best improve.

Human Resource Management systems, policies and practices that reflect diversity and promote equity and inclusion

We will implement bias- and barrier-free recruitment, selection, hiring and promotion at all levels. We will ensure that our employees' skills and knowledge are respected, valued and used appropriately. We will provide equitable opportunities for professional development and advancement for all employees.

Training and staff development in equity and diversity

We will provide ongoing training and staff development to build understanding and ensure that equity and inclusion are central to the work we do. We will recognize and reward initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion.

Accessible and inclusive college communication

We will reflect diversity in communications that promote Centennial College, our programs, services and curriculum. We will ensure that college communication is respectful, and that our information is accessible and widely available.

Strategic engagement with diverse communities

We will undertake strategic outreach to develop meaningful relationships with diverse communities. We will engage with these communities and encourage their fullest contribution to, and participation in, our activities and consultations.

Relationships and partnerships that align with our mission, vision and values

We will actively seek relationships that enhance our values and offer domestic and international opportunities to prepare our students to work effectively and successfully in a global and diverse marketplace. We will ensure that our contractual relationships with businesses and organizations comply with our standards of equity, human rights and fairness.

Committing financial and human resources to promote diversity, equity and inclusion

We will provide resources to support the work of our employees, our students and our partners in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.

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Kritee Ahmed is a professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and has regularly taught GNED 500. He has contributed to the OER textbook and participated in course revisions.



Paula Anderton

Paula Anderton is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences and the GNED 500 coordinator. She was the OER project lead and a contributor to both the previous and current textbook and course revisions.



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Selom Chapman-Nyaho is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences and Liberal Arts and has contributed to several versions of the GNED 500 textbook and online course. He is also an instructor in the departments of Criminology and Sociology at York University.



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Sein Kipusi is a professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and has regularly taught GNED 500. She is also a lecturer at the University of Toronto in the department of Social Justice in Education.



Athanasios Tom Kokkinias

Athanasios Tom Kokkinias is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Tom has been teaching GNED 500: Global Citizenship since 2008, alongside various philosophy courses. He has also contributed to several editions of the GNED 500 textbook and helped develop the online version of the course.



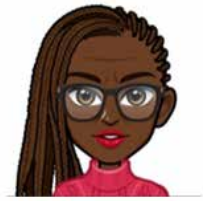
Sabrina Malik

Sabrina Malik is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, where she teaches GNED 500 and other courses in the social sciences. She contributed to the previous edition of the GNED 500 textbook, as well as the current GNED 500 OER and course revisions.



Meera Mather

Meera Mather is the Chair of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and oversees the curriculum and delivery of the Global Citizenship (GNED 500) course. She is involved in the GNED 500 comprehensive review and ongoing curriculum modifications. Meera has initiated and led the past and current iteration of the GNED 500 textbook.



Kisha McPherson

Kisha McPherson is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences and Liberal Arts and has contributed to several versions of the GNED 500 textbook and course.



Soudeh Oladi

Soudeh Oladi is a professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences and she contributed to the GNED 500 OER textbook. She is also an instructor and researcher at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.



Chet Singh

Chet Singh developed the initial curriculum framework for the GNED 500 course and has been involved in updating several editions of the course textbook. He has contributed to numerous social action initiatives to bring about systemic change in the education system and larger society.

Support Team Bios



Matthew Maaskant

Matthew Maaskant is a graphic designer for print & web who's company is called Maaskant Media Productions. He designed the overall look for the GNED 500 OER textbook and created the pdf version of the course.



Shelby Stinnissen

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Kathryn Willms is an editor and writer who specializes in educational work. Her company is called Kwill Communications. She edited the GNED 500 OER textbook.

Support Team Bios



Elena Escalada Barroso

Upon graduating with master's degrees in neuroscience and psychology, Elena Escalada worked as a child psychologist for more than ten years in Spain before moving in 2014 to Toronto. After becoming a mom two years ago, Elena decided to switch careers to her true passion—graphic design.



Zia Foley

Zia Foley is an emerging mixed media artist based in Toronto. Having lived abroad for many years, her artwork is influenced by a wide range of cultures. She has exhibited her artwork in Turkey and Canada, and won first place in the drawing category for CICan's 2020 Student Contest.



Linh Le

Linh Le is a graphic design student at Centennial College and an aspiring illustrator/ graphic designer based in Toronto. Her fascination for the Japanese art culture reflects in the style and subjects of her works, and it inspires her to pursue her interest in game design. She enjoys collecting pieces of concept designs, character designs and environment designs from different animated films and games.



Phoenix Mounce

Phoenix Mounce is currently a third-year student studying graphic design at Centennial College, residing in Toronto. She aspires to be a professional illustrator and graphic designer, specializing in music branding, merchandise, logo, and package design. She is very fond of coffee and loves collecting vinyl records.



Tuncel Mustafa

Tuncel Mustafais an emerging artist with a focus on realistic painting and drawing and a passion for landscape painting. She has participated in Centennial College exhibitions at the Story Arts Centre, Corridor Gallery, Closet Gallery, and the Scarborough Hero Award Project. External shows include Artist Network Gallery, Art Fair, and Radio Perfect commissioned work.



Ankita Nema

Ankita Nema is a visual artist with a number of successful art exhibitions around the Greater Toronto area. As an illustrator, she has published an eBook on Amazon.com. She likes to experiment with various art mediums such as pencils, pastels, charcoals, oils, watercolors, and acrylics on canvas.



Anna Rasti

Anna Rasti is a second-year Graphic Design student at Centennial College with a passion for illustration and editorial design. She has spent most of her life designing and creating, which led her to Architecture school in her home country of Iran, where she graduated from the program.



Kenneth Reaume

Kenneth Reaume is a graphic designer and illustrator from Scarborough, Ontario. His designs and illustrations were honored with the Peter Dickinson Award as well as being showcased in Centennial College's student artwork competition for the 2021-25 Renewed Academic Plan. He was also nominated for a JUNO Award for album artwork and design.



Aleksandra Rodneva

Since childhood, Aleksandra has had a passion for creating visual images. Back in her hometown Vladikavkaz in Russia, she studied at the S. D. Tavasiev Municipal Children's Art school. In 2017, Aleksandra moved to Canada, enrolled in Art and Design fundamentals and then Fine arts Studio courses at Centennial College, where she kept looking for new things to use for visualizing her ideas.



Sidia Atabales-Schnitzler

Sidia Atabales-Schnitzler is an emerging artist who lives and works in Toronto, Ontario. Although her roots are in drawing and painting, she also explores antique photographic methods, such as cyanotypes.



Anna Zabashta

Anna Zabashta is a student in the Fine Arts Program at Centennial College, where she is learning about art and participating in art communities. Her favourite media are watercolour and acrylic. Anna's other artistic interests include abstract painting and digital art.

Preface

> *As the world becomes smaller, our role in it—and the role of our students—must become larger. To this end, we will strive to become an internationally recognized leader in education that places a strong emphasis on global citizenship, social justice, and equity.*
>
> *– Centennial College's Book of Commitments**

As globalization has expanded and increased, the level of interconnectedness among people and countries has led to broad concerns about the issue of citizenship. It has now become incumbent upon post-secondary institutions to educate and provide tools for students to become responsible global citizens. As Martha Nussbaum (1997) suggests, colleges are not just producing students; they are also producing citizens, and as such, "we must ask what a good citizen of the present day should be and should know" (p. 8). This was the very statement that Centennial College was encouraged to explore in 2004. The dialogue began within the college community and resulted in the development of the Signature Learning Experience (SLE), focusing on global citizenship, equity, and inclusion. The SLE came to be incorporated into all areas of academic and college life. Today, Centennial College continues to effectively cultivate global citizenship and Indigenous principles within the college leadership and culture and has established itself as an activist college.

At Centennial, our administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to educating our students to achieve a broader understanding of the social issues that challenge us in the 21st century, including "human rights/equity, peace/justice, environment/energy/technology and poverty" (Singh, 2008, p. xi). Learning about issues such as injustice, power and diversity—about the globalized world in which we live—is a necessity because students will inevitably be confronted with these issues and will be required to think critically in their personal and professional lives. This is reinforced in Centennial's vision of "transforming lives and communities through learning." The college recognizes the value in engaging in decolonizing educational systems and structures (Book of Commitments, 2019–2024). Hence, every student in the college participates in the SLE.

One of the key initiatives of the SLE is our college-mandated General Education course titled Global Citizenship: From Social Analysis to Social Action (GNED 500) for which this textbook is written. This course provides students with the skills, knowledge and education that will allow them to achieve a greater global consciousness and to strive towards change. Employers seek graduates with an understanding of global issues that contribute to their leadership and interpersonal skills. In response to employer need, Centennial College has created conditions of inclusion in our classrooms, so that students can become well-rounded global citizens.

Meera Mather and Kisha McPherson

Sources

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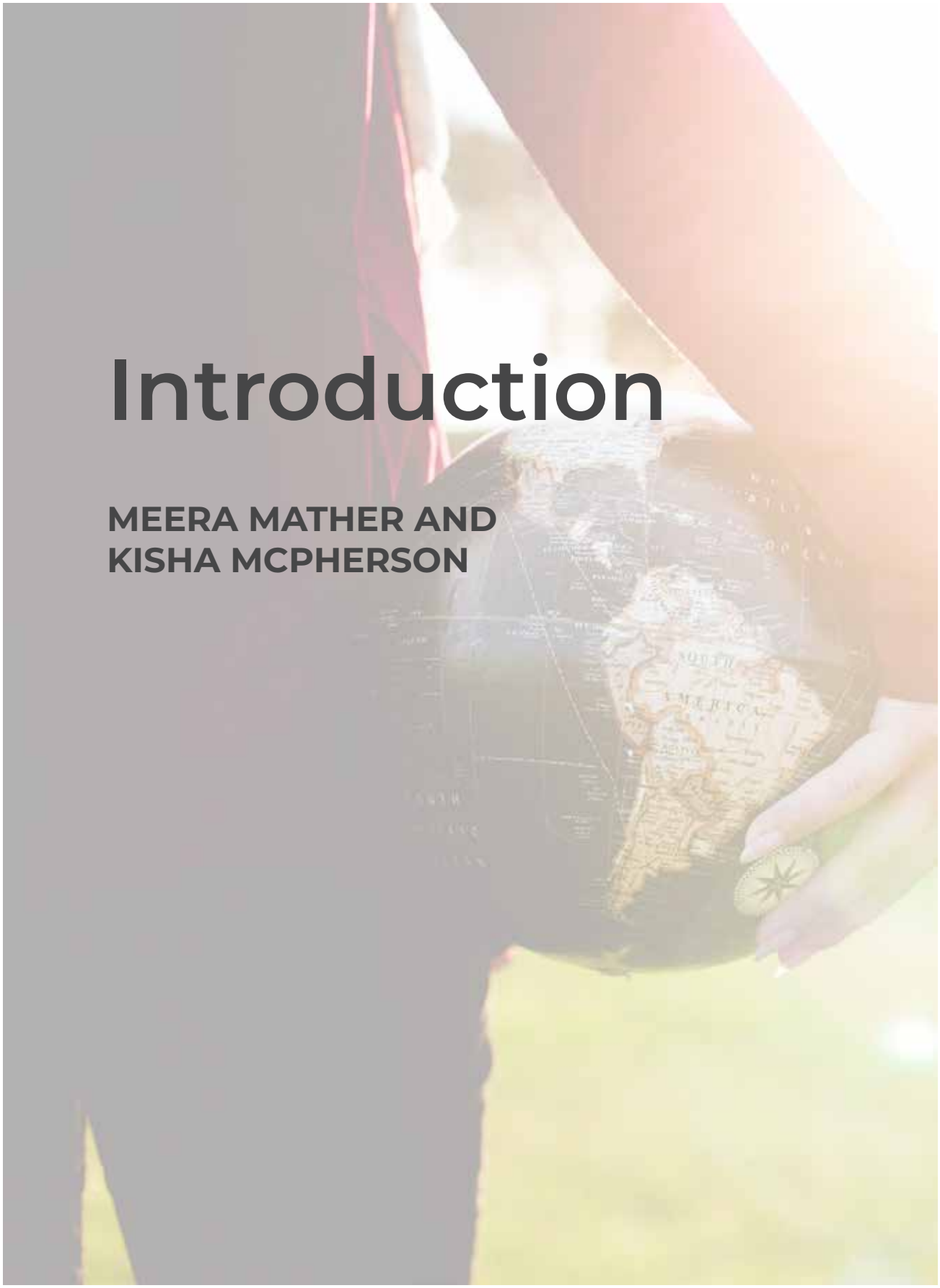
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Introduction

MEERA MATHER AND KISHA MCPHERSON

Citizenship in a Global World

> *You have to take ownership and leadership of tomorrow. For that to be possible, you have to strengthen your capacity and widen your vision as a global citizen.*
>
> *– Ban Ki-moon (former Secretary-General of the United Nations)*

Can you imagine a world where everyone is aware of and concerned about issues like the environment, poverty, and how policies affect people's lives? The concept of global citizenship was created by imagining such a world. This module introduces the foundational concepts of this e-textbook: global citizenship and social action.



Image by Pixabay on Pexels

Watch this video to learn more about the purpose and benefits of global citizenship education. The narrator starts by asking some questions that highlight how teaching global citizenship can help to address key concerns in the world. (Source: Global Education First Initiative, 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPdtGrnj7sU

Introduction to Global Citizenship



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Citizenship refers to membership and participation in a specific community. The term "citizenship" has both legal and social meanings. In a legal sense, it refers to the status of a person who lives in a particular country. As a member of a country, a citizen is given a set of rights and privileges and accepts certain responsibilities. For example, a Canadian citizen is expected to obey laws and pay taxes. In return, Canada provides its citizens with rights such as freedom of speech and the right to vote, among other things (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). In a social sense, citizenship refers to participation in a community. Citizens fulfill and debate their rights and responsibilities (Centennial College, 2009).

Global Citizenship is a concept that recognizes the interconnectedness of people from diverse societies across the globe. It emphasizes that we are all part of a global community and can share values, beliefs, ideas, voices, resources, and practices. We are not only citizens of a nation; we are also citizens of the world. As citizens of a nation, we attempt to work collectively to improve our country. However, as global citizens, it is essential that we work to better the lives of people across the world.

Global Citizenship: A concept based on social justice principles and practices that seeks to build global interconnectedness and shared economic, environmental, and social responsibility.

Do you believe that everyone around the world can participate in global citizenship? Can a person living in poverty be a global citizen as effectively as a wealthy person?



Watch this video to learn the story of Viola Desmond, an entrepreneur who challenged segregation in Nova Scotia in the 1940s. (Source: Historica Canada, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie0xWYRSX7Y

Viola Desmond was a Canadian citizen who was denied her right to participate fully in Canadian society based on her race. She took a stand against racial injustice. Desmond fought for her rights as a national citizen, but she was also acting on the principles of global citizenship by fighting against the worldwide problem of racial inequality.

Historical Context for Global Citizenship



Image by geralt on Pixabay.

In the world of our early human ancestors, social circles were small. Knowledge was either passed down from elders or experienced first-hand. Compare that to society today where we live in communities of millions and have access to knowledge far beyond that of our elders. Contact with the rest of the world is literally at our fingertips, accessible within seconds (Global Citizenship, 2015, p.6).

The term "global citizenship" was traditionally associated with the concept "cosmopolitism". The word **cosmopolitan** means "world citizen" (Global Citizenship, 2015). We can recognize ourselves as world citizens by thinking about the spread of online technology across the world. Today, we can connect with people around the globe. This creates international communities where individuals develop a sense of belonging. This has also strengthened our ties to other countries. The use of technology is increasing our individual and collective global economic activities, and access to information expands our awareness of inequalities in our world (Israel, 2013). For example, during the global pandemic of COVID-19, information was shared across nations, and countries collaborated to share resources and to find effective resolutions.

cosmopolitan: Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.

History has taught us that a country and its citizens cannot exist in **silos**. We must be concerned, connected, and engaged with the rest of the world. Climate change provides an example. Pollutants from the industrialized West and Asia are destroying farmland in sub-Saharan Africa. Rising sea levels are flooding Bangladesh. The poorest countries are facing the worst consequences of the actions of the richest countries. What we do and the choices we make have a wide impact.

silos: To separate something or someone from other things or people.



GO DEEPER

For more insight into the historical role industrialized countries have played in climate change, and the challenges faced by the global community in fixing this problem as it evolves, read this blog post. (Source: Ritchie, 2019)

https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2

Throughout this e-textbook, we will be critically thinking and questioning how to apply the concept of global citizenship. The concept of global citizenship can provide the modern world with much-needed critical and ethical perspectives. These will allow us to stay globally connected and contribute to achieving fairness and justice for all people. To think globally also means to act locally. Global, social justice consciousness starts at home, with an honest examination of how our own society treats its citizens. See the following video for an example.

This video outlines and explains some key perspectives and concerns related to the Dakota Access pipeline, which has created tensions between the US government and Indigenous communities across North America. (Source: Vox, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJZ1-LAFOTo

Considering Canada's responsibilities to its citizens, including voting privileges, safety, and ensuring people's basic well-being, have our laws and policies always ensured these rights for Indigenous people across the country?



Why Study Global Citizenship



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Global citizenship has never been more relevant in our diverse society. The study of global citizenship creates critical thinkers. It encourages the ability to see and apply multiple perspectives when assessing events and trends. It also helps develop big-picture thinking. This can help us better understand why current events happen and what their results might be.

For instance, in 2008, the Canadian government apologized for the great damage government policies had done to Indigenous Peoples in Canada. To start the process of healing, the government created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC travelled the country to record the injustices experienced by Indigenous Peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, n.d.).

At the end of this process, the TRC wrote a report. In it, 94 "Calls to Action" were listed. One of the Calls to Action is to acknowledge that we live on Indigenous Peoples' lands. The study of global citizenship encourages us to think beyond what is presented to us. In this case, let's use **big-picture thinking.**

Do you think this acknowledgement is enough to make up for centuries of abusive policies and actions by the government?

big-picture thinking: to think about issues from a broader perspective, considering multiple views and resources.



GO DEEPER

This video depicts a land acknowledgment that takes place at a theatre and the reaction of one of the audience members. Using the form of comedy, this video asks a critical question about our responsibilities as citizens and residents of Canada. It also demonstrates how studying global citizenship builds the knowledge and skills required to work towards more equal and just societies. (Source: CBC Comedy, 2019)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlG17C19nYo

Global Citizenship in Context

Becoming a global citizen requires active engagement with the tools and skills outlined below.



Graphic by Kisha McPherson and Meera Mather, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.



Image by geralt on Pixabay

In this course, you will learn and apply these skills and tools in the context of global citizenship. These skills will also serve you in the workplace. Canadian employers want employees who can resolve conflict at the earliest stage. They are also looking for people who can think critically, communicate effectively, and engage successfully with a wide range of people (Bourn, 2009).

Developing interpersonal skills will help you both at work and in personal relationships. In the Global Citizenship course, you will build interpersonal skills through group work that requires both critical thinking and social analysis.

As you move through this course, you will examine and reflect on the following questions: What does being a global citizen mean to you? What are different ways of thinking about the concept of global citizenship? And what are the pros and cons of global citizenship?

GNED 500 Course (Global Citizenship: From Social Analysis to Social Action)

This e-textbook is a resource for the GNED 500 course, Global Citizenship: From Social Analysis to Social Action. As you journey through this course, it will support your learning in the classroom. The course is designed to introduce you to social analysis tools and frameworks to increase your understanding of social problems in our interconnected world.

The areas we will explore include globalization, identity, social analysis, social structures, ideologies, social problems, media literacy, equity and equality, and social action.

The overarching goal of this course is to develop strategies to promote justice through social action. In the final module of this course, you will explore how to effectively address social problems through social actions that you take as a global citizen.

Figure 1: GNED 500 Course Framework

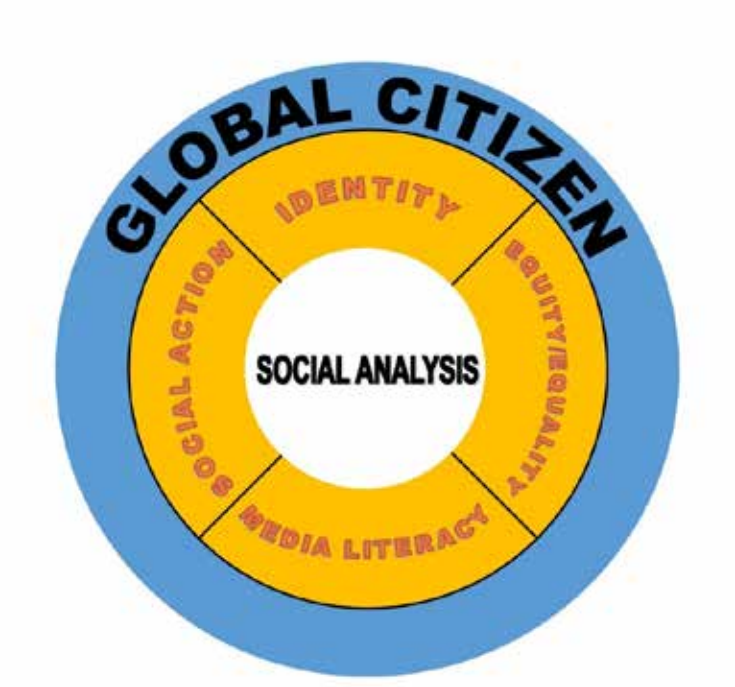


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KEY CONCEPTS

cosmopolitan	Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.
cosmopolitanism	Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.
global citizenship	A concept based on social justice principles and practices that seeks to build global interconnectedness and shared economic, environmental, and social responsibility.
silo	To separate something or someone from other things or people.

Sources

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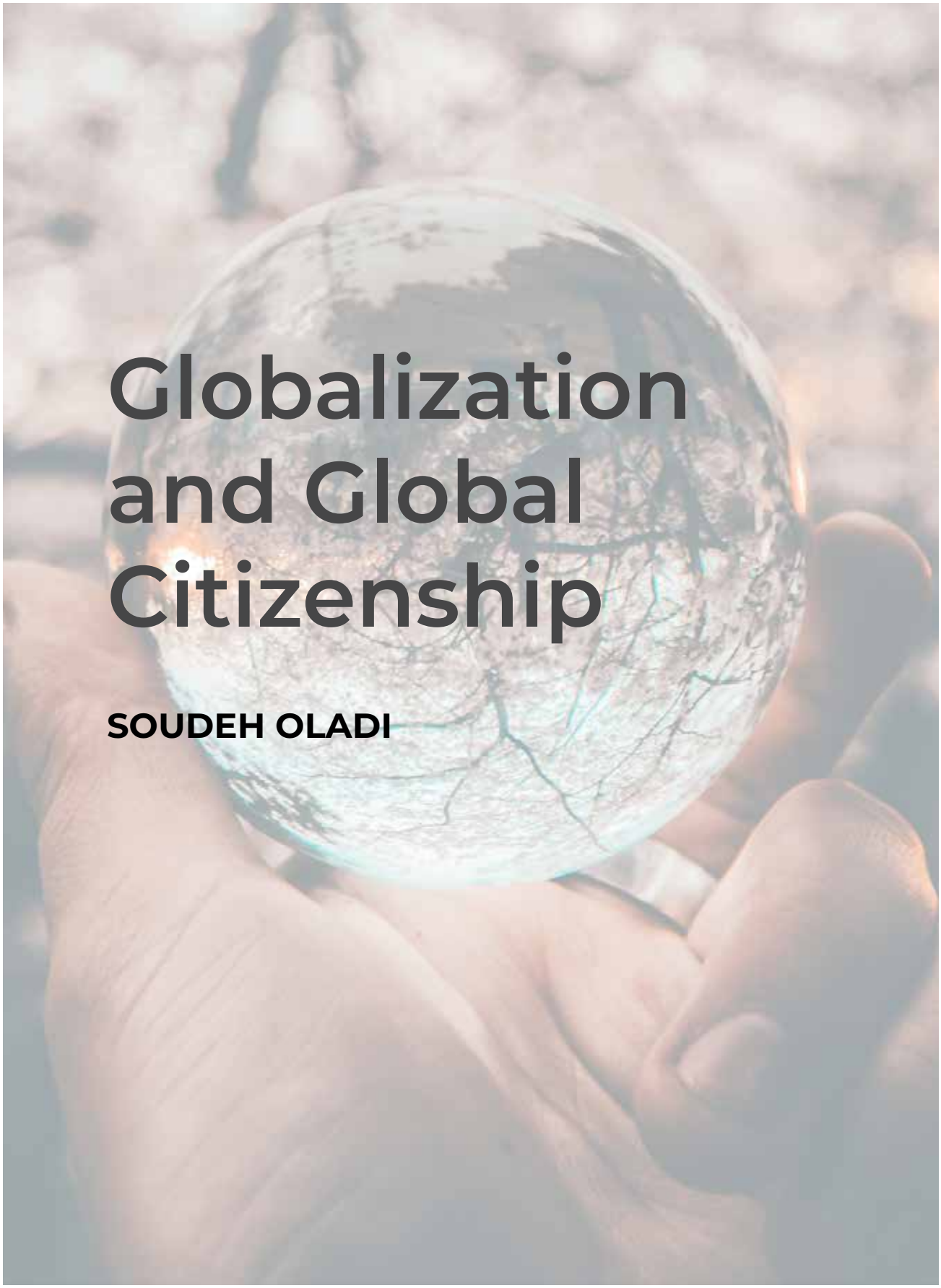
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Globalization and Global Citizenship

SOUDEH OLADI

What is Globalization and Global Citizenship?

Globalization has become a one-word-fits-all concept. Put simply, it acknowledges that we are becoming increasingly connected economically, culturally, and politically. We can see this shift in our everyday lives. Think about how quickly you can receive news about events in another country. Consider how a social movement in one country (for example, Black Lives Matter in the US) can spark protests around the world. Think about where your food comes from—or how massive companies like Amazon crisscross the globe, producing, sourcing, and selling products. All these are examples of globalization in action.

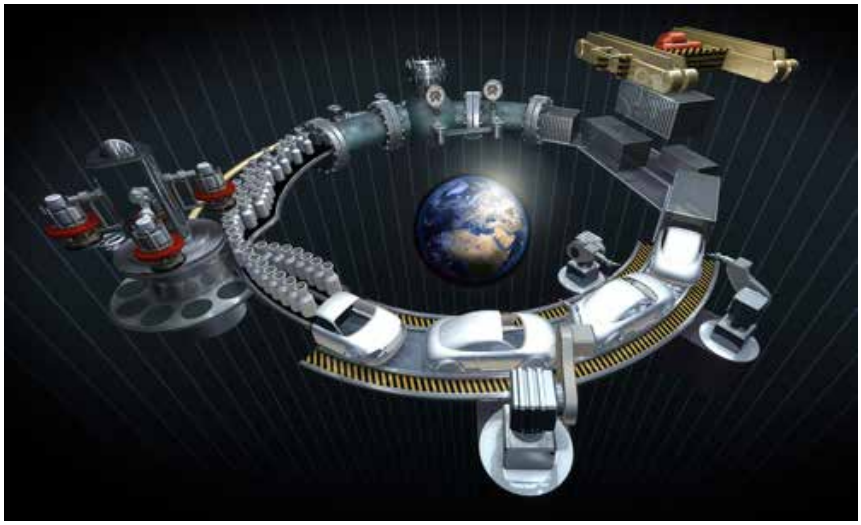


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Globalization and **capitalism** are closely linked. Capitalism requires new markets, places in which to buy and sell products. Globalization provides such markets (Awan, 2016). As you will see in this module, some of the criticisms and defenses of globalization overlap with those of capitalism. For example, defenders of capitalism point out that there has never been a better economic system for creating wealth, leading people out of poverty, and improving quality of life. But critics warn that unchecked capitalism disempowers workers and leads to greed and corruption on a massive scale.

A commonly used term to describe globalization is **global village**. In a village, one person's actions can affect everyone else. This is why it is important to consider the effects of

Globalization: The increasing integration of world economies, trade products, ideas, norms, and cultures in ways that affect all individuals as members of the global community (Albrow & King, 1990; Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006).

Capitalism: A global economic system in which private people and companies own goods and property. The capitalists' main aim is to produce goods to sell at a profit by keeping the cost of labour and resources low.

Global Village: The idea that the entire world is becoming more interconnected because of advances in technology. This makes it possible to deal with the world as if all areas of it were local.

globalization. For example, what role did globalization play during the COVID-19 pandemic? You might start by considering negative effects—like how the ease of international travel caused the virus to spread. You may also note how emerging crises tend to unveil the extreme injustices and inequalities of economic and social systems. But also consider hopeful effects—such as how scientists were able to collaborate to produce vaccines more quickly than ever before.

In what other ways might globalization have contributed to how the COVID-19 pandemic progressed?



In the unit on globalization, we will explore the different waves of globalization, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and what it means to be a global citizen.

Globalization: A History

In our lifetime and in our parents and grandparents' lifetime, there have been three waves of globalization (Rumford, 2008).

The first wave can be traced back to the 1870s. That lasted until the First World War. Industrialization was well underway at that time, and advances in transportation meant less trade barriers and more globalization of trade (Hill, 2012). Prosperity in some parts of the world led to the migration of more and more people. During this period, nearly 10% of the world's population migrated to new territories (Maddison, 2007).



Photo by Jonathan Francisca on Unsplash

The first wave of globalization has a legacy in **colonization**. Many of the trade measures that are in place today can be traced back to the colonial structures of that time, when groups in power wanted to ensure they would always benefit and maintain their superiority.

For three decades starting in 1920, most economies faced major crises, and globalization slowed down (Lewis & Moore, 2009). But before

long, the world entered the second wave of globalization (1950–1980). During this time, many economies picked up where they left off and grew at a rapid pace. New trade agreements and **cartels** like OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) were formed during that time period to encourage a global economy (Wallerstein, 2008).

The third wave of globalization started in the early 1980s. Advances in communication technologies made this stage evolve quickly. Many countries could not resist global trade associations such as the World Trade Organization and opened up their economies for global business (Stiglitz & Pike, 2004).

colonization: Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.

cartels : A cartel is formed when businesses agree to act together instead of competing with each other, all the while maintaining the illusion of competition. A cartel is a group of independent businesses whose concerted goal is to lessen or prevent competition" (Government of Canada, 2018).

When we think about globalization, a new sense of community and locality comes to mind, where the world is interconnected and unified. But four decades later, critics are warning that the third wave of globalization has exploited the working class, caused more harm than benefit for developing economies, and ultimately made the rich richer and the poor poorer (Kunnanatt, 2013; Klein, 2007).

An important question many people are asking is if globalization in its current form (third wave) is the only feasible option for us right now.

Those who answer yes likely believe in "globalization from above." Also called corporate globalization, "globalization from above" is driven by big business. It mainly serves the interests of transnational corporations and monetary institutions like the World Bank that work in collaboration with the most powerful economies in the world (Demaine, 2002). These corporations and institutions have made a lot of money off third-wave globalization and want it to continue.

But there are also those who believe in "globalization from below." These include social movements, non-government organizations, and people who are active in grassroots initiatives and community-based movements. These people want to open up spaces for community building and meaningful participation in democracies.

Critics have pointed out that third-wave globalization has led to greater social exclusion and marginalization (Santos, 1998). Those who believe in "globalization from below" counter this through bottom-up approaches that represent the interests of ordinary people. For example, by participating in initiatives that "[re-inject] ideas of social justice, human rights and environmental sustainability into the global agenda" (Ife, 1995, p. 5). These movements resist "globalization from above" and offer meaningful

alternatives to the models imposed by economic powerhouses and governments that keep the **hegemony** of the "haves" over the "have-nots" alive and well (Falk, 2013; Smith, 2008).

hegemony: The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.

Citta` Slow

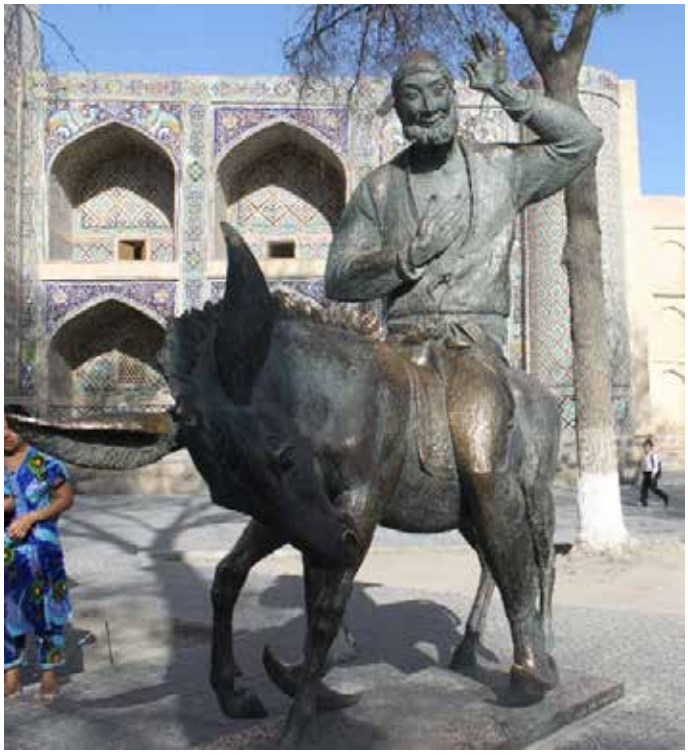
One example of a "globalization from below" response to "globalization from above" is the Slow Movement. This began with the "Slow Food" philosophy in Italy, which was a reaction to the extensive spread of "fast food" (Miele, 2008). It promoted eating local and sustainably grown food, and slowing down to cook and enjoy meals with friends and family. This expanded to become an overall philosophy of slow living.



Photo by Jovan Vasiljević on Unsplash

*Citta` Slow,* which means "slow city," is an international network of small towns that have been inspired by the Slow Movement. Now more than 100 countries worldwide are part of Citta` Slow and practicing in the slow-living movement as a measured response to globalization. Slow living has been called a form of "ethical **cosmopolitanism**"(Parkins & Craig, 2006). In Canada, four towns in British Columbia, Quebec, and Nova Scotia are part of the Citta` Slow movement (Cowichan Bay, Lac-Mégantic, Naramata, Wolfville).

cosmopolitanism: Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.



"Nasr Eddin Hodja statue in Bukhara Liab -i-Haouz complex" by Faqscl is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Mullah Nasreddin, a Persian sage who used humour to share his wisdom, was asked to show the centre of the universe. He pointed to the hook on the ground where his donkey was tied. "There," he said, "there is the centre of the universe—and if you don't believe me, go and measure the equidistance from it around the world."

Consider these questions:

1. Is it possible for globalization to create one centre for the whole world?
2. Can we have a form of globalization that allows for multiple centres?

GO DEEPER

The Scramble for Africa refers to a time known as the New Imperialism period between the 1880s and the start of the First World War. European nations had long exploited African countries. They did this in the name of bringing civilization to Africa. But in reality, European countries were reaping the benefits of Africa by exploiting the land and its inhabitants. During this period, European countries divided Africa up between themselves and even created artificial states without taking into consideration cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic issues. In the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, France, and Germany tried to regulate European colonization and trade in Africa. But it was a failure. The involved nations did not agree on how to divide up Africa among themselves. One of the central reasons behind WWI is believed to be the dispute over who got what in Africa (Joplin, 2019).



"No. 30; American view of Africa from 1839" by Edu-Tourist is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Watch The New Scramble for Africa to get an idea of how the continent of Africa was taken advantage of and exploited by European powers. (Source: Al Jazeera English, 2014)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KM-06hTeRSY

Globalization and Cosmopolitanism



"Jean-Leon Gerome – Diogenes [1860]" by Gandalf's Gallery is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

When I was growing up in Canada, I would often be asked, "Where are you from?" and I'd say, "Born and raised in Scarborough, Ontario" or "Toronto." The person asking would try to hide their disappointment at my response. I could see them thinking hard about how to ask the question again without offending me: "No, I mean what's your background," they would venture. Of course I knew exactly what response they were fishing for from the first question. But I wanted to know if there would come a day when I would be considered a Canadian without being asked, "But where are you *really* from?" That day has yet to come.

For many people, including myself, globalization has brought up questions about home and belonging. I often find myself "suspended between the no longer and the not yet" (Braidotti, 2006). I "no longer" only identify with my ancestral "homeland," but I am still perceived as "not yet" a Canadian.

In trying to locate myself, I have looked closely at concepts like cosmopolitan and global citizen. The word cosmopolitan means "world citizen" and its roots go all the way back to ancient Greece (kosmo-politēs). The Greek words kosmo (the world/universe) and *politēs* (a citizen) combine to give us cosmopolitan. In the Western tradition, **cosmopolitanism** has been traced to Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of the philosophy of Cynicism. Diogenes challenged the conventions of Greek society in numerous and often outrageous ways. For example, he lived in a large clay pot in the marketplace of ancient Athens. When he was challenged by Athenians to say where he came from, Diogenes would respond, *"Kosmo-politēs!"*—"I am a citizen of the world!"

> **cosmopolitanism:** Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.

European Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant also informs the modern understanding of cosmopolitanism. He believed that being a cosmopolitan means



Monument of Immanuel Kant by Valdis Pilskalns is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

we have moral obligations towards one another. These moral obligations are rooted in our shared humanity and should not be impacted by our attachments to concepts such as nation, language, religion, or family. Kant expressed the idea that all human beings have an "intrinsic worth" and a "dignity" that must be respected (Kant, 1981). Because of this, we cannot use people and treat them as a means to an end (to produce a result we desire). Kant's writings about cosmopolitanism came around the same time European countries were colonizing the rest of the world (Kent & Tomsky, 2017). Nowadays, cosmopolitanism means thinking beyond local and national concerns. But in a world that is increasingly becoming interconnected, is this a realistic expectation? Can we say that we are moving towards a borderless world? Or has globalization had the opposite effect: highlighting local and national differences?

Globalization, Migration, and Employment



Image by mohamed Hassan from Pixabay

In our globalized world, people increasingly move to study, live, and work in other countries and communities (Gibson & Koyama, 2011). The number of individuals living outside their original homelands increased from approximately 33 million in 1910 to 272 million in 2019 (Benhabib, 2004; United Nations, 2020). In 2020, India, Mexica, and China had the largest number of migrants living abroad (United Nations, 2020).

To accommodate the growing number of immigrants, many countries have adopted multiculturalism policies. For nearly half a century, Canada's **multiculturalism** policies have promised opportunities to immigrants on the basis of merit and hard work.

But this wasn't always the case.

Renisa Mawani (2010) writes that at the start of the 20th century, colonial states like Canada put in place laws and policies to regulate perceived threats. In Canada, these "threats"

multiculturalism: The "practice of creating harmonious relations between different cultural groups as an ideology and policy to promote cultural diversity" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015, p. 3).

included Indigenous Peoples, Japanese and Chinese labourers, and mixed-raced populations. For example, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 stopped almost all Chinese immigrants from coming to Canada. It would be 24 years before this policy was repealed (ended).

In the late 1950s, after the end of World War II, multiculturalism began to emerge as an official policy in Canada. Throughout the 1960s most new immigrants to Canada were from European countries (Italy, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Australia, France, and Portugal) (Lee, 2013). But as Europe became more economically stable after WWII, fewer European immigrants wanted to come to Canada. The country had no choice but to look to non-European (in particular, non-white) nations for new immigrants.

Canada's Multiculturalism Act, passed in 1988, promised to promote respect and uphold the differences in ethnicities, cultures, religions, languages, and heritages of Canada's citizens. The act was originally established as Canadian policy in 1971 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.



Photo by bantersnaps on Unsplash

In 2002, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government adopted the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which included the category of "economic immigrants" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014). Canada's interest in economic migrants is primarily aimed at pursuing "the maximum social, cultural, and economic benefit of immigration" and "to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy" (Government of Canada, 2001). According to Canada's immigration minister, the federal government plans to bring in more than 1.2 million new immigrants between 2021–2023 to fill gaps in the labour market and boost an economy that has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. For Canada, these will be the highest years on record for accepting immigrants since 1911. By 2036, nearly half of Canada's population is expected to be an immigrant or the child of an immigrant (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Globalization has its success stories, but it also often generates demand for low-paid service workers who are mostly women, new immigrants, and people of colour. These workers fall into a new category called the "serving class" (Sassen, 2010). Even though

Canada recruits skilled professionals through its immigration programs, many end up underemployed in low-paying and (Allan, 2014). A study published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada entitled *Who Drives a Taxi in Canada?* found that overqualified immigrants, including architects, engineers, and physicians, drive taxis. Immigrants from India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Haiti and Iran were significantly overrepresented among taxi drivers (Xu, 2012).

Underemployed immigrants is one of the negative side effects of globalization. One important question we might ask ourselves when we think about globalization is: How can we navigate and negotiate between its good, bad, and ugly sides? Listen to the summary of a short story by Ursula Le Guin (1973) and reflect on this question.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas is a story about a utopia. In this town, the people want for nothing. They celebrate and dance and embrace each other. The animals, children, and land are well looked after. The air is fresh and clean and filled with the sounds of beautiful music. The people of Omelas live in bliss, though they are not unintelligent. All of the people who live in this beautiful place know that their happiness and enjoyment is contingent on the incessant suffering of a lone child, kept out of sight in some small, rarely visited room. All of the people who live in Omelas know about the child and they know that the child must suffer in order for the rest to have what they need. The people of the city learn of the child's existence in their youth and often rationalize to themselves that there is nothing they could do to help the child, and while it's awful that it has to suffer, the suffering is what allows for the beauty and bounty of the city for everyone else. Some, however, cannot stay in the city once they learn of this secret and they choose to walk away, into the night, onward in a new direction.

Questions

1. Does globalization require us to ignore the misery of some so we might continue to benefit ourselves?
2. Can you identify similar cases in your life when you ignored a glaring injustice or just walked away from it because there was nothing you could do?

Globalization, Global Citizenship, National Citizenship

There is no more dynamic social figure in modern history than The Citizen.

– Ralf Dahrendorf (1974)



Image by Gerd Altmann fra Pixabay

Philosophers in the ancient world shared many ideas about what global citizenship should involve. These early philosophers were united by a belief in the shared humanity of all persons. Global citizens since the time of Diogenes have believed that there are many acceptable ways to live.

The spirit of **global citizenship** has appeared in different ways throughout history. Until the 16th century, much of South and Southeast Asia were united by language and the activities of traders, writers, religious figures, and adventurers. There was a similar period of cultural flourishing under the Islamic Abbasid Dynasty, which stretched from the Middle East and Persia to North Africa and Spain. Philosophy, science, mathematics, and literature thrived in a cosmopolitan environment that allowed for diverse languages, religions, and ethnicities. Global citizenship was also experienced in the great multicultural centers of the Ottoman Empire, including Istanbul, Aleppo, and Baghdad, where people from all faiths and ethnicities lived and worked together (Riedler, 2008; Zubaida, 2010).

global citizenship: A concept based on social justice principles and practices that seeks to build global interconnectedness and shared economic, environmental, and social responsibility.

In search of a unified definition of global citizenship, scholars and writers have agreed on common topics that fit under its umbrella. Such topics include:

- economic fairness
- equitable distribution of resources
- education
- poverty relief
- cultural identity
- environment
- human rights
- health
- gender equality

- *globalization*
- **social entrepreneurship**
- **social justice**
- sustainable economic development
- corporate responsibility towards one another as global citizens (United Nations, n.d.).

social entrepreneurship: A commerce model that combines the principles of business with the objectives of social action and charity

social justice: The full and equal participation of all groups in an egalitarian society, where people's needs are met, and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Social justice aims to address inequities by changing the structural and root cause(s) of social problems.

Centennial College's Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity has its own definition of global citizenship:

> To be a citizen in the global sense means recognizing that we must all be aware of our use of the world's resources and find ways to live on earth in a sustainable way. When we see others are treated without justice, we know that we are responsible for trying to ensure that people are treated justly and must have equitable opportunities as fellow citizens of this world. We must think critically about what we see, hear and say, and make sure that our actions bring about positive change. (Centennial College, 2008)

But what is **citizenship**? Picture citizenship as a "social glue" that connects people to one another and to a particular territory (Yarwood, 2016). This image differs from a historic understanding of citizenship. For the longest time, a citizen was defined in relation to "nation-state boundaries" (Fischman & Haas, 2012). That is, a citizen was a recognized subject of a country.

citizenship: Refers to social and political relations among people who are considered to be community members. It can also refer to borders, passports, and nationalities that divide membership communities from the rest of the world. In the latter form, citizenship labels some people as "national members and others as national outsiders and limits the entry of those outsiders into the national territory" (Bosniak, 2006, p. 2450).

The concept of a "citizen" goes back to the Latin *civis* or *civitas*, meaning a member of an ancient city-state (Isin & Turner, 2002). The traditional citizen was someone who contributed to public life, including participating politically, while living in the city (Yarwood, 2016; Bellamy, 2008; Janoski & Gran, 2002). For the Greeks, citizenship was linked to the territory of a particular city-state and could not be transferred from one person to the next.

Citizenship can also be understood historically as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion (Mackert & Turner, 2017). We cannot forget that citizenship is a status given to people at different times for different reasons. For instance, citizenship was often slow to be granted to groups of people that were categorized as inferior by the dominant class. Most of what we know of history has been told from the perspective of the included (citizens) and not the excluded (aliens, outsiders, the other) (Janoski & Gran, 2002).



Photo by Jaimie Harmsen on Unsplash

While there are differences between citizenship, global citizenship, and **national citizenship**, it is useful to note that these concepts are complementary. For instance, identifying as global citizens does not mean we don't value our national citizenship. It simply means that we assume greater responsibilities for and engage with local and global communities. National citizenship is obtained through birth or **naturalization** and includes shared national values along with obligations such as paying taxes and following the law. When we think of national citizenship, we think of the rights, privileges, and re-

national citizenship: Legal membership in a country typically due to birth or naturalization, which comes with certain responsibilities towards the state and country in question. In exchange the state fulfills certain social responsibilities (access to healthcare, education, etc.) towards its citizens.

naturalization: In Canada, naturalization happens when an immigrant attains citizenship status. The basic requirements to obtaining a Canadian citizenship include permanent residency status, knowledge of English or French, and basic knowledge of the history and sociopolitical makeup of Canada. Naturalized citizens have the same rights as Canadian-born citizens, which include the right to vote, hold public office, and serve on a jury (Canada Statistics, 2011).

sponsibilities associated with living in a particular country. Citizens fulfill their obligations to the state and in turn the state fulfills its duty by providing protection, education, health care, and access to jobs and resources.

Nowadays, with millions of people living in several nations, many with multiple citizenships, the term citizenship has taken on new meanings. (Castles & Davidson, 2000). It is no longer as much about being connected to a particular territory (Fleming et al., 2018). In the modern world, citizenship fosters feelings of belonging, identity, responsibility, and protection. The contemporary notion of citizenship is about "helping your neighbour; supporting known and unknown 'others' in your local area; having a connection and shared understanding with people across your nation; feeling a sense of humanism and attachment to communities across the globe" (Anderson et al., 2008, p. 34).

Summary

This module takes you through the roots and history of contemporary globalization. It draws a connection between globalization and concepts such as multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Additionally, the importance of migration in the context of globalization is discussed. Finally, the link between globalization, global citizenship, and national citizenship is brought to light as we continue to build on what it means to be a global citizen.



KEY CONCEPTS

capitalism	A global economic system in which private people and companies own goods and property. The capitalists' main aim is to produce goods to sell at a profit by keeping the cost of labour and resources low.
cartel	A cartel is formed when businesses agree to act together instead of competing with each other, all the while maintaining the illusion of competition. A cartel is a group of independent businesses whose concerted goal is to lessen or prevent competition" (Government of Canada, 2018).
citizenship	Refers to social and political relations among people who are considered to be community members. It can also refer to borders, passports, and nationalities that divide membership communities from the rest of the world. In the latter form, citizenship labels some people as "national members and others as national outsiders and limits the entry of those outsiders into the national territory" (Bosniak, 2006, p. 2450).
colonization	Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.
cosmopolitanism	Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.
global citizenship	A concept based on social justice principles and practices that seeks to build global interconnectedness and shared economic, environmental, and social responsibility.

globalization	The increasing integration of world economies, trade products, ideas, norms, and cultures in ways that affect all individuals as members of the global community (Albrow & King, 1990; Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006).
global village	The idea that the entire world is becoming more interconnected because of advances in technology. This makes it possible to deal with the world as if all areas of it were local.
hegemony	The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.
multiculturalism	The "practice of creating harmonious relations between different cultural groups as an ideology and policy to promote cultural diversity" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015, p. 3).
national citizenship	Legal membership in a country typically due to birth or naturalization, which comes with certain responsibilities towards the state and country in question. In exchange the state fulfills certain social responsibilities (access to healthcare, education, etc.) towards its citizens.
naturalization	In Canada, naturalization happens when an immigrant attains citizenship status. The basic requirements to obtaining a Canadian citizenship include permanent residency status, knowledge of English or French, and basic knowledge of the history and sociopolitical makeup of Canada. Naturalized citizens have the same rights as Canadian-born citizens, which include the right to vote, hold public office, and serve on a jury (Canada Statistics, 2011).
precarious jobs	Refers to work that is part-time and/or temporary. Precarious employment means job insecurity, unpredictability in terms of schedule and income, limited control or autonomy as an employee, and lack of regulatory protections, benefits, and entitlements such as paid sick leave, a minimum wage, and protection against unfair dismissal (Goldring & Joly, 2014; Cranford et al., 2003).
social entrepreneurship	A commerce model that combines the principles of business with the objectives of social action and charity

Global Indigenous Example

Historically, there has always been a connection between land and citizenship. When the colonizers wanted to strip the colonized of citizenship rights, one way they did this was by labelling their land as available to be used and owned by others.



"Aboriginal Images Adelaide Museum Reflections #dailyshoot" by Leshaines123 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Global Citizenship Example

The pandemic has changed our lives in countless ways. But will COVID-19 spell the end of globalization? Watch the video from *The Economist* called *Will Covid-19 Kill Globalization?* to find out if we are nearing the end of an era. (Source: The Economist, 2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJhlo6DtJIk

Critically Thinking About Globalization

Globalization and Its Ideological Roots

At first glance, globalization seems like a one-size-fits-all concept. Useful and relatively neutral. But upon closer inspection, we can see that globalization has its own ideological roots that need to be examined. All sorts of questions come to mind when trying to pinpoint the ideological underpinnings of globalization. Questions like:

- When did globalization become a household name and why?
- Who benefits most from a globalized world?
- Who benefits least from a globalized world?
- Are there alternatives to globalization?
- How are capitalism and globalization connected?
- Can we aim for a capitalism that cares more about the interests of Main Street (regular people) as opposed to Wall Street (rich people)?
- How is it that individuals like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos have grown their wealth by billions during the COVID-19 pandemic, but millions have been hit by poverty and joblessness?
- The GameStop debacle, where a group of random people on the internet managed to make a big impact on the market, made a lot of rich people worried. Why? (Source: CNET, 2021)

  GameStop: https://www.youtubwe.com/watch?v=ZoPEaBAe0CY

Sources

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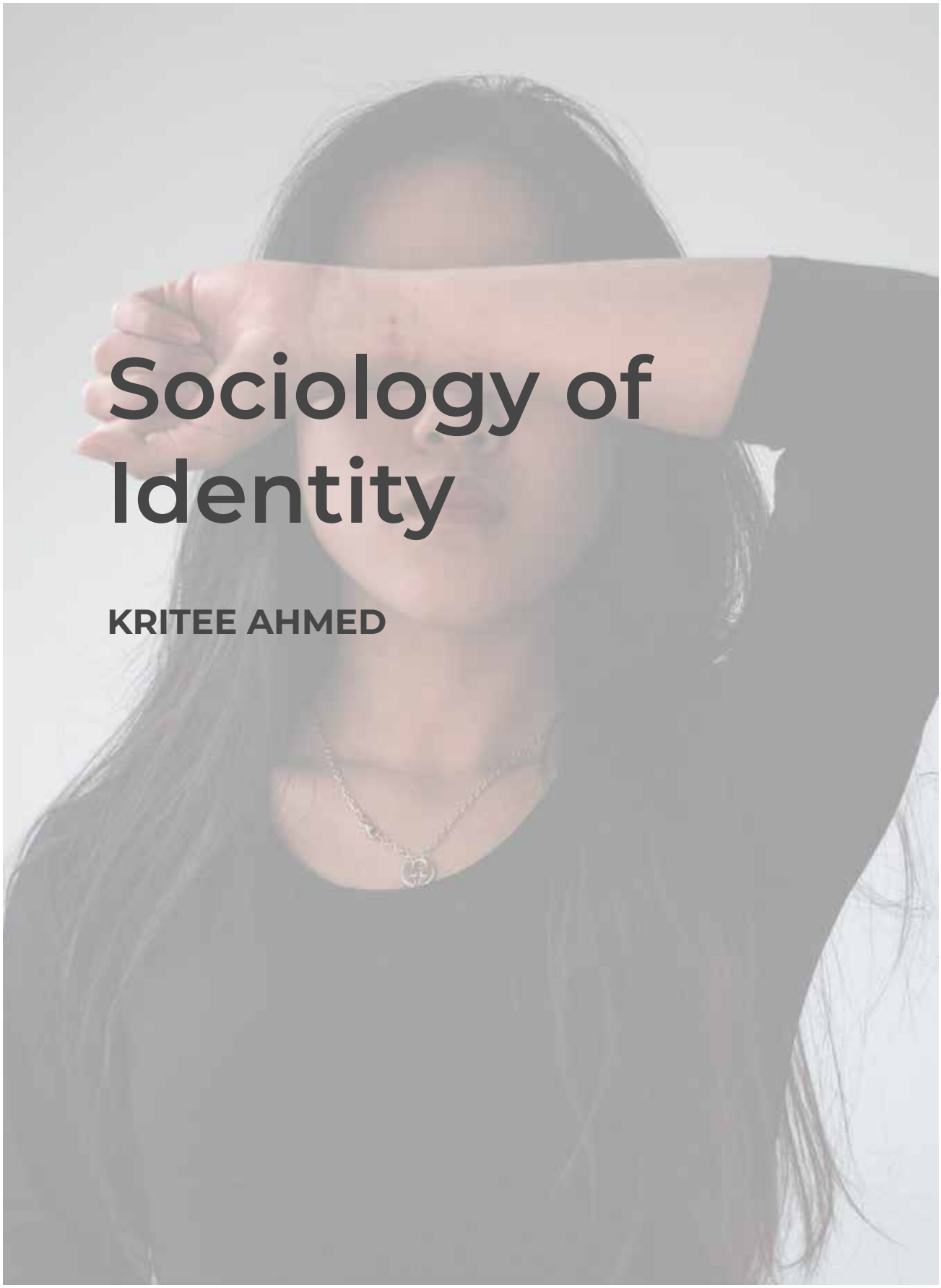
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Sociology of Identity

KRITEE AHMED

Who Am I? How Did I Become Me?



Image by Shreyak Singh on Unsplash

My name is Kritee Ahmed.

I am a teacher, a student, a writer, and a researcher, as well as a husband, father, and son. I identify as Bengali, South Asian, and Muslim. I am Canadian-born, able-bodied, and come from a working-class background. I love to eat food, such as fresh-cut fries and fragrant, flavourful biryani; you might call me a foodie.

Is this me? How did I become this person? In this module, we grapple with these two questions by considering concepts and theories used in sociology. The processes that shape and define us are far more complex than we might imagine.

Constructing Identities

In my simple biography above, I identify myself using different categories. Before we make sense of those identities and where they come from, we must think through how identity is formed. There are two main frameworks used to understand identity: **essentialism** and **social constructionism**.

According to essentialism, identity is innate; it is something with which we are born. Essentialism proposes that we have some kind of unchanging fundamental self. Identity, thus, lies outside the sphere of culture and politics (O'Brien & Szeman, 2004, p. 170). Essentialism as a theory of identity limits the possibility of our identities changing or shifting over time. It suggests that from birth to death we can only identify in one way.

The other way of looking at identity is to see it as something that takes shape and changes over time. We might think of identity as cultural critic Stuart Hall (1990) does, as "not already an accomplished fact" but rather "a



Image by Divyadarshi Acharya on Unsplash

'production,' which is never complete, always in process" (p. 395). This understanding of how identities are made up is called social constructionism.

Social constructionism argues that identity is the product of society and culture. It reminds us that our connections to each other, the social groups we are part of, and the **social institutions** we interact with all play a role in shaping our identity. In other words, our identities are produced, reproduced, and developed through our relationships with and within society. In this course, we focus on how our identities are constructed by understanding how society functions.

essentialism: A perspective that assumes that aspects of our identities are innate. We are born with them, and they remain fundamentally unchanged throughout our lives.

social constructionism: A perspective that argues that our identities are the product of society and culture, and are always changing.

social institution: Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.

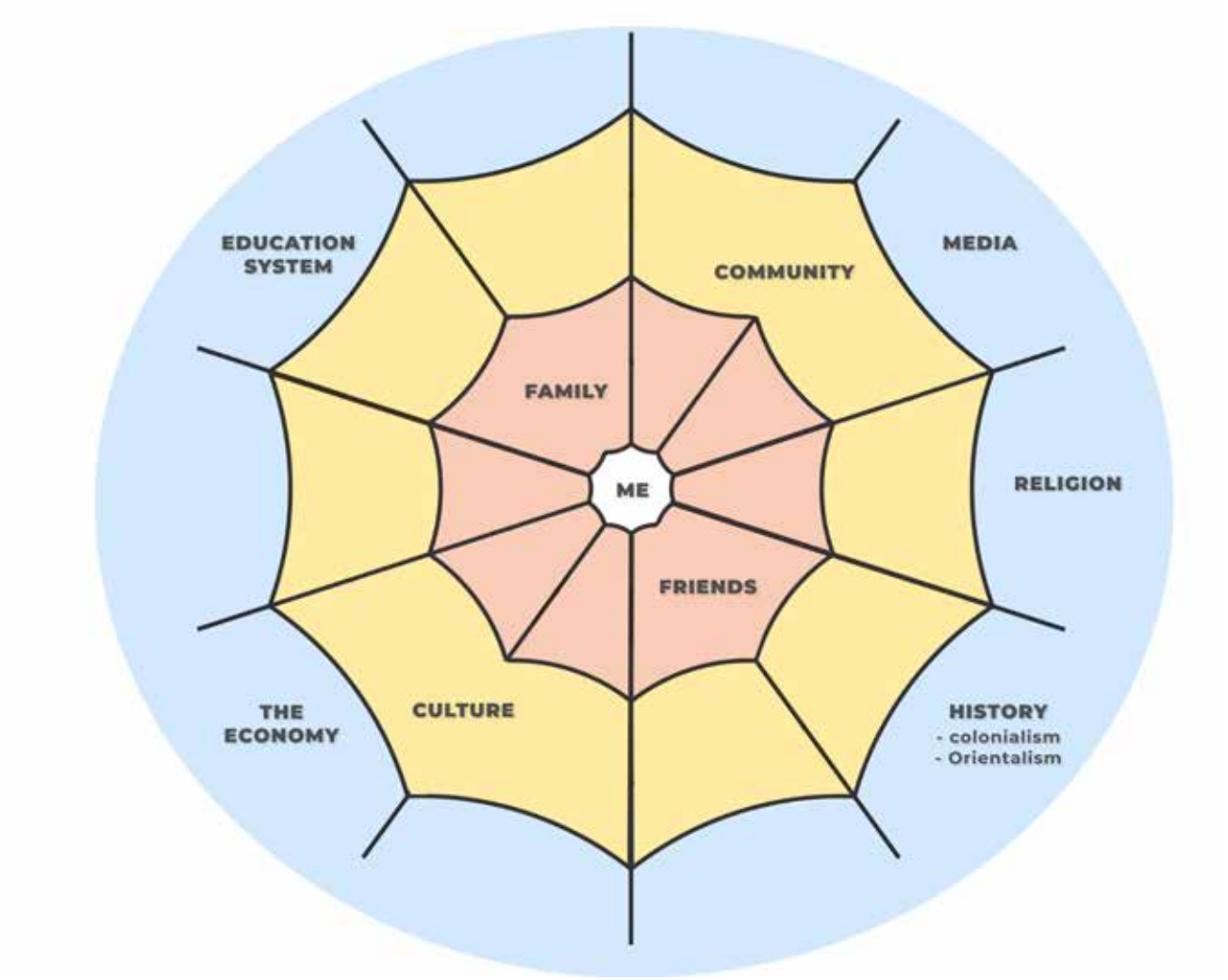


GO DEEPER

Want to know more about cultural critic Stuart Hall who passed away in 2014? Read his obituary here. (Source: "Stuart Hall – Obituary," 2014)

http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=centennial&url=https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A358348176/STND?u=ko_acd_cec&sid=STND&xid=b54682a4

Societal Web



Graphic by Kritee Ahmed, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

The question of identity is more complex than simply choosing the key details of how we present ourselves to others and the career choices we make. For example, not everyone can choose the career path they would like to take. It may be too expensive to follow that career path. It may take too long. It may require a move from one place to another, which might not be possible. Our decision might be affected by what others, including our loved ones, need. Look to the image title "Societal Web." The societal web's basic function is to get us to think about how we are connected to family and friends, community groups, social institutions, media, and history. By realizing how we are connected to one another, a key aspect of global citizenship, it reminds us of how our identities are also connected to not only the choices we make but to others who impact how we come to identify ourselves. By thinking through identity in relation to how we are connected to others, we can think of how our identities come to be shaped by social construction—through our relationships and connections, the groups we are a part of, culture, and social institutions such as media and government.

Identifying You and Me

When I talk about myself as a teacher, student, father, or Canadian, I am identifying myself through a **social status**. Social statuses help us categorize our identities through the positions we hold in society and how these positions relate to other positions in society (Murray et al., 2014, pp. 119–120). In other words, social statuses, rightly or wrongly, also tend to be arranged based on a **hierarchy** of **prestige**. For example, think of the healthcare field and how the different professions within it relate to one another: volunteers, cleaners, pharmacists, technicians, nurses, doctors, administrators. All these workers are needed to keep us healthy, but how are these statuses valued differently based on prestige or ranked in terms of importance?

The duties associated with a social status are socially defined. This means that we don't simply make them up on our own. Society helps to develop an understanding about those specific duties. We refer to the duties, or behavioural expectations, that are tied to social statuses as **roles**.

For example, think of a teacher you've had and consider the following questions:

- What were your behavioural expectations of the teacher before you met them?
- How did you expect them to speak and present themselves (e.g. how they dress, what they look like) to the class?
- How did those expectations affect your interactions with the teacher?
- From where did those expectations come, anyway?

Chances are these expectations come from ideas floating around in society (such as in **media representations** of those social statuses; see the module on Critical Media Literacy). By accepting these expectations as true and incorporating them in our interactions, we reinforce them.

We can roughly divide social statuses into two categories, though there may be overlap between these two categories. First, some social statuses are **ascribed**. This means they are assigned to us at birth and cannot be easily changed. Examples of these include your age, sex, or ethnicity. Second, some statuses are **achieved**. These require work and effort to earn and include our jobs or abilities. Our accomplishments, such as degrees or diplomas we complete, can help us earn these achieved statuses. When you think of the social status of teacher, is it an example of an ascribed or an achieved social status?

social status: The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.

hierarchy: A system of increasing value that ranks people based on certain criteria.

prestige: A form of social honour, or respect, that is valued by society or particular groups, and placed on people based on their social status.

role: The social and behavioural expectations assigned to different social statuses, or positions in society.

media representations: The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.

ascribed: A social status assigned to an individual from birth. It is not chosen and cannot easily be changed.

achieved: A social status that is a result of an individual's work, accomplishments, and/or abilities.

1. Can you identify the social statuses found in the biography in the module introduction? Which would you describe as ascribed? Which ones are achieved? Why?
2. Make a list of social statuses with which you identify. Which ones are achieved, and which ones ascribed? Why?



Choosing Who I Am

Imagine you're trying to figure out what to wear to a job interview. Perhaps this choice feels simple to you. You know exactly what to wear. But when we slow down the process and think about what went into that decision—about who you are and how you want to present yourself— a more complex picture emerges.



"Friends & Strangers" by Sidia Atabales-Schnitzler is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

George Herbert Mead helps us understand that process. He describes the self as having two key aspects, the **"I" and the "me."** The "I" is the part of you that presents itself to and interacts with others. When it does this, it uses information it receives from the "me." The "me" is like a library of past information collected from the interactions and experiences of the "I" (Elliot, 2014, p. 33; O'Brien, 2011, p. 110; Appelrouth & Desfor Edles, 2007, p. 179). The "I" and the "me" have internal conversations discussing how the "I" should act or behave (Dillon, 2010, p. 259). The "I" is also the creative aspect of you (Craib, 1992, p. 88), so it can, if it chooses, behave as it wants, despite the advice and data provided through conversations with the "me."

"I" and the "me": Two key aspects of the self that allow a person to reflect on their actions and behaviours.

This internal dialogue between the two aspects of the self is how we reflect on things. Reflection shapes who we are, and how we present ourselves. It allows us to think about and interpret the various roles we're expected to play when performing certain social statuses. For example, in figuring out what to wear for a job interview, your "I" has a conversation with your "me" as they decide together how your "I" should present itself. The result

of that conversation determines what you end up wearing. You may want to dress professionally or creatively (however you interpret that!) depending on the type of interview, and the social status and roles you want to present to the interviewer. In this way, Mead's theory helps us to understand how our identity is shaped, and how our understanding of social statuses and roles comes to be.

Another sociologist, Charles Cooley, frames this a little differently. Cooley believes that we develop our sense of self, or self-identity, based on how we imagine others perceive or judge us. He calls this the **looking-glass self** (Murray et al., 2014, p. 102).

In the end, Mead and Cooley both highlight that our sense of self and our identity are shaped by forces around us. While we choose many aspects of identity, the range of choices that we have is affected by the people and things we're connected to.

looking-glass self: The theory that our ideas about our identity are formed through the way we imagine we are seen by others.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Do you remember a time when you sent an SMS/text or a WhatsApp message to a friend and you waited a long time for them to get back to you? What went through your mind in that time? Did it go something like this?

You send a text to your friend, telling them you want their response. They don't respond right away like you expect them to. In fact, two hours pass, perhaps even a day, and you start to imagine what you may have done that's keeping them from responding to you. Your mind races. You think back to interactions that may have caused your friend to be upset at you. You wonder how you've offended them. The longer you wait, the worse the anxiety gets and the more you think you may have done something wrong. After enough time, you start to believe that maybe you are not a friendly or good person! So, what do you do next? You send your friend a message saying you're sorry—that you feel terrible for what you've done—even though you don't know what that is! Then they write back and tell you they didn't get back to you because their phone broke or they had an emergency. It wasn't your fault at all.

Your reaction in these situations reveals the effect of the "I" and the "me" having an internal conversation about who you are and how to present yourself. Such conversations may cause you to reflect on your identity. You can see the looking-glass self emerging. Your actions are based not on how your friend actually saw you but how you imagined they understood you. You may also see the social status of friend and its behavioural expectations (roles) emerge in the given scenario.

Presenting Myself



Photo by William Moreland on Unsplash.

Imagine you're in a classroom. You sit at a desk facing the front of the class with a pen or pencil in hand and a notebook. Perhaps you have your computer open. Someone enters the front of the room, dressed "professionally." They place a bag on the front table, turn on a computer, and put PowerPoint slides on the screen. They say, "Welcome to class, today we'll be talking about…" You think, this must be the teacher. You ask the instructor a few questions. The class ends. Your teacher goes back to their office. The teacher sees a colleague and says to them, "I wasn't able to teach everything I wanted to in that class! I should've prepared less material!" Of course, you, the student, never know about that conversation the teacher has with a colleague.

In the scenario above, sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) would use his theory of dramaturgy to make sense of what was happening. He would tell us that individuals in society act much like actors do on stage. We perform convincingly to our various **audiences**—the student to their teacher, and the teacher to their students. In front of an audience, we behave with our roles in mind. This affects how we use our body to communicate, how we ask questions, how we lecture and lead discussion. The **setting**, the way we're positioned, and the various **props** we use, such as computers, notebooks, and projectors, all help to make our **front-stage performances** believable to our public audiences. When we're alone or with people whom we trust, we let our guard down and relax our bodies much like actors do when they go backstage. In these **back-stage performances**, we reveal things that were hidden or affected us emotionally in our front-stage performances.

audience: A group of people or a person to whom we perform our identities.

setting: The physical environment and the location in which we act.

props: Items, such as pencils, books, and computers, which play a role in our performances to other people. Props help people understand who you are and the social status you hold.

front-stage performance: The behaviour that we exhibit when in public or around less-familiar acquaintances.

back-stage performance: The behaviour that we exhibit only when alone or around people we are close to and trust.

It is tempting to think of front-stage behaviour as fake, and backstage as a place where a person can be his or her *real* self, but Goffman did not necessarily intend it this way. He would say they are both our real selves. In both settings, we imagine how other people perceive us and this affects our behaviour. However, with back-stage performances, we are less anxious about how we might be judged due to the trust and familiarity we have with those closer to us. In other words, the choices we make about how we present ourselves and fulfill our roles change in different contexts.

Socialization: The Influence of Groups and Social Structure on Me

When Stuart Hall (1990) tells us that our identities are never an accomplished fact, he's reminding us that identities can change over time and are affected by others around us. Sociologists like Mead and Cooley highlight how our interactions affect how we identify ourselves in relation to other people. Goffman builds on this to show how we understand our identities by reading the setting and context we're in. These theorists highlight how our identities develop through limited choice—we understand our social status and roles based on perceptions of those around us.

But when we think about identities, we must move one step further and consider a concept called **socialization**. Socialization is the process through which we come to act and behave in line with an identity by learning about it from other people, groups, and **social institutions** (these are a part of society's **social structure**). We have already discussed how our actions and behaviours are influenced by our interactions with other people and the environment we're in. Now let's think about how these actions and behaviours are influenced by our relationship to groups, institutions, and history.

socialization: The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

social institution : Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.

social structure: The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.

GO DEEPER

Connect the dots and think a little more deeply about how Cooley's looking-glass self and socialization work together by watching this video. (Source: Khanacademymedicine, 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU0BQUa11ek

Socialization and Social Constructionism



"Leaves in Harmony" by Tuncel Mustafa is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Social constructionism says that we learn much of our identity from our families, communities, educational institutions, and other surroundings. We do not "come into the world pre-programmed with a sense of self and the knowledge necessary to act and interact appropriately with others" (Shaffir & Pawluch, 2014, p. 51). We learn this over time, often without even realizing it. We also learn how to present ourselves to manage other people's impressions of who we are. And we come to understand different social statuses and the roles, or behavioural expectations, associated with them through interactions with others. In other words, social constructionism argues that our identities are formed through socialization. Socialization is "the lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 93).

This does not mean, however, that biological or psychological factors do not influence identity. We are born with certain qualities of character. Some children are naturally more expressive, aggressive, or sociable than others. However, it is through the social process of learning how to perceive and then express these qualities that our sense of self—our individual identity—is born.

Agents of Socialization

Those groups and institutions from which we learn how to identify and behave are known as **agents of socialization**, or socializing agents (Parsons, 1952). Examples of these include family, friend/peer groups, school, religion, and media.

agents of socialization: Groups or institutions that play role in the process of developing our identities and the roles we play.

Early in our lives, our primary agents of socialization are often our parents, guardians or family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 131). From them we learn to imitate behaviour and how to act in relation to others. They also communicate values to us, through the things they tell us. How they act in relation to us teaches us about our own social status, child. These interactions also help us understand who and what our parents or guardians are—including their social statuses and roles.



Image by Becca Tapert on Unsplash

A parent or guardian may feed, clothe and clean us. Through these acts, we understand that they are our protectors, and so we come to trust them...and test them! Because of this trust, parents or guardians can set boundaries for their children, for example, by telling their kids not to scratch their arms, pick their nose, or act out. This is socialization at work. Through this give-and-take relationship, we are engaged in a process of becoming. Children learn that they are children and how to be children by understanding things they are permitted to do, and not to do. Meanwhile, a parent or guardian also learns (or should learn!) about their social status and role as a parent or guardian by interacting with their children, as well as by learning from other parents and guardians about how to act and behave.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

For another example of socialization, consider how people become religious or atheistic. A case could be made that we are born Muslim, Catholic, or atheist, but this is only part of the story. Now that we understand the social construction of identity and socialization, we know that we learn about our identity and social status, and the associated expected behavioural roles, from our environment. In other words, agents of socialization play a role in whether we become religious or not.

If you went to church every Sunday or mosque every Friday as a child, you would have learned certain traditions that determined how you act and behave in that environment. These would have reinforced your sense of being part of a religious community, and thus, your religious identity.

But your religious identity is determined by more than what happens in a religious space. It may be affected by the types of food you eat or don't eat, such as not eating pork. You may participate in religious rituals, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Or you may have been told religious parables that shape how you act and think about the world. Events, foods, lessons, stories—all play a role in shaping your religious identity. And these don't come from a single source like a religious institution. They come from school, family, friends. We learn about these things from agents of socialization, and they affect how our identities develop over time.



Image by Richard Mcall from Pixabay



Image by Patrick Fore on Unsplash

Socialization, Ideology and the Media

Another way we learn about social statuses and ways of being and acting is through **media**, such as advertisements, TV and radio, social media, and the internet. You'll learn more about how this works in subsequent modules. What is being transmitted to us through media is ideology, the topic of another module. In this section, we'll begin making links between these concepts.

Media is a **social institution**. What we see in media is imbued with **ideology**, or beliefs or ideas about how society should work and be organized. In other words, media tells us how we should act and behave and what we should value (Festenstein & Kenny, 2010; Mullaly, 2007). When we see messages and ideas repeated over and over again in the media, they begin to shape our beliefs of who we can be and how we should behave. For example, if everywhere we look we see advertisements for products that we could potentially buy, we may start to believe in and see the world through the ideology of consumerism. Consumerism tells us that our happiness is tied to the things we buy, own and consume. This can shape our sense of self and even the social statuses we hold. For example, companies and organizations identify us by the social status of consumers or customers. We in turn may start to identify ourselves by these social statuses. This then will affect our actions and behaviour within particular social situations (Ahmed, 2016).

media: A social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience.

social institution: Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.

ideology: A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.

Have you ever watched an ad on TV or the internet and found yourself convinced that you must have the advertised product? If so, think through the following questions:

1. Did the ad convince you that possessing the product will somehow make your life better or make you happier?
2. What was the product? How was it presented to you?
3. If you bought it, did it live up to expectations?



There are no right answers to these questions. But they do illustrate the ideology of consumerism and how it can convince us that buying or consuming something can improve our lives.

Historical Tendencies, Knowledge and Representations

In previous sections of this module, we have discussed how our identities are influenced by our interactions with others, our connections to groups and social institutions, such as family, religion and media, as well as our environment. Now we will consider how social statuses and roles developed and how they connect us to each other (as highlighted by the societal web).

Every society has particular ways of doing and knowing things. These develop over time. We can call them "historical tendencies." These tendencies are revealed through the knowledge, ideas or **representations** that are repeated time and again in society and that people have come to generally accept as true (whether they are or not) (Grossberg, 1986, pp. 53-54). This knowledge can be found everywhere—books, TV shows, travel journals, scientific studies, reports, etc.—and is repeated to us such that we accept it as common sense. And it has a large effect on how people and places get represented.

representation: A portrayal or re-presentation of something. In other words, a depiction or description meant to "stand in the place of" and "stand for" the original, but not the original itself (Hall, 1997, p. 16).

These tendencies shape what we understand about different social statuses and expected roles because they impact and shape representations of people and places, as well as *their* social statuses and roles. They've also helped stereotypes flourish (which will be discussed in the next module more fully). The voiceover below provides an example of how historical tendencies can shape what we know of particular social statuses and how that can ultimately shape our behaviour.

Historical tendencies, in the end, make us realize that we are socialized to believe in our society's way of doing and knowing things *over time*, but that doesn't mean we can't resist this. We can refuse to be socialized to accept certain ideas and behaviours. We can refuse to adopt the social statuses and the expected behaviours society tries to attach to us. However, we may encounter resistance if we try to identify differently or in new ways (Grossberg, 1986, p. 54).



Ashton Bingham on Unsplash

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

What does the above discussion have to do with identities, anyway? Take a second and think of the social status of "professor." When you think of a professor, who do you imagine? Do they wear glasses? A tweed sportscoat? (I wear tweed sportscoats!) Are they a man? White? Do they have a British accent? What a social status looks like in our heads serves as a reminder that this representation is the product of socialization. The fact that many of us imagine the same representation, despite being socialized differently, suggests that these ideas come from something a lot deeper than our simple connections with each other. Historically, people with certain identities—for example, white, male—have held the social status of professor. Even though this isn't always true anymore, we may still associate the social status of professor with this representation. This is an example of how historical tendencies affect how we identify with or relate to and understand various social statuses and roles.

You might also think about why I, a professor, choose to wear tweed. Could it be that I have been socialized into thinking that's what professors wear? Could I be

doing it subconsciously so people will recognize me as a professor, since many people already believe professors wear tweed?

We could take this discussion in another direction still. Perhaps I just think that it makes good fashion sense and like it! Good point! But even if this is true, what helped create the conditions for me to like it? How did I even come to think about wearing tweed in the first place? Did it come from an idea about what "professor" as a social status entails? And what does this example say about how historical tendencies affect representation, social status, and how we relate to each other?

Finally, you might ask, what if a professor you've never met before came to class wearing a t-shirt and shorts? What would that make you feel about this professor and professors in general? Your answer to this question might reveal how historical tendencies affect social statuses and roles and perhaps how people may resist them.

Colonialism, Orientalism and Identity



Image by Dan Meyers on Unsplash

One of the ways our knowledge and understanding of identities has been shaped is through a historical process known as **colonialism**. Colonialism can typically be understood as the political, economic or cultural domination of less powerful nations by more powerful countries (Dillon, 2010, pp. 400-401; Alexander, 2005, 181-182). Sometimes this domination can be seen when a powerful country takes over land and territory for its own interests. It can also be seen when a powerful country forces less powerful nations to exist and function using its own language, customs, practices and art, which it deems superior.

Powerful countries reasoned it was okay to dominate people of another country and take their resources by assigning those people a less valuable social status. In some cases, they continue this practice today. For example, First Peoples in Canada, like other Indigenous groups across the world, continue to be treated as inferior by the government. Their concerns are ignored, and their communities lack basic services. The government as well as non-Indigenous people and groups, meanwhile, make money off their land and resources, as well as their culture (Francis, 2012).

Colonialism's legacy has affected our understanding of identities and difference, particularly in how it has played a role in defining social statuses of entire groups

of people and the roles they are expected or imagined to play by those in relative positions in power. In the next module, you will learn about some of colonialism's effects, for example, by thinking through **stereotypes** and **discrimination**.

colonialism: The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.

stereotype: "A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person" or group ("Stereotype," n.d.).

discrimination: The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

Orientalism: A term coined by Edward Said that refers how countries in the West define the people from the East without their input.

Orientalism is a concept developed by Edward Said (2003) to explain how colonizing countries (mostly in Western Europe and North America) defined and identified people from other parts of the world. They described these groups of people as "other," different, abnormal, exotic, backward, savage, inferior, etc. Doing this allowed them to position themselves as the opposite—as forward-thinking and superior. It was also another way to position these people as less valuable so that it was okay to dominate them.

These representations can still be found in society today. For example, Muslims have been portrayed negatively in Western countries. Today, we see this in media, where they are often connected to terrorism, torture, and war. They have also been represented as culturally abnormal or even "barbaric." This affects how Muslims are seen and treated, by both non-Muslims and governments. In turn, this affects how Muslims understand their own sense of self and how they are able to participate in society.



Image by Chris Lawton on Unsplash

Can you think of another example of a group of people being described and viewed as "other," or backward or exotic? How has this affected the way they are treated?





GO DEEPER

To learn more about Islamophobia in Canada, read this piece in *The Conversation*. (Source: Zine, 2019)

https://theconversation.com/islamophobia-and-hate-crimes-continue-to-rise-in-canada-110635

What happens when people catch on to false and misleading representations? Read this article about how a magazine cover hashtag prompted a social media response. (Source: Hotz, 2012)

https://www.theguardian.com/media/us-news-blog/2012/sep/17/muslim-rage-newsweek-magazine-twitter

Summary

In this module, we learned about the sociology of identity to help us understand how we came to be ourselves. Our identities are not simply chosen by us. Instead, they are affected by the people, environment, social institutions, history, and knowledge with which we come into contact. Recognizing how we are interconnected to other people sets us up to understand global citizenship and how we can act as global citizens by thinking of others and ourselves.



KEY CONCEPTS

achieved status	A social status that is a result of an individual's work, accomplishments, and/or abilities.
agents of socialization	Groups or institutions that play role in the process of developing our identities and the roles we play.
ascribed status	A social status assigned to an individual from birth. It is not chosen and cannot easily be changed.
audience	A group of people or a person to whom we perform our identities.
back-stage performance	The behaviour that we exhibit only when alone or around people we are close to and trust.
colonialism	The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.
discrimination	The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.
essentialism	A perspective that assumes that aspects of our identities are innate. We are born with them, and they remain fundamentally unchanged throughout our lives.
front-stage performance	The behaviour that we exhibit when in public or around less-familiar acquaintances.
gender-fluid	A gender identity that is not fixed to masculine or feminine.
hierarchy	A system of increasing value that ranks people based on certain criteria.
"I" and the "me"	Two key aspects of the self that allow a person to reflect on their actions and behaviours.

ideology	A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.
Indigenous peoples	A catch-all term to describe the people who originally lived in an area. In Canada, this refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.
intersectionality	The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on the intersection of different social statuses.
looking-glass self	The theory that our ideas about our identity are formed through the way we imagine we are seen by others.
media	A social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience.
media representations	The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.
Orientalism	A term coined by Edward Said that refers how countries in the West define the people from the East without their input.
prejudice	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
prestige	A form of social honour, or respect, that is valued by society or particular groups, and placed on people based on their social status.
props	Items, such as pencils, books, and computers, which play a role in our performances to other people. Props help people understand who you are and the social status you hold.
representation	A portrayal or re-presentation of something. In other words, a depiction or description meant to "stand in the place of" and "stand for" the original, but not the original itself (Hall, 1997, p. 16).
role	The social and behavioural expectations assigned to different social statuses, or positions in society.

setting	The physical environment and the location in which we act.
social constructionism	A perspective that argues that our identities are the product of society and culture, and are always changing.
social institutions	Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.
social status	The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.
social structure	The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.
socialization	The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.
stereotype	"A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person" or group ("Stereotype," n.d.).

Global Citizenship Example

In the introduction to this module, I, Kritee Ahmed, did not simply identify myself as a man. I said I am brown, Bengali, Muslim, able-bodied, working class and a man, among many other things. We are not solely one social status at any one point. Many of them intersect at any given moment. Therefore, when we experience negative responses or positive successes for just being ourselves, it is important to note that this is not just because of a single social status we hold. It may be due to a combination.

Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) highlighted the multiple ways people experience the world with her idea of **intersectionality**. This concept underscores how thinking through identity in only one way limits our ability to understand the unique advantages and social disadvantages people can experience because of who they are. In the next module, you'll learn more about this term. You will consider how the various social statuses you hold intersect. You will also think about why this may cause disadvantages, as well as **prejudice** or **discrimination**. Our identities are complex. We don't experience them in the same way in different social situations.

So why is thinking about identity important to global citizenship, anyway? Well, for many reasons. Studying identity helps us understand the processes, such as socialization, that affect who we are and how we act. It lets us think about how our connections and interactions with other people shape us. In this light, it makes us socially and culturally aware. We can imagine how other people are shaped and affected by the connections and interactions in their lives and societies. In the coming chapters, we will use what we've learned to consider why certain groups are affected by social problems more than others. We will trace the roots of those social problems and work towards taking action to address them. Thinking through our own identities—how we became us and the forces that produced our identities—will enable us to make connections with others and act to create more justice in the world.

intersectionality: The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on the intersection of different social statuses.

prejudice: A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).

discrimination: The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

Could our social class—whether we identify as working class, middle class, or upper class—be considered a form of identity? How so? (More of this discussion can be found in the module discussing inequality).



Global Indigenous Example

The term **Indigenous peoples** is a catch-all term for people who are "[i]ndigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of [power]" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 597). But it's important to remember that Indigenous peoples do not have the same cultures. They also don't have the same political, economic or social aims as other Indigenous groups or the societies that have been built around them (Smith, 2012, p. 6; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 597).

> **Indigenous peoples:** A catch-all term to describe the people who originally lived in an area. In Canada, this refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

As a result, Indigenous groups use different language to identify themselves. This may happen for various reasons. Crucial to this is an understanding that not everyone is able to self-identify easily.

For some, identifying with a particular social status comes with a link to a particular culture, relationship and/or political situation. For example, in Ireland, as Joyce (2018) has noted, "Mincéirs (Irish Travellers) are a traditionally nomadic ethnic minority indigenous to Ireland, distinct from the majority Irish population." The term "Traveller" was given to the community by outsiders because of their nomadic history. The name "Mincéirs" comes from their own indigenous language Cant/Gammon. They use this name to self-identify (Joyce, 2018).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Indigenous people of the land are known as Maori. But Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes that "Maori" also represents a colonial relationship between those who are indigenous to the land (Maori) and those who are non-indigenous settlers (Pakeha) (p. 6).

Alfred and Corntassel (2005) say the terms "aboriginal" in Canada and "Native American" in the US refer to those "who identify themselves solely by their political-legal relationship to the state rather than by any cultural or social ties to their Indigenous community, or culture or homeland (p. 599). In other words, these identities were established by colonial governments; however, Indigenous people may accept these terms as a means to attaining what they need to survive (pp. 598–599).



GO DEEPER

To learn more about Irish Travellers, see Dr. Joyce's article "Policing Travellers: Ireland's Deeply Ingrained Racial Divide" here. (Source: Joyce, 2020)

http://www.errc.org/news/policing-travellers-irelands-deeply-ingrained-racial-divide

Critically Thinking About Identity

Socialization is a useful concept to understand how people become who they are. It also explains how ideas get transmitted to us to shape who we think we should be. Keeping this in mind is useful when critically thinking about identity. It forces us to think about why our social status labels affect the ways we treat others with different social statuses. For example, you might want to consider whether you treat boys, girls, and **gender-fluid** children differently. Why would you treat kids of different genders differently? From where do our ideas about how to treat children of certain genders come? How have those ideas shaped your own identity?

gender-fluid: A gender identity that is not fixed to masculine or feminine.

We think through these things not to criticize our understanding of gender, but to consider the roots of these ideas and how they impact our actions and the actions of others. This can help us decide to act differently, perhaps in a more just way, keeping the global citizenship principles of equity and social justice in mind.

Using the key terms you've learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

1. What role does understanding your identity play in getting to know others?
2. What are the expectations and assumptions attached to your social status? Do these expectations shift when your social status changes?
3. Our identities are socially constructed. This means that we acquire them through our interactions with society. How is this true for your own identity? What social structures and institutions (school, media, parents, and friends) have shaped your identity, and how?



Sources

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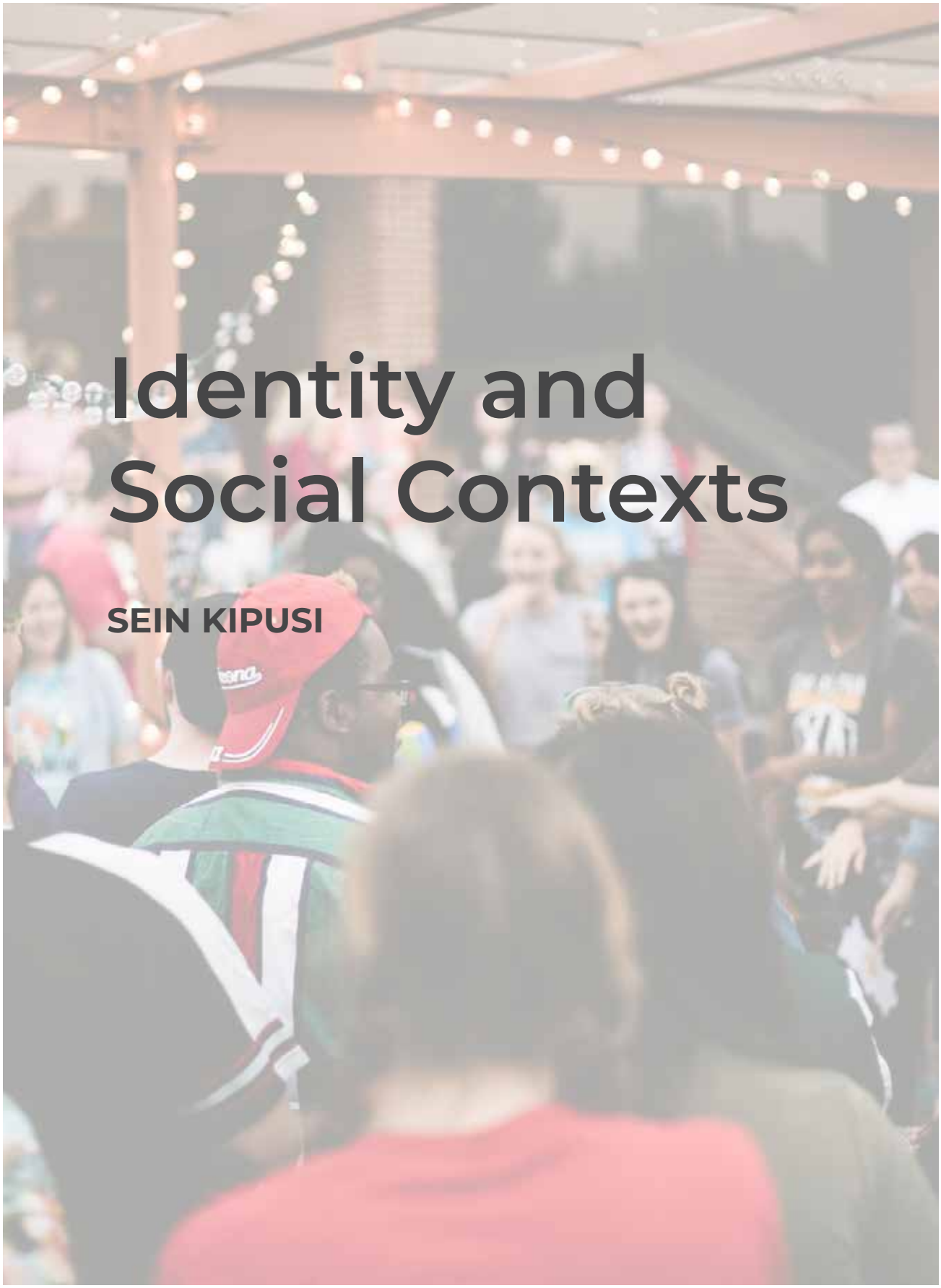
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Identity and Social Contexts

SEIN KIPUSI

The Sociology of Identity

Hi, my name is Sein Kipusi.

I like to read books, go hiking, garden, paint, and do gymnastics. Why do I like those things? Did I learn to like them through **socialization** or was I born with these likes?

I am a woman, I am 5 feet 5 inches tall, I have short hair, I have brown eyes, I am Kenyan. I am the youngest of three siblings. These are all ways of describing myself that also shape my identity. Are these descriptions static and unchanging?

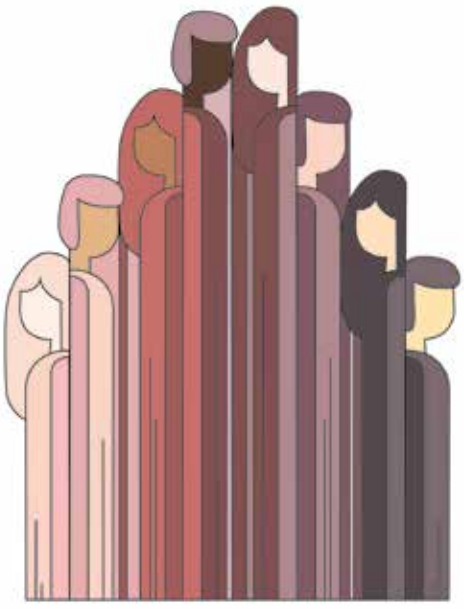
In this module, we will look at the ways in which our identities are fluid rather than static. We will consider how they are shaped by the social, historical, and **ideological** forces around us.

The previous module asked the question, was your identity given to you or was it created? In this module, we go further by asking, who would you be if you were never socialized by society? How do we learn to perform our identity?

socialization: The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

ideological: Related to ideology, which is a defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people.

Identity and Social Contexts



Artwork by Elena Escalada Barroso is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

In my simple biography above, I identify different categories linked to who I am. Some of these categories fit into the understanding of identity proposed by **essentialism**. Others fit into the **social constructionist** view of identity. We learned these concepts in Identity 1.

In the Identity 2 module, we will consider how identity is the product of **social structures** and culture. In my biography, I started my description with things I enjoy: hiking, reading, and gymnastics. I was not born with these enjoyments. Rather, the culture and social structures around me exposed me to these activities and influenced my choice of them. When I realized I enjoyed them and started to practise them regularly, they became a part of my identity.

In my biography, I also describe myself as a woman and give my height and the location of my birth. Some may say these are examples

of identity markers that cannot change. But is this true? Let's take a closer look at my gender identity.

To begin, we must separate the concepts of sex and gender. **Sex** is a term "used to describe the biological and anatomical differences between females and males" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 336). **Gender**, on the other hand, refers to the "attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2012). For example, being a woman comes with a set of behavioural expectations. These expectations help determine how I perform my gender in social contexts. When we don't perform gender roles as expected, we may experience negative consequences, like not getting a job or being left out of a group.

essentialism: A perspective that assumes that aspects of our identities are innate. We are born with them, and they remain fundamentally unchanged throughout our lives.

social constructionism: A perspective that argues that our identities are the product of society and culture, and are always changing.

social structure: The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.

sex: A term "used to describe the biological and anatomical differences between male and female" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 336).

gender: "The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2012).



GO DEEPER

This presentation uses a multimedia project about modern Brazilian identity to examine how we form identities and what drives us. (Source: TEDx Talks, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tJKGZ_xSZ0

This video looks at how our personality is affected by the culture in which we grow up. It examines how manners are not universal but cultural. By being aware that our personality/identity has foundations in the locations and cultures in which we were raised, we can see how our personal views are heavily influenced by social contexts. (Source: Practical Psychology, 2019)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jx-1EthJeIg

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

As we learn more about identity, we must also question the dynamics of power and privilege in society. Our identity is influenced by social contexts, institutions, community, media, and culture. These social structures are cemented in power, economics, and history. And they influence how people in a society see, value, and treat people who hold certain identities. The next sub-topic will explore how people can experience discrimination and prejudices based on their identities. We will also learn what stereotypes are and how they are created.

Discrimination, Prejudice and Stereotypes

Socialization does not just play a role in how we identify and how we perform those identities. It also affects how we think about other people's identities. Due to the power dynamics in our society, we may be socialized to believe things that are false or misleading about others and to treat them differently as a result. (Why this happens will be discussed in the Ideology module.)

Prejudice occurs when we judge or make unquestioned assumptions (usually negative) about a person, without knowing them, based on their association with a group. **Discrimination** can occur when we act on those assumptions and treat people differently as a result. People can be discriminated against based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, class, caste, shade or skin colour, religion, language, (dis)ability, or body size and shape. Examples of discrimination include paying women less than men for doing the same job and screening someone at an airport due to the colour of their skin.

Stereotypes are unfounded but widely held beliefs about a particular group of people. For example, a common stereotype is that individuals who identify as Asian are good at mathematics. Another one is tall people are good at playing basketball. Stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral, but they are damaging because they lead to false assumptions about people. They can also create expectations for people that limit what they can do and how they can behave.

A danger of stereotypes is that the groups being stereotyped start to believe negative characterizations of them are true. This is

prejudice: A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).

discrimination: The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

stereotype: "A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person" or group ("Stereotype," n.d.).

called **stereotype threat** and is defined as "poor performance in the face of negative stereotypes" (Beilock, 2010, p. 102). To understand stereotype threat further, let's examine a case study:

stereotype threat: The effect of negative stereotypes on an individual's performance or behaviour.

Asian female college students were recruited for a math test and divided into groups. Some groups were given a survey beforehand that highlighted their Asian ancestry while others had a survey that drew attention to the fact that they were women. This test was designed to test the effect of two common stereotypes. The first is that Asians are naturally good at math, and the second is that women are naturally less inclined towards the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. The Asian women who were sensitized to their Asian identity scored higher on the test than the Asian women who were sensitized to their gender, thus confirming that stereotypes impacted performance (Beilock, 2010, p. 166).

Next, we will consider what happens when you experience discrimination and prejudice based on more than one aspect of your identity.



GO DEEPER

This video looks at common stereotypes and makes the argument that stereotypes are everywhere. They may be affecting you and your performance without you realizing it. Finally, it asks the question, is there any way to avoid "stereotype threat"? (Source: CNA Insider, 2014)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTYMSulvnyw

Identity and Intersectionality

Intersectionality describes the complex ways people can experience multiple forms of **discrimination** or **prejudice** based on different aspects of their identity. For example, an overweight person from a **visible minority** group may be body shamed for their weight and also called racial ethnic slurs. Furthermore, intersectionality recognizes that aspects of people's identity may combine or add together to create unique forms of discrimination. In the above example, this person may face slurs that target both their race and weight, or they may be stereotyped in a particular way because of these overlapping identities.

intersectionality: The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on the intersection of different social statuses.

discrimination: The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

prejudice: A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).

visible minority: "The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' The visible minority population [in Canada] consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese" (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Different groups in societies are subject to different levels of discrimination. How society views your identity can affect it and how you perceive yourself. Understanding that identities have multiple aspects and that these may affect the discrimination and stereotypes we face can help us recognize and address injustice in society.



Photo by Mikhail Nilov from Pexels

Gender
Performance, Power and Status

As previously discussed in the sub-topic on Identity and Social Contexts, **gender** categories are created by society (and different from sex categories, which describe biological differences). We perform our gender identities, and our performance is influenced by societal expectations and stereotypes. When we perform a role, we think about who our audience is and what their expectations are. We consider what a successful performance will look like

gender: "The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2012).

to our audience. And we are rewarded when we meet their expectations, and judged and treated negatively when we don't.

Let's look at a daily task: dressing ourselves. How does our gender affect the clothes we choose? What is considered fashion for men and fashion for women? Who decides what is appropriate to wear as a man or woman? These questions reveal the role media, culture, family, religion and educational institutions play in how we perform our gender and how we are rewarded for that performance.

Watch this video about 100 years of fashion for men and women to think through these questions (Source: Glam Inc., 2015).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3e8MvTntkE

As you can see from the video, social contexts influence how gender is performed.

Gender is also connected to **social status**. Let us look at some common jobs. Do you expect a nurse to be a man or a woman? Do you expect a construction worker to be a man or a woman? Nurses are associated with the role of caregiver, which has typically been considered a feminine role. Construction workers are associated with strength, which is typically considered a characteristic of masculine roles. Where did we learn these stereotypes? How have they influenced us and our career choices?

social status: The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.

Finally, it is important to remember that social statuses influence who has power in society. Some social statuses are more powerful than others, and often these are associated with a particular gender. For example, chief executive officers (CEOs) of major companies—a very powerful position—are overwhelmingly male. In Canada, only 4% of companies that are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange have a CEO who is a woman (Deschamps, 2019). As you will recall from the discussion of stereotypes, this can create conditions where women are not seen as leaders of companies—and don't see themselves as potential leaders of companies. A 2019 survey showed that 62% of Canadians were "very comfortable" with a woman being the CEO at a major company (67% men; 57% women) (Deschamps, 2019).

Which gender has seen the most changes in fashion over the past 100 years? Why do you think that is?





GO DEEPER

This video looks at how roles in society are gendered, for example, women as nurses and men as doctors. It examines various scenarios where we are confronted with gender roles and how our status in society is defined by stereotypes of masculine vs. feminine. (Source: Langland, 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdEAz3mjaSw

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Which gender has undergone the most changes in fashion? What are the major differences in clothes from 1915 and 2015? Let us try and imagine how the world was in 1915. Did women and men have equal political power? Did they equally participate in the workforce? How have gender roles changed as more women entered the workforce? Let's now think about how power and privilege in society is reflected by the distinction between what is fashionable for men and women. For example, there was a time when it was considered inappropriate for women to wear trousers. Today in many cultures around the world there are still specific garments for women and men to wear, whether it is for political, historical or religious reasons. These clothes represent and signify our gender; they are part of how we perform our gender. Power and privilege are conveyed through our fashion choices because they are non-verbal symbols of our gender and ultimately our status.

Let us now turn to thinking about how our gender roles and statuses are affected by political policies and ideologies. In 1922 women in all of Canada except Quebec and Newfoundland (Newfoundland was still a separate country) won the right to vote. Quebec granted suffrage to women in 1940 and Newfoundland in 1925. Today women can campaign to be the prime minister of Canada. But do you think they experience the same challenges and opportunities as male candidates? Why or why not?

1. What is considered fashionable vs. unfashionable? Who decides this?
2. How is fashion influenced by power, history, politics and economics?



Exploring the Complexity of Sex and Gender

Not everyone can be divided into the gender and sex categories that are commonly used in Western society. Gender and sex are complex concepts. It is important to consider these complexities so we don't fall into stereotypes that may cause prejudice and discrimination.

Intersex refers to people whose biological sex characteristics are neither typically male nor female. Instead, they exhibit elements of both. As is the case with all people, their sex does not determine their gender. People who are intersex may have a typically masculine or feminine gender performance.

The opposite is true as well. Even though someone is born male, it does not mean they may feel or act masculine. When we say things like "Be a man!" or "Act like a lady!" we are referencing stereotypes about gender roles that may prove damaging to people.

It is also possible to identify as both masculine and feminine. **Two-spirit** is an Indigenous term that describes the sexuality, gender and/or spiritual identity of people who identify as having both a masculine and feminine spirit.

Transgender people have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some transgender people who desire medical assistance to transition from one sex to another identify as transsexual. Non-binary gender refers to when a person does not identify as either male or female.

intersex: A term used to refer to people whose biological sex characteristics do not fit into the typical definitions of male or female.

two-spirit: An Indigenous term that describes the sexuality, gender and/or spiritual identity of people who identify as having both a masculine and feminine spirit (Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health, 2020).

Gender is socially constructed. Therefore, gender identities can vary between cultures and communities, as can the associated attitudes, behaviours, and activities that are learned through the socialization process.

For an example, watch this video about a community in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where there are five genders (Source: National Geographic, 2008). By providing many

options for gender expression, and recognizing five genders, the community finds balance and peace.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9VmLJ3niVo

This video explores the two-spirit gender of some North American Indigenous communities (Source: Them, 2018).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4lBibGzUnE



GO DEEPER

Learn more about the history and definition of two-spirit. (Source: Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health, 2020)

https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php

Identity and Race

Race is also a socially constructed category. It groups people together based on physical or social qualities. It affects how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we perceive others as seeing us. In previous sub-topics, we learned how gender is connected to status and power, and can lead to inequality. The same is true of race. We can ask ourselves some questions to highlight these connections. Why are certain characteristics associated with certain races? Who benefits and who is damaged by stereotypes associated with race?

Race as a concept only really developed during the late 18th century. While Ancient Egyptians, Jews, Greeks, and Romans recognized and placed importance on differences between groups of people, they did not use the concept of race. For example, in ancient Greece and Rome, people distinguished themselves from others based on the perception of cultural differences, not physical differences. Race was invented to explain and rationalize slavery and **colonialism**. Political and social factors, more than

race: Categorizing people based on identified or perceived characteristics such as the colour of skin. Race must be understood in the context of history, politics, and geography. It is not a biological category, and it is often used to group people, assign them social roles, and associate them with a specific social status.

biology, determined what categories were used to group people into races. This categorization was not neutral. It was done to allow one group of people to dominate and enslave others.

Given these origins, it is not surprising that race continues to contribute to inequality. People categorized as white hold power and positions of privilege. Non-white people face barriers and systemic disadvantages. Furthermore, we are socialized to accept dangerous and untrue stereotypes about race that contribute to discrimination and prejudice. Prejudice and discrimination based on race is called **racism**.

colonialism: The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.

racism: Prejudice and discrimination based on race.

An example of how powerful stereotypes about race can be, watch this video to learn about the famous "doll study"where small children are asked simple questions about dark-skinned and light-skinned dolls (Source: Fanpage.it, 2016). Their answers reveal how race can damage a child's self-identity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRZPw-9sJtQ

For another example, watch this video on skin bleaching in Asia that demonstrates how racial stereotypes have created a desire to look more white (Source: CNA Insider, 2020).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEs3g5LVqPU

It is important to remember that racial categories are socially created and not static. Within racial groups, there may be different racial identities based on tribe, ethnicity, culture, and background. People may face multiple forms of discrimination (**intersectionality**) based on intersecting racial identities. Furthermore, racial categories might shift as conditions in society change.

We can now ask ourselves questions to think about how racial identity is expressed.

intersectionality: The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on the intersection of different social statuses.

1. How do you perform race? Is that possible?
2. Can you be one race but act like a different race?
3. If we think of racial identity as a performance, who are we performing for? Does your performance change based on your audience? Can the way you racially identify change?
4. How would you describe your race to a person who was born blind?





GO DEEPER

In this video Jenée Desmond-Harris explains how the ideology of race is complex and socially constructed for political and economic agendas. (Source: Desmond-Harris, 2014)

https://www.vox.com/2014/10/10/6943461/race-social-construct-origins-census

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Race is a complex topic that can demonstrate how intersectionality works. Let's think about the famous brand of skin-bleaching creams called Fair & Lovely. These creams claim to lighten skin complexion and are sold around the world, but they are mainly marketed to Black and Asian communities. The name itself indicates that to be fair-skinned is to look lovely. It implies that dark skin is not lovely and therefore not desirable. And of course, these creams are marketed mainly to women. Women face pressure in most societies to conform to male ideals of beauty and be an object of male desire. The name Fair & Lovely associates the feminine ideal with whiteness, negating the beauty and value of women of colour

Indigenous Identity

What does it mean to be Indigenous? To answer this important question, we need to consider the historical context and the struggles faced by Indigenous peoples around the world.

Let's start by bringing in the voice of an Indigenous person of Canada to see how they identify themselves:

> I am a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw located between Comox and Port Hardy on Vancouver Island and adjacent mainland of British Columbia. I am an initiated member of the Hamatsa Society and am in line to become a hereditary chief. I am a status Indian. I switched to using 'Indian' for historical accuracy as that was the legal term used by the federal government, and continues to be used in the title of the federal policy that oversees almost every aspect of the life of a status Indian. (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018)

Please click this link for more information on this quotation (Source: Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018).

https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-is-indigenous-identity

This description highlights how identifying as an Indigenous person brings additional layers, complexities, and considerations.

First, it is important to note that there is a difference between how external agencies identify Indigenous peoples and how they identify themselves. The complexities of Indigenous identity are deeply rooted in **colonialism**. For example, Indigenous Peoples in Canada are identified legally as "status Indian" even though they do not live in or come from India. Initially, the criteria used to define who was Indigenous were quite expansive. However, the federal government realized, over time, that narrowing the definition would reduce the number of people who met the criteria. This helped their goal of **assimilation**.

colonialism: The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.

assimilation: "The process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation, or the state of being so adapted" ("Assimilation," n.d.).

When an Indigenous person describes their own identity, they may consider adding whether or not they have status, which nation, band, clan, or tribal council or treaty office they belong to, and whether or not they live in their home community or in an urban centre.

Watch this video on the Indian Act to learn more about how Indigenous history and identity was affected by social contexts (Source: The Agenda with Steve Paikin, 2018). It features an interview with Bob Joseph, the founder of Indigenous Corporate Training.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhBrq7Ez-rQ

- Who versus what created your identity?

Read this interview with Winnipeg artist Kent Monkman to learn more about his painting called "The Scream" (Source: TVO Current Affairs, 2017). This illustration shows how Indigenous children were removed from their communities by the Canadian government and the churches. The children were taken to **residential schools**.

https://www.tvo.org/article/challenging-canadas-history-through-art

residential schools: "(in Canada) A government-supported boarding school for children from Inuit and other Indigenous communities" ("Residential school," n.d.).



GO DEEPER

This video by CBC asks 18 Indigenous leaders and change-makers what it means to be Indigenous and how they experience their Indigenous identity. (Source: CBC News, 2017)

https://youtu.be/X-zwP6q1GkM

Learn more about Kent Monkman here. (Source: Morgan-Feir, 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-zwP6q1GkM

Summary

Identities are fluid rather than static. They are shaped by the social, historical, and ideological forces around us. However, as individuals, we also play an important role in the process of constructing and shaping our own identities. This means we can still define ourselves and work to change discrimination and prejudice based on identity, even as we are socialized into existing power structures and categories of gender, race, and sexuality.



KEY CONCEPTS

assimilation	"The process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation, or the state of being so adapted" ("Assimilation," n.d.).
essentialism	A perspective that assumes that aspects of our identities are innate. We are born with them, and they remain fundamentally unchanged throughout our lives.
gender	"The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2012).
ideological	Related to ideology, which is a defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people.
intersex	A term used to refer to people whose biological sex characteristics do not fit into the typical definitions of male or female.
prejudice	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
race	Categorizing people based on identified or perceived characteristics such as the colour of skin. Race must be understood in the context of history, politics, and

	geography. It is not a biological category, and it is often used to group people, assign them social roles, and associate them with a specific social status.
racism	Prejudice and discrimination based on race.
residential school	"(in Canada) A government-supported boarding school for children from Inuit and other Indigenous communities" ("Residential school," n.d.).
sex	A term "used to describe the biological and anatomical differences between male and female" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 336).
social constructionism	A perspective that argues that our identities are the product of society and culture, and are always changing.
social structure	The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.
stereotype threat	The effect of negative stereotypes on an individual's performance or behaviour.
two-spirit	An Indigenous term that describes the sexuality, gender and/or spiritual identity of people who identify as having both a masculine and feminine spirit (Re:-searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health, 2020).
visible minority	"The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' The visible minority population [in Canada] consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese" (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Global Indigenous Example

Watch these videos to learn more about Indigenous communities from different nations and countries.

A Celebration of Indigenous Cultures Around the World (Source: In The Know, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXWpDXZADCs

Who Are the Khoisan? The World's Oldest Race and the Indigenous South Africans (Source: Masaman, 2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0xQQE_Qy64

Global Citizenship Example

We live in a global world where being born in one country, going to school in another country, and finding a job in a different country has become the norm. As a global community we interact, work and live with people from all over the world. When we think about how we identify, we must also factor in that our identities are constantly changing and evolving as we experience different cultures, environments and countries. The intersectionality of our identities is complex, and people experience the same social situations differently depending on their identities.

Critically Thinking About Identity

As we close this module on identity and social contexts, below are some questions to critically think and self-reflect. We live in a global world where our identities are constantly being questioned and molded as we adapt to different environments and cultures. The below questions will help you analyze why identity is important and how it has shaped your experiences.

1. If identity provides the foundation for understanding and answering the question "who am I" how much control do we have in shaping our identities?
2. What are the expectations and assumptions attached to the gender you identify with? Does this change if your social status changes?
3. How has colonization shaped the identity, stereotypes, and intersectionality of your race?

Sources

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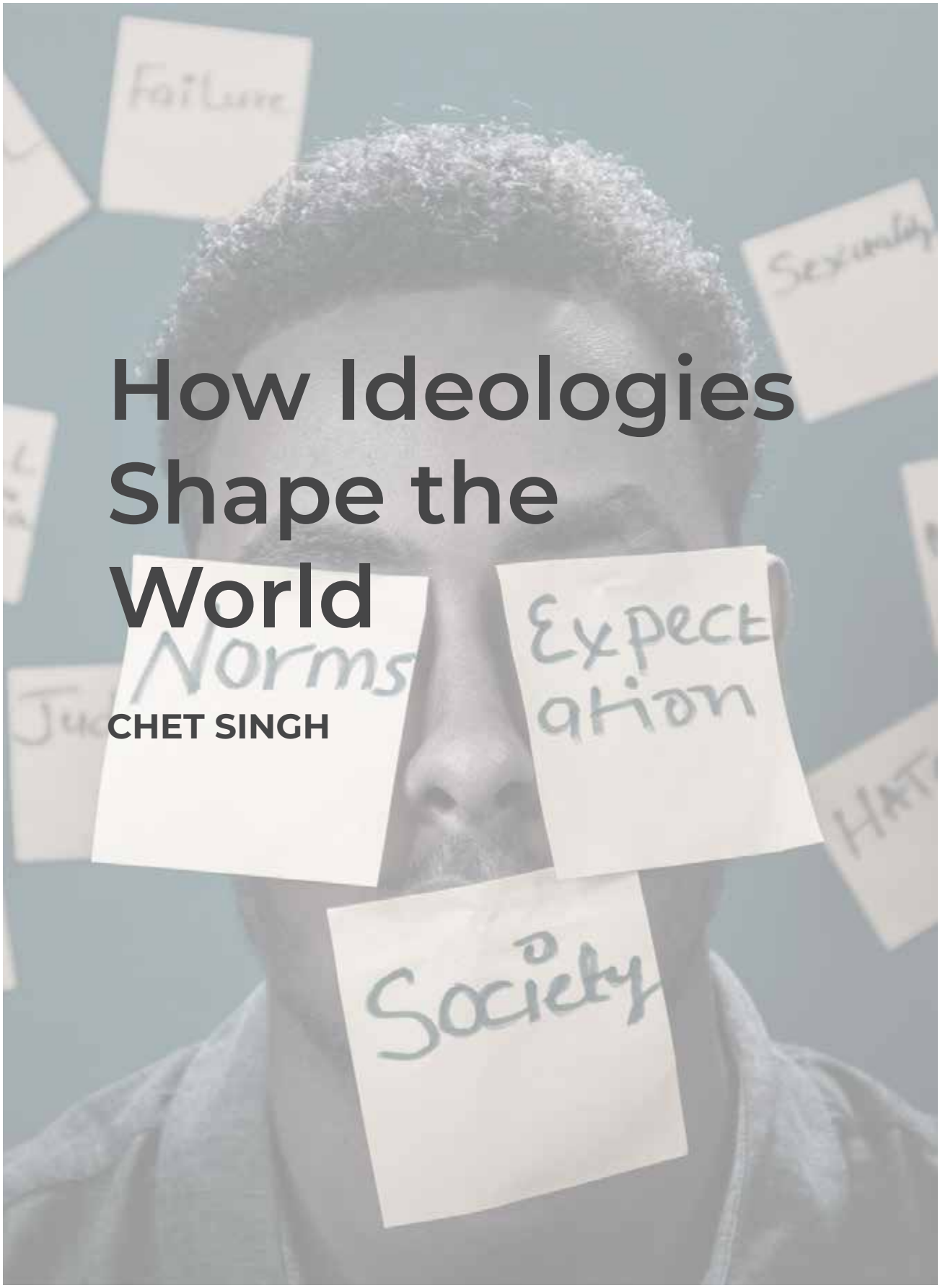
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How Ideologies Shape the World

CHET SINGH

Where Do Your Beliefs, Values, and Ideas Come From?

> *Power tells us stories that it is not power – that it is the rule of law, justice, ethics, protection from anarchy or the natural world, inevitable. And to obscure the fact that these are just stories – and that like all stories, these ones may not actually be true, or may even be the opposite of truth – it embeds these stories in ideology.*
>
> *– Jonathan Cook*

As we go about our daily activities, we are engaged in a web of relationships that connect us to the larger world. As we navigate various social interactions, and make sense of the world and our place in it, we rely on ideas and values to form opinions, make assumptions, and arrive at conclusions. However, many of us aren't aware of where these notions come from or how they influence our thinking. Most of us assume that our points of view are accurate and truthful. We think that they are just common sense. This may lead us to dismiss, discredit, or misinterpret perspectives that differ from our own (Paul & Elder, 2006). For example, it is not uncommon for us to mistake opinions with factual analysis. We may ignore facts that contradict our perspective or emphasize information favourable to our point of view. **Confirmation bias** is the tendency to seek out perspectives that match our beliefs. This means that we rarely evaluate our perspectives in relation to alternative points of view.

In this module, we will think about how our ideas, assumptions, and values are formed and how they relate to power. We will also consider why it is important to analyze and assess our perspectives in relation to alternative points of view.

confirmation bias: The tendency to seek out perspectives that match our beliefs. We tend to favour facts that support our preconceived opinions and are less likely to believe facts that don't support our perspectives. Also referred to as belief bias.

What Is Ideology?

> *Ideology touches every aspect of life and shows up in our words, actions, and practices.... Because ideology structures our thoughts and interpretations of reality, it typically operates often beneath our conscious awareness ... it shapes what seems "natural," and it makes what we think and do "right."*
>
> *– Eisenberg, quoted in Allen, 2011*

An **ideology** is a defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Often, these beliefs and ideas are about how society should work and be organized (Festenstein & Kenny, 2010). Ideologies can be political, social, legal, religious, cultural, or ethical. They

give people a common understanding of their community, society, or larger world (Brock, 2003). Our ideologies help determine our values and our ideas about how we should treat each other and live together in a society (Mullaly, 2010).

ideology: A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.

For example, some people think that our primary loyalty should be to the country in which we live (nationalism). Others think that we need to think and act in ways that acknowledge our connection to all of humanity (global citizenship). Both of these are ideologies.

You may believe that the most important thing the government can do is protect private property. It should let people do what they want, including building as much wealth as they can. Alternately, you may believe that it is more important for a government to ensure that all of its residents have access to education, health care, a living wage, and food. These too are ideologies.

As you can see from these examples, ideologies often conflict with each other. Supporters of different ideologies tend to assume that their ideologies represent the best way to organize society. Therefore, they often compete to promote their particular values and beliefs.

Do you know which ideologies influence your morals and values?



The Social Construction of Knowledge and Ideas: An Example

Imagine that you are with a friend in the cafeteria at the college, and your friend identifies a classmate in the Tim Hortons's line-up as the "Canadian guy." You may have learned that the **First Nations** were the original inhabitants of Canada, or that Black Loyalists have been in Canada since the 1800s. But in spite of this knowledge, you would probably look for someone of European ancestry. Where do assumptions about who is a "regular" Canadian come from? Are there certain ideas that shape these assumptions?

When I moved to the Peterborough area in the 1990s, I purchased *The History of Harvey Township* (Brunger, 1992) by a local university professor to learn about its history. This book told the story of European people and the institutions they established. It made few references to the Anishinaabeg First Nations, who call this area Nogojiwanong and have been here for thousands of years. There was no mention of their diverse cultures, languages, traditions, governance structures, philosophy, laws, and other aspects of their societies.

This book was written by a respected academic. It seemed accurate and trustworthy. But it wasn't. By omitting the stories, achievements, and experiences of the First Nations and how their land was taken by Europeans, it gives readers a distorted narrative of Canada. In this story of Canada, Canada was an empty landscape peacefully settled by Europeans. Leaving out the First Nations who already lived here positions them as marginal, irrelevant and insignificant to the story of Canada.

This framing of Canada as a white European nation has been repeated by other institutions such as the Canadian government, schools, mass media, and other forms of popular culture (Monture-Angus, 1999; Palmater, 2017). It has been reinforced to the point that even when we know better, we unconsciously think of a Canadian as having European ancestry.

Have you ever unconsciously had a distorted idea about something?





"Group of nine taken in the square of the North-West Mounted Police Barracks, at Regina" by O.B. Buell, 1885, Library and Archives Canada/C-001872, (http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=3260668&lang=eng). © Public Domain.

This idea that Canada is a European nation has had harmful consequences. Historically, it has been used to justify stealing Indigenous lands as well as passing laws and policies that harm Indigenous Peoples. It has also led to genocidal practices. Today, the majority of Canadians still think of "real" Canadians as European, and Canada as a land of opportunity. Such beliefs allow Canadian governments to continue to discriminate against Indigenous Peoples—for example, by not funding basic services, not allowing them to govern themselves, and refusing to address their claims to traditional lands. Recently, a Canadian senator said First Nations should just forget about the past and join mainstream Canada (see the video in the Go Deeper section).

When the majority of us accept these ideas, we're buying into a vision of society that is racist and discriminatory. Often, we are doing this without even realizing it. The ideology associated with this vision is called "white supremacy." This refers to the belief that white Europeans are responsible for the spread of progress and civilization. As the quote at the beginning of this section illustrates, powerful ideologies do not simply influence our perceptions. They can also be used to normalize harmful policies and practices.

GO DEEPER

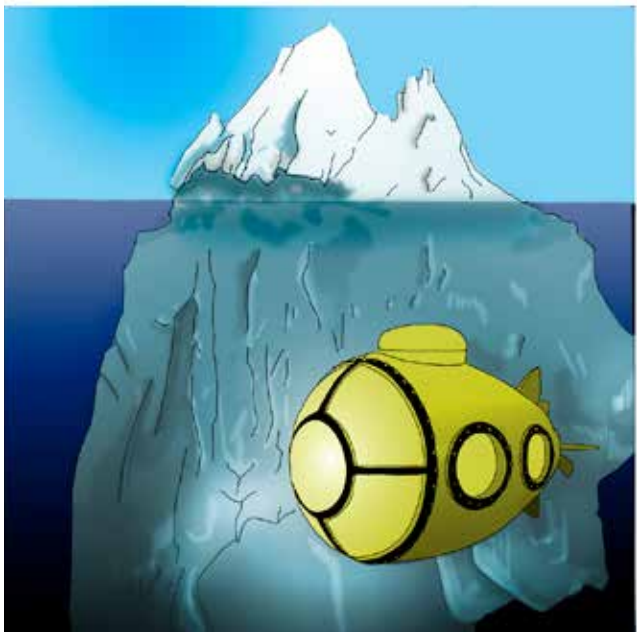
This video features a discussion about the case of former Senator Lynn Beyak. Beyak was accused of promoting racism by denying historical facts about residential schools. Also discussed on the panel is the free speech defense used by the senator and why the political system allows her to continue in this influential role. (Source: APTN InFocus, 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/embed/KJO1GX2M7VA?start=1490

How Ideologies Shape Us

Ideologies are ways of organizing large swaths of life and experience under a set of shared but unexamined assumptions. This quality makes an ideology particularly hard to see, at least while it's exerting its hold on your culture. A reigning ideology is a little like the weather: all pervasive and virtually inescapable.

– Michael Pollan



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Most of us don't think about the role of ideologies in our lives because their influence on our thinking is subtle. Understanding how ideologies work, however, is important for critical thinking. It helps us to recognize how certain beliefs and assumptions are at work in everyday situations and practices (Brookfield, 2009). What we may think is a personal point of view has been influenced by a lifetime of interactions: with friends, family, and social institutions, such as education, media, and government (Naiman, 2012).

Ideologies influence our morals and values. They affect the kinds of interpersonal relationships we have and what we think is appropriate or normal. They determine how we view ourselves in relation to others. They also influence our interac-

tions with institutions such as the family or the workplace, as well as how we interpret those experiences. So, ideology lives both within and outside us. It shapes our individual identities and how we experience the world.

It can be difficult to change our ideologies. At the core of every ideology is the assumption that our beliefs and values are morally superior to other beliefs and values (Marchak, 2011).

The last sub-topic explored the idea of "who is a Canadian?" How we view the idea of Canada depends on our ideological lens. Sometimes our beliefs and assumptions are based on distorted knowledge and myths presented to us through schooling, movies, television, and books. So, what we may think of as accurate could be factually inaccurate. In the case of who we think of as Canadian, our thoughts and beliefs may be influenced by the ideology of white supremacy still circulating in Canadian institutions.

Hegemony

> *The dominant ideology justifies the social, political, and economic status quo as natural, inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class.*
>
> *– Antonio Gramsci*

You may have noticed that many of us support ideologies that do not best serve our interests. Why is that?

The simple answer is that powerful groups have ways to encourage us to believe ideologies that protect their interests. This process of getting people to accept the interests and values of ruling groups without force is called **hegemony**. Hegemony can also be defined as rule by consent.

hegemony: The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.

norms: Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Ruling groups get us to support their preferred ideologies through several social processes. One, they create **norms**. They do this by defining mainstream culture and what are considered acceptable behaviours, roles, and ideas. These norms might include how we should act at work; what work is considered appropriate for different genders; what history we learn in public school; who we consider leaders; and what we value and ignore in our society (Goodman, 2011). These norms appear to us to be common sense. Two, they restrict how we understand and talk about issues by creating dominant discourses (e.g. "real" Canadians are European descendants—you will learn more about dominant discourses in the next sub-topic and the module on social analysis). According to Mullaly (2010), hegemony is achieved through the control of **social institutions** such as the education system, religion, and mass media.

Hegemony ensures dominant groups do not often need to use violence to get the majority to agree with their preferred ideologies and ways of organizing society. Because we have been socialized to believe the same ideologies, we more readily accept things the way they are. Our consent is important because the current system benefits these ruling groups far more than it benefits everyone else. This inequality is challenged by alternative discourses and ideologies that suggest other ways of organizing society. We will learn more about these and how ruling groups deal with them in the sub-topic on counter ideologies.

social institution: Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.

Dominant Ideologies and Dominant Discourses

> *The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.*
>
> *– Noam Chomsky*

Ideologies shape our individual thinking, but over time, some of them become more influential than others. We call these **dominant ideologies**. Dominant ideologies, however, are not more influential because they contain better ideas. Instead, they represent the extent to which powerful groups in any society are able to shape our ideas, values, and beliefs. Dominant ideologies are often linked together. For instance, as we learned in the "Who is a Canadian?" example, the dominant political ideology of imperialism (where a nation uses force to take over and rule another nation) is linked to the social ideology of white supremacy (Goodman, 2001; Mullaly, 2010; Singh, 2004).

dominant ideologies: Ideologies that are particularly influential in shaping our ideas, values, and beliefs because they are supported by powerful groups.

racialized: The process of creating, preserving, and communicating a system of dominance based on race.

We are all influenced by dominant ideologies even if we think we are not. Consider Hollywood films, for example. White men and women have most major roles. Black and other **racialized** actors usually play minor or stereotypical roles. It is not uncommon to view a Hollywood movie with an entirely white cast.

Furthermore, most Hollywood stories feature middle- or upper-class characters who are cis, Christian, straight, and able-bodied. This is an example of mass media creating norms to shape our ideas of who is valued and who is not. These portrayals have consequences. People who do not fit these norms face prejudice and discrimination. They may also internalize these messages, which means they may come to believe they do have less worth and value.

How do dominant ideologies come to be accepted as natural and inevitable?



Dominant Discourses

The common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated through **dominant discourses**. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media. For example, in Canada, the dominant discourse that **capitalism** is the best economic system can be found in media, schools, and popular culture. It is promoted in business schools and publications. No other options are usually even mentioned. This narrows how we talk and think about economics. We disregard alternatives and accept the ideology that capitalism is the most democratic, fair, and effective way to organize the economy.

Dominant discourses tend to hide negative realities. For example, capitalism poses dangers to our health and environment. It requires the exploitation of certain groups (including children in countries where our goods are made). However, because capitalism is a dominant ideology, people are less likely to believe negative stories about it. When people point to negative aspects, they are often dismissed or called names such as radical or extremist. Creating and promoting dominant discourses is a technique powerful groups use to prevent people from disagreeing with dominant ideologies.

dominant discourses: How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.

capitalism: A global economic system in which private people and companies own goods and property. The capitalists' main aim is to produce goods to sell at a profit by keeping the cost of labour and resources low.

What ideas, values and interests are being promoted by the dominant discourse of who is regarded as a Canadian?



The chart below explains the relationship between hegemony, dominant discourses, and dominant ideologies.

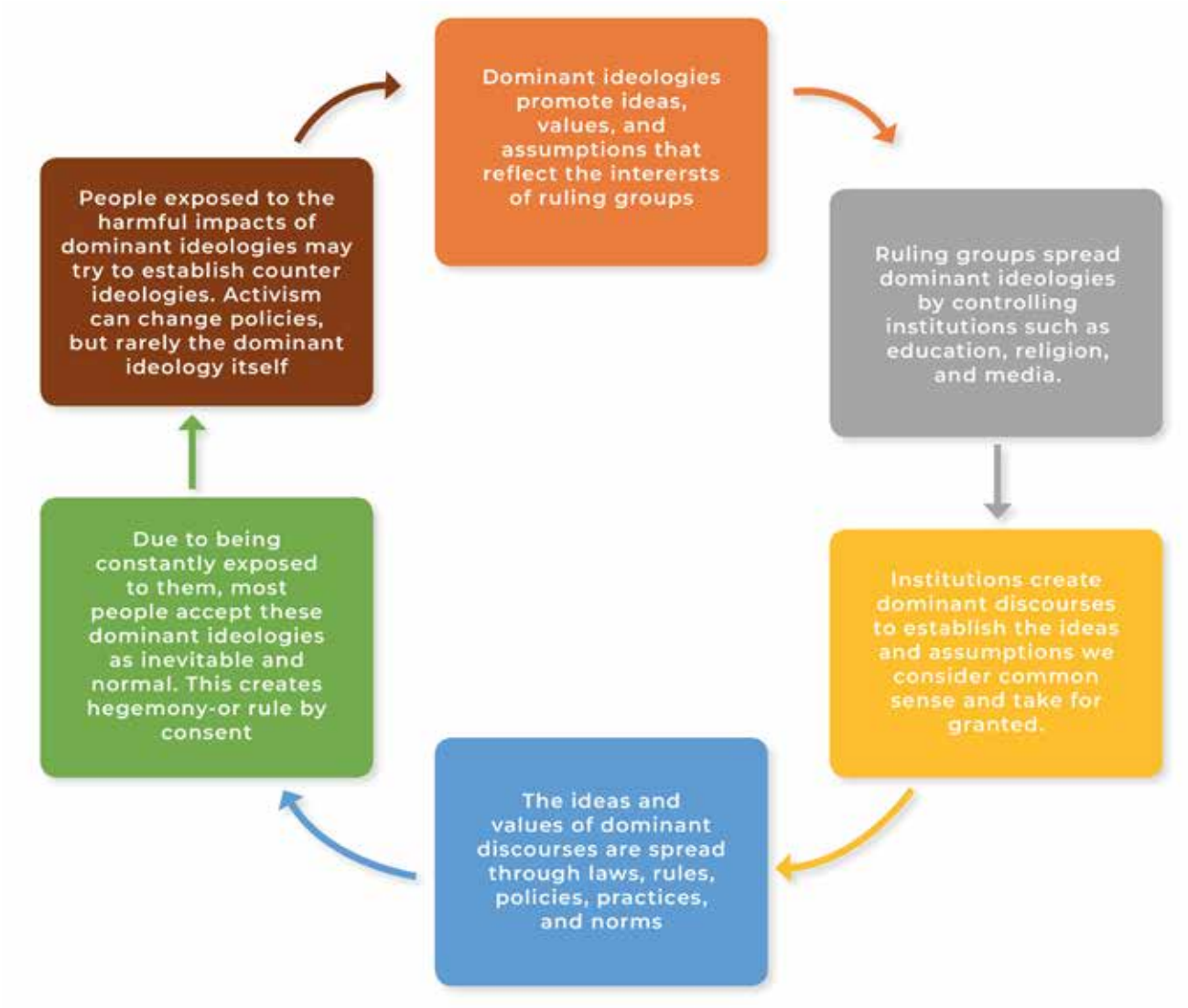


Chart by Chet Singh, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.



GO DEEPER

In this video, philosopher Slavoj Zizek demonstrates how dominant ideologies operate in Hollywood movies to normalize or promote certain values, attitudes, and beliefs. (Source: Fiennes, 2013)

https://centennialcollege.kanopy.com/video/perverts-guide-ideology

In this video, bell hooks examines how dominant discourses are represented in Hollywood movies and commercial rap music. (Source: Hirshorn et al., 1997)

https://centennialcollege.kanopy.com/product/perverts-guide-ideology

How Four Contemporary Ideologies Differ

The chart at the end of this module illustrates how four contemporary ideologies differ from each other in terms of their principles and vision of society. It also provides an overview of the history of each ideology and what it looks like today. Finally, it presents how each views social problems and what the societal impacts of each are in practice. You will notice that it does not cover the variations within each ideology, nor does it cover every ideology. Many other social, political, religious, and economic ideologies exist.

The transformative ideologies are the most difficult to pinpoint. This category includes various counter ideologies that address specific issues. Their approaches may be politically liberal, socialist, or even conservative in some instances.

Identifying ideologies and their influence in society is a key component of critical thinking and self-reflection, which are building blocks for the social analysis model you will be using for course assignments. After reviewing this chart, consider which ideology aligns with your views. Perhaps the ideology that best fits your worldview is not listed. For a brief description of other ideologies, see Definitions of Common Ideologies in “Your Ideological Framework.”

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTS

Historical Origins of Dominant Political Ideologies

Throughout history, all civilizations have developed philosophical and ideological traditions. However, the dominant economic and political ideologies of today were outcomes of foundational global changes occurring with the European Enlightenment in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Liberalism arose as a critique of the feudal aristocracy and the Church. These institutions dominated these societies. They created an exploitative and rigid social order. This movement led by philosophers and emerging middle classes argued for a new form of society with increased freedoms and rights for the individual (Heywood, 2017).

Liberalism evolved, and is closely associated, with capitalism. Capitalism claims that a free market is the key to social development. Liberalism was opposed by the aristocracy through the ideology of conservatism. Conservatism sought to restore previous hierarchies and control of wealth (Naiman, 2012).

The Enlightenment period also coincided with European imperialism and colonization. This financed the European capitalist industrial revolution and spawned an assortment of discriminatory social ideologies. The colonizing process involved appropriating Indigenous technologies, enslavement of local populations, dispossession of resources and wealth, and genocide.

To justify dispossession, theft, and enslavement, European elites concocted the discriminatory social ideology of white supremacy. This constructed whites as superior and civilized and the colonized in the Global South as “uncivilized,” “noble savages,” or “barbarians” (Johnson, 2006). The introduction of the idea of racial supremacy made it possible to reconcile dispossession, slavery, and genocide with liberalism’s ideas of individual freedom and human rights. In addition to enforcing religious ideologies of Christianity, European colonizers also enforced associated discriminatory social ideologies such as patriarchy and heterosexism when these contradicted their prescribed norms (Rodney, 2018).

Ideology Test

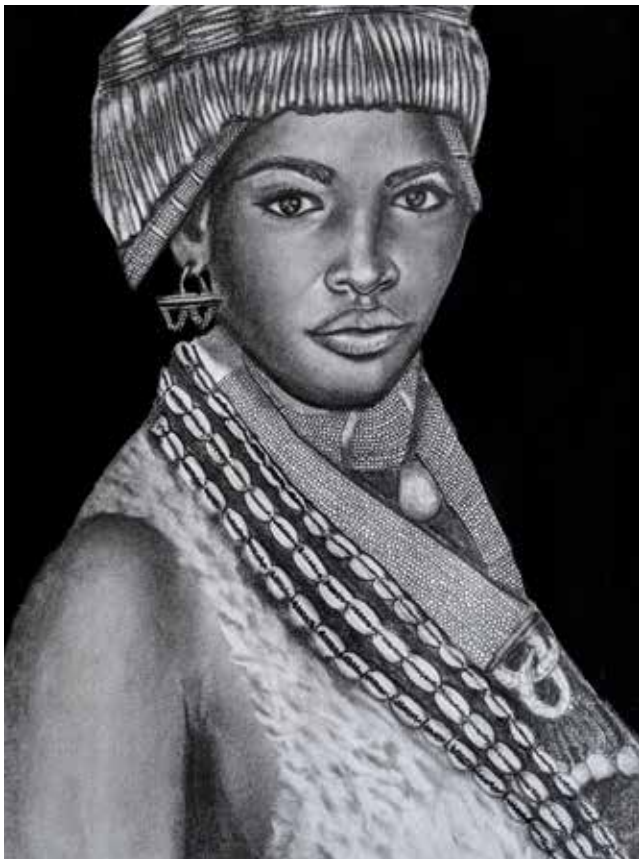
Take the following test to more specifically determine your ideological leanings. (Source: Pace News Ltd., 2020)

https://www.politicalcompass.org/test

Counter Ideologies and Discourses

If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.

– Malcolm X



"Black Indigenous Woman" by Ankita Nema is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Through hegemony, ruling groups try to ensure that we will accept their views and ideologies without question. However, some people resist submitting to the desires of the ruling group. These people hold **counter ideologies**, alternative ideas about how society should be run and organized. Generally, counter ideologies, and the counter discourses associated with them, articulate an alternative set of values and assumptions that are more inclusive, equitable, just, and less harmful.

Counter ideologies question the "common-sense" ideas of dominant ideologies and dominant discourses. They draw attention to how dominant ideologies justify injustice and lead to inequality and discrimination. For instance, many textbooks celebrate the explorer Christopher Columbus as a great hero and credit him with discovering the Americas. There is even a US holiday with his name, Columbus Day. However, counter ideologies put forward by Indigenous and anti-racist groups point out that Columbus did not discover the Americas; there were people already living here. Not only that but Columbus murdered and enslaved the Tainos (Indigenous people) he encountered (Bigelow & Peterson, 2003).

counter ideologies: Alternative ideas to dominant ideologies about how society should be run and organized. Generally, counter ideologies, and the counter discourses associated with them, articulate an alternative set of values and assumptions that are more inclusive, equitable, just, and less harmful.

Counter ideologies do not have the same ability to reach the public as dominant ideologies. Institutions like the media and education are controlled by ruling groups who do not want counter ideologies to spread. However, they can achieve substantial reforms (changes) or accommodations (shifts) in the way we approach social problems (Marchak, 1988).

Movements inspired by counter ideologies include The Combahee River Collective, anti-racism, civil rights, labour unions, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, Cochabamba, and the Arab Spring. These movements are responsible for major reforms such as the right to form unions, minimum wage, social medicine, pensions, human rights laws, and sexual and gender harassment policies. Counter ideologies put forward by First Nations activist groups are forcing settler governments around the world to address the injustices of the past and present. Some notable developments include United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Recommendations for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

When ruling groups feel threatened by movements inspired by counter ideologies, they may agree to some changes, such as new laws or policies. This makes them look good and legitimizes their power. However, they generally only agree to policies that keep them in charge.



GO DEEPER

Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's "Calls to Action." (Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)

http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Your Ideological Framework

Your beliefs, ideas, and values make up your ideological framework. This framework is developed over a lifetime of **socialization**. Many of these interactions are with and within social institutions. Social institutions include the family, education systems, mass media, and religious institutions. These institutions

socialization: The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

transmit dominant ideologies to us. They do this through policies, practices, and norms. In this way, the ruling ideas of dominant groups operate hegemonically through the creation of common-sense assumptions shared by everyone.

Most of us may not realize that our private thoughts and beliefs are heavily influenced by the social world we grew up in. Here is an example.

A child asks his mother, "Why does my friend not have her own room?" The mother replies, "Well, they are poor." The child continues, "Why are they poor?" The mom explains, "The parents don't make much money. The mom is a personal support worker, and the father used to be a cab driver but is now unemployed. Your dad is a sales manager, and I am a college professor. We both went to university. That's why we have good jobs."

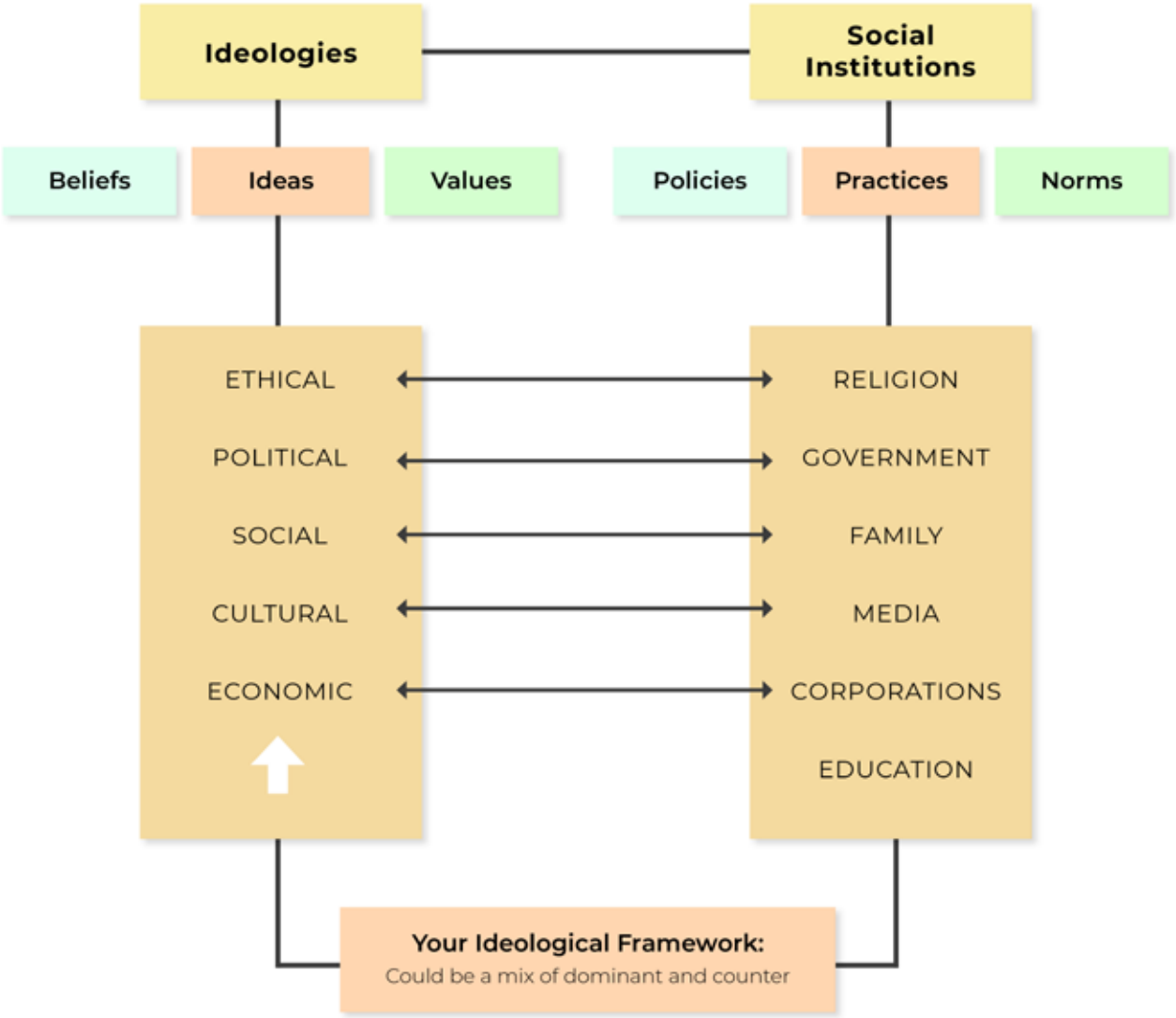
This may seem like a harmless conversation. However, in the mom's responses, we can find assumptions and omissions that reflect the influence of dominant ideologies about the economy, work, gender roles, and poverty on her ideological framework. Why do some jobs pay more than others? Why are some jobs valued more than others? Which sex generally works in caring professions? Which sex primarily works as cab drivers? Why are there working people living in poverty? Why does the economic system allow 5–12% of the population to be unemployed at any given time, through no fault of their own? Why do some social groups have more stable work, higher-paying jobs, or higher unemployment?

Asking these sorts of questions can help us recognize the effects of dominant ideologies. It may cause us to seek more information and an explanation for the way society is organized. It may lead us to adopt counter ideologies and engage in social action. A person's ideological framework is highly variable. It can change over time based on a range of factors such as social status, social interactions, and critical thinking.

Can we unknowingly perpetuate harmful ideas and practices?



How Agents of Socialization Shape Your Ideological Framework



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After learning more about various ideologies, can you evaluate your perspectives on social issues by considering perspectives that differ from your own?





GO DEEPER

Interested in learning more about specific ideologies? This list describes some ideologies that have influenced the social, economic, and political structures of society. They have impacted the life experiences of various social groups. They may have impacted your life too. Please note this is only a sample of influential ideologies. It is not a complete list.

Common Ideologies List

> *Definitions belong to the definer—not to the defined.*
>
> *– Toni Morrison*

Political and Economic Ideologies

Anarchist

As with all ideologies, there are many strands of anarchists. However, all reject the state as a coercive authority that is nothing less than legalized oppression working in the interest of the powerful classes. All state structures from the right or left are viewed as inherently evil and oppressive.

Capitalism

Capitalism has been the dominant economic ideology beginning around the period of European colonization and imperialism. It is a system where profit is largely generated from the control of natural resources, low wages, and financial speculation. Conservatives and neoliberals embrace this as the best economic system; social democrats want to reform it to reduce inequality; and socialists want to entirely replace it. Capitalism is linked historically to white supremacy, gender inequality, and exploitative labour practices for people with disabilities.

Communism

Communism is similar to socialism in its critique of capitalism but differs from socialism because it argues that capitalism must be destroyed by force and a small group, a vanguard, must lead the revolution. Hence, it is hostile to democratic systems. It has been linked to totalitarian governments such as the former USSR and pre-state capitalist China. China now practices a form of state capitalism.

Conservatism

Conservatism values a natural hierarchy of classes, which is necessary because the elites are natural leaders who need to direct the masses. Government has the right to intervene and establish social and moral norms but should have a restrained role in the economy. Society is viewed as an organic whole within which various social statues have assigned roles, unlike liberalism which sees society as a collection of individuals striving for personal goals.

Consumerism

Consumerism is critical to the maintenance of capitalism as an ideology. It encourages the purchase and consumption of goods as indicative of our worth and level of happiness.

Learn more:

Bioneers. (2015, December 23). Annie Leonard - The story of stuff [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WInDaa-0Yd4

Crony capitalism or corporatism

Crony capitalism or corporatism is social, economic, and political. It shares conservatism's belief in the natural social hierarchies of the human species. It believes that corporations should make decisions about the economy and other facets of society. Democratic institutions sought by liberals are seen as unacceptable because it impedes their view of social progress. This ideology is characterized by favouritism in the distribution of legal permits, government grants, and special tax breaks, lax environmental policy, and other state intervention in favour of corporate interests.

Imperialism

The formation of the nation state of Canada is based on the ideology of imperialism, the idea that the imperial power is culturally, religiously, and economically superior, which gives them the right to expropriate land and resources and control the destiny of Indigenous populations. More recently imperialism is linked to neoliberal and conservative political theories.

Learn more:

Longley, R. (2020, May 26). What Is imperialism? Definition and historical perspective. ThoughtCo.

https://www.thoughtco.com/imperialism-definition-4587402

Liberalism

A belief that the free market is the key to social development. Liberals believe in individual equality and equality of opportunity. Many see present-day society as having largely achieved equality within social structures. Liberals place great emphasis on education as an equalizer. Liberals are not as concerned with social and moral issues as conservatives except where they infringe on individual rights.

Libertarianism

Comprises a range of theories on the right and left spectrum. All maximize individual freedom over the state, which proponents see as a threat to liberty. Social order flows from individual liberty not authority. Some libertarians recognize the need for a limited state that provides the basics such as police, courts, and a military. Right libertarianism believes the state should protect private property and economic freedom. Left libertarianism is associated with anarchism and stresses individual freedom, particularly civil liberties (free love and free thought), and social equality, and is opposed to capitalism and private ownership of natural resources.

Nationalism

Nationalism can be political, cultural, or racial. It centres on a set of shared values and myths of the nation or group. Those not belonging to the nation or group are marginalized and ostracized, and genocide is a strong possibility under certain circumstances. The nation is regarded as superior to others; war with others regarded as enemies and imperialism/empire building are practices associated with this ideology. Nationalists are inward looking, hence opposed to internationalism or globalization unless it is favourable to their interests.

Populism

Not a defined ideology per se but piggybacks on right or left ideologies. The common theme is the identification of a particular class of elites as corrupt and out of touch. Demagogues offer to voice the concerns of "common" people and shift power from the establishment back to the people. Right-wing populism identifies enemies who are minoritized such as immigrants/racialized peoples who they claim are favoured by elites with special treatment. Left-wing populism is driven by the tensions inherent within hegemony when the legitimacy of the social or political order is exposed, as with the financial crisis of 2008 when the bankers who caused the problem were bailed out and people lost their homes. The global movement Occupy Wall Street exposed the collusion between government and corporations to enrich the elites at the expense of working people.

Learn more:

Baker, P. (2019, January 10). 'We the people': The battle to define populism. The Guardian.

https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/10/we-the-people-the-battle-to-define-populism

Menon, R. (2017, November 28). The many ways Trump will betray his base: The ugly façade of American populism. Common Dreams.

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/11/28/many-ways-trump-will-betray-his-base?

Right-wing and left-wing

Right-wing and left-wing represent contrasting approaches to political and social change. Left-wing views are regarded as progressive and welcoming of change that will create more equitable conditions in society. They support a great role for the state and are collectivist in orientation. Social democrats and feminists would be considered having left-wing ideology. Right-wing thinking, associated with neoconservatism, favours capitalism and individualism, and views equality as undesirable and unattainable. Right-wingers resist change and support the existing social order.

Social democratic

Social democratic shares values of both liberalism and socialism. Rather than centralized state ownership of industries, social democrats favour a mixed economy with strong state planning. They place more of an emphasis on equity than liberals, recognizing that governments act in the interests of ruling classes. They would work towards a gradual and democratic transition to a more egalitarian society with strong worker participation in management and collective ownership of resources and industries. However, most social democratic parties such as the NDP have abandoned the latter goal and have shifted to the right of the spectrum.

Learn more:

Geoff, J., et al. (2020, March 10). Five Americans living in social democratic Norway explain why Bernie Sanders is so appealing. Common Dreams.

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/03/10/five-americans-living-social-democratic-norway-explain-why-bernie-sanders-so

Wittner, N. (2019, March 24). What democratic socialism is... and what it is not: There is no good reason for socialism to be a bad word. Common Dreams.

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/03/24/what-democatic-socialism-and-what-it-not

Socialism

Socialism challenges capitalism as an economic system, and neoliberalism and neoconservatism as political ideology. Socialists argue that the production, distribution, and exchange of goods and services should be under common ownership of the state to mitigate the inequalities inherent in capitalism.

Social Ideologies

Casteism

Casteism is practiced in India and is similar to supremacist ideologies, but instead of race or gender, it is based on heredity. Though associated with Hinduism, it is still practiced

among all religions in India. Those deemed of a lower caste face systematic discrimination and violence. Remedies to end this form of discrimination are viewed as reverse discrimination in much the same way as some in the West view anti-racism and anti-oppression programs.

Classism

Classism suggests that those experiencing poverty have traits that are responsible for their marginal economic and social status. While those experiencing poverty are blamed for their situation, institutions and policies structured to create inequality and advantage the wealthy are not acknowledged as contributing factors.

Colonization

Colonization occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade. As a result, the Indigenous people become dependent on the settlers.

Democratic racism

Democratic racism is an ideology that permits two contradictory sets of values to coexist. One set of values embraces liberal ideas of fairness, justice, and equality, and the other set of conflicting values permits attitudes and behaviours that are racist. This belief is compatible with neoliberalism and historically linked with colonialism and capitalism.

Ecologism

Ecologism gives priority to nature, unlike environmentalism which does not fundamentally question the capitalist economy system and nature as secondary to human needs. This green ideology views nature as interconnected, where humans and other life forms are intrinsically connected and interdependent. It adopts various political ideological positions such as anti-racism, though it can ignore class analysis.

Feminism

Feminism, as with all ideologies, consists of numerous variations. First-wave feminism in the West originated in the mid-19th century. It was focused on acquiring the same political and legal rights as men and initially associated with the abolitionist movement in the US. However, it became dominated with the concerns of middle-class, cis-gendered white women. Nellie McClung, Canada's most renowned suffragist, was also supportive of eugenics (forced sterilization), which targeted the poor, racialized and First Nations. Second-wave feminism emerged in the 1960s and extended the goals of political and legal equality to include personal, psychological, and sexual aspects of women's liberation such as reproductive rights. Its significance was challenging the social construction of women. While the movement addressed issues of race and class, the voices and contributions of Black women were marginalized. Third-wave feminism originating in the 1990s is largely the theoretical construct of Black feminist intellectuals and is international in focus. It views women's lives as intersecting through dimensions of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, sexuality, and nationality.

Fourth-wave feminism originating around 2008 is characterized as queer, sex-positive, trans-inclusive, body-positive, and digitally driven.

Learn more:

Grady, C. (2018, July 20). The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained. Vox.

https://www.vox.com/2018/3/20/16955588/feminism-waves-explained-first-second-third-fourth

Heterosexism

Heterosexism advances the idea that heterosexuality is normal and natural. Hence, it minoritizes individuals who do not identify as heterosexual. This ideology grants favouritism to male biological sex, gender identity and gender roles. This discriminatory ideology historically was promoted by numerous institutions. Only recently have some legal and educational institutions acknowledged their roles in stigmatizing LGTBQ2S identities. However, many religious institutions and families continue to stigmatize these identities resulting in ongoing discrimination and violence.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy asserts that male dominance in the family and other institutions is natural; consequently, it promotes gender-based norms and roles. This ideology is responsible for violence and discrimination against women, and persists in virtually all societies. Also, devaluing women leads to exploitation through segregated and precarious work, with low pay. Aspects of this ideology are associated with all of the dominant political ideologies.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism exposes how cultural and psychological subjugations persist after the political structures of colonialism have been largely replaced. It gives a voice to political and philosophical ideas and traditions suppressed by Western political, social, and intellectual imperialism. It does incorporate some aspects of Western critical theories. However, some are concerned with the concept as it has not extended its analysis to emerging capitalist states that have elements of internal colonialism such as India and China.

Learn more:

Roy, A. (2019, January 3). How to think about empire. Boston Review.

http://bostonreview.net/literature-culture-global-justice/arundhati-roy-avni-sejpal-challenging-%E2%80%9Cpost-%E2%80%9D-postcolonialism

Religious fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism is a global phenomenon and common to the major religions. Extremists groups involved with these religions are involved in terrorist activities against perceived enemies. Christian fundamentalists associated with white supremist groups

have been involved in most of the terrorist activities in the United States and have been very influential in the political arena and mainstream media. Islamic fundamentalist movements view their interpretation of religion as principles that dictate personal and institutional conduct. Religion is not a private matter but is expressed in rules that govern the organization of social, political, and economic affairs of society. Islamists concentrate most of their activities in the Middle East as they attempt to expel the US and other Western countries with imperial military and economic interests and establish a caliphate, an Islamic state. Hindu fundamentalist has been described as more nationalistic than religious and equated with fascism. It has led to the demonizing of Muslim minorities who have been victims of state violence.

White supremacy

The idea of whiteness, that socially constructs Europeans as a privileged social status above everyone else, was developed to justify colonization and imperialism. White supremacy was critical to the development of capitalism and is largely responsible for the wealth of European nations. These ideas were the basis of the formation of white settler states such as Canada and though refuted are still popular in European-dominated societies. This hierarchy of social statues based on the artificial concept of race made it possible to justify two competing values: dispossession, treachery, genocide, and enslavement, and evolving ideologies prompting values of democracy, freedom, and human dignity. Reducing racialized people to the status of non-humans enabled colonizers to dispossess them of their lands, acquire these lands and resources, carry out genocide, and benefit from cheap, indentured and enslaved labour.

Summary

Dominant ideologies are powerful forces in society. They are how dominant groups preserve their power. They do this by promoting ideas to advance their interests and maintain social order. Such ideologies shape dominant discourses that legitimize the current organization of society. These ideas are embedded in the practices of social institutions. The majority of people accept these conditions even though it is not in their interest to do so. This is referred to as hegemony, or rule by consent.

When we share the ideologies of dominant groups, social problems such as discrimination, inequality, and injustice continue. To address social problems, we must be able to recognize dominant and counter ideologies. We must be aware of how they impact the economic, social, political, and environmental ideas and values in our society.



KEY CONCEPTS

capitalism	A global economic system in which private people and companies own goods and property. The capitalists' main aim is to produce goods to sell at a profit by keeping the cost of labour and resources low.
colonization	Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.
confirmation bias	The tendency to seek out perspectives that match our beliefs. We tend to favour facts that support our preconceived opinions and are less likely to believe facts that don't support our perspectives. Also referred to as belief bias.
counter ideologies	Alternative ideas to dominant ideologies about how society should be run and organized. Generally, counter ideologies, and the counter discourses associated with them, articulate an alternative set of values and assumptions that are more inclusive, equitable, just, and less harmful.
democracy	On a basic level, it is the ability of citizens to participate in fair and open elections to choose their representatives in government. Another perspective argues that democracy must function beyond elections by involving citizens in ongoing government decisions that affect them.
dominant discourses	How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.

dominant ideologies	Ideologies that are particularly influential in shaping our ideas, values, and beliefs because they are supported by powerful groups.
First Nations	Peoples indigenous to Canada who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. There are approximately 630 First Nations in Canada.
hegemony	The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.
ideology	A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.
minoritized	Experiencing discrimination and other disadvantages compared to members of the dominant group.
norms	Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.
racialized	The process of creating, preserving, and communicating a system of dominance based on race.
social institution	Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.
socialization	The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

Sources

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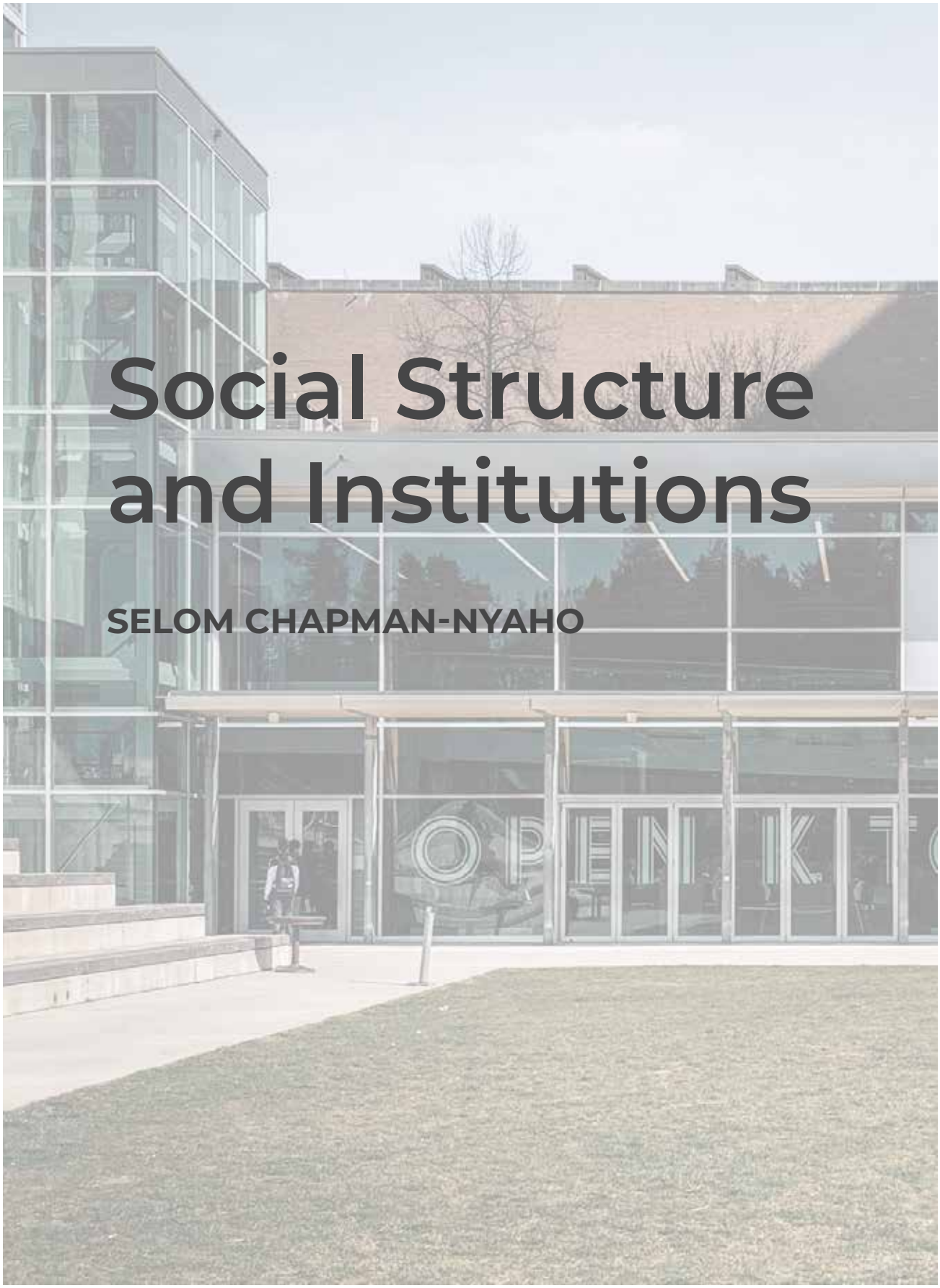
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How Ideologies Differ Chart

Key Tenets, Origins, Objectives	Fascist	Conservative / Neoconservative
Vision of Society	Authoritarian: the charismatic leader's xenophobic views of social group, race, community and nation is supreme, including anti-democratic nationalist vision Strict government control. Rampant sexism, glamorization of military, disdain for intellectuals, journalists and arts Tacit support of corporate elites who finance the leader and receive preferential economic access Outsiders are enemies	Hierarchy: elites are morally, intellectually superior to the masses. Tradition: God makes the rules and the state backs 'Him' up Small government, free market capitalism, low taxes Conformity: gender roles, law and order Patriotic: militarism, nationalism, hostility to minoritized groups Inequality is natural; fittest of the fit survive
Core Values: View on Human Nature	Humans are ruled by nature—will and other non-rational drives. Only elite (primarily) men are capable and dedicated to national or racial cause Life is an unending struggle, the masses are primarily suited to serve and obey	Humans by nature are morally flawed, greedy, materialistic and selfish Inequality is normal; elites are naturally suited to rule over the imperfect masses
Origins of these Ideologies	Ultra-Nationalist: 19th century revolt against democracy and human rights. Takes root after collapse of democratic structures post-WW1 Largely a revolt of the lower middle classes displaced by industrialism, both anti-communist and anti-capitalist	Individualist/Elitist: emerges in 18th century as a rejection of liberal ideas, seeks to reassert traditional hierarchies and roles Elites reposition themselves to take advantage of evolving economic system of capitalism, privatization of land. Displacement of peasant farmers who become low wage and child labourers in developing urban centres
Recent Manifestations	Displacement of white middle class resulting from neoliberal economic policies (1980s to present); blame placed on racialized immigrants and enemy 'others' Rise of authoritarian-style leaders both in the West and Global South—suppression of dissent, attempts to weaken or dismantle democratic institutions. Rise of white nationalism, Hindu nationalism, Christian evangelism; many view diversity as a threat to their racial, cultural, or religious survival	Anti-colonial movements of the 1960s and feminist, anti-racist, LGTBQ2S, disability activists seen as radicals and outsiders eroding traditional values Backlash in the 1980s/90s to demographic shifts from non-white immigration and state implementation of human rights and equity legislation. Discourses of reverse discrimination and political correctness gives rise to white nationalists, conversion therapy, men's rights and INCEL movements
Perceptions of Social / Environmental Problems	Economic, social and political problems blamed on liberal intellectuals, scientists, feminists, racialized immigrants, and other enemies Police given limitless powers; patriotism trumps civil liberties. Fear of enemies can lead to disdain for human rights, incarceration of political opponents, assassinations and torture	No systemic/social issues, just individual problems caused by individual flaws and pathology Anti-union, anti-immigrant, anti-social services and anti-human rights. Does not support policies and legislation to bring about equity and protect human rights or environment Tacit and overt support for discriminatory social ideologies Social activist groups viewed as thugs and "domestic terrorists" Climate change seen as a hoax; environmental and species protection legislation must be dismantled—bad for business
Institutional Impacts	State institutions serve the leader's interests. Corporate power is enhanced since business elites bankroll such movements. Rampant nepotism, cronyism, corruption, electoral fraud and manipulation to maintain power. Use of religion to manipulate public opinion Media control, censorship and misinformation rampant. Rise of hate groups and hate crimes bolstered by leaders who target minoritized groups as the source of problems. Women usually marginalized, though there are modern exceptions where women are the leaders of such movements—France	Militarization, nationalistic and xenophobic targeting of vulnerable groups. Culture of fear, and law and order discourse used by state institutions to justify increasing loss of freedoms, increasing surveillance of population, using military tactics on activist minoritized groups and state violence against Black people and other minoritized groups. Working poor rely on food banks and charity. Substandard housing, education, healthcare and other public services
Major Flaws / Contradictions	Mythical/fictional view of past "as glorious—good old days"; more fantasy than reality Strong support for conspiracy theories Targeting of outsiders or those deemed enemies has led to violence and genocide	Disdain for most of the population. Relies on the people it exploits for support Tacit support for discriminatory ideologies Creates highly stratified and unequal societies

Liberal / Neoliberal	Social Democratic / Democratic Socialist
Individual liberty: freedom to compete in one's (economic) self-interest and to participate in political process; legal rights extended to all Small government, free market capitalism, labour and environmental rules favour corporate elites as best for economy. Limited social services Individual success comes from competition and ambition	Free market capitalism is unfair, leads to inequality. Rules must benefit all, not just the wealthy State promotes social justice and social service programs to reduce inequality under capitalist economic system Strong government to advance fairness and equity and manage economy in interest of all citizens not just the wealthy. Wealthy and corporations pay more taxes than poorer individuals
individuals have innate qualities regardless of social position or socialization People are rational and self-reliant; can improve through education. Inequality exists because some are incapable and/or lack social/economic conditions to compete successfully	Humans are rational, co-operative, responsible, inherently good, and all can succeed if the social, economic, and political environment is supportive
Individualist: originates as rejection of feudal society during the European Enlightenment period (17th century). Embraces individual rights, freedoms, and parliamentary system. Develops alongside white supremacist capitalism Basis of imperialism and colonialization and emergence of current global economic order controlled largely by European colonizers	Reformist/Collectivist: an off shoot of socialism's disenchantment (19th century) with totalitarian nature of Russian communism. Seeks gradual reform within liberal participatory democratic models. Democratic socialists aim to reform capitalism with economic democracy, more worker control, and/or state structures to facilitate this. Popular during the first half of the 20th century in Scandinavian countries, settler states like Canada and the Global South.
In the 1970s financial elites demand less government. This leads to: elimination of social democratic policies that alleviate the worst aspects of capitalism, deregulation of financial markets, off-shore tax havens, weakening of environmental and labour protection, massive cutbacks and/or elimination of public services (education, healthcare, welfare, pension, unemployment...), privatization of state enterprises (public utilities, transportation, roads...), massive tax cuts for the wealthy, and increased corporate welfare and subsidies for corporations	Aspects adopted by USA in the 1940s after the Great Depression—legalizations of unions, work rights, health and safety, minimum wage, pensions; limit on hours of work and number of days per week. Neoliberal tax cuts have led to more privatization of public services Advocates for a mixed economy of both private and public sectors. Strong publicly owned subsidized institutions viewed as essential public services: energy (Petro-Canada), health (medicare), education (free or subsidized tuition), transportation (public transit), culture (CBC), utilities (Hydro)
Social problems are increasingly viewed as the fault of the individual who needs to be entrepreneurial to succeed. State's purpose is to serve the interests of business elites, as wealth will trickle down to workers Assumes we live in post discriminatory age. Social justice, social welfare policies undermine the rules of the 'free' market Environmental destruction a cost of development Previous measures to address social problems largely dismantled	Systemic inequality a consequence of corporate capitalism. The state and societal institutions must play a major administrative role in advancing social justice by redistribution wealth, developing a strong welfare state, and addressing issues of discrimination against minoritized groups State resources used to promote citizen participation in social justice policies and programs to reduce inequality and revamp collectivist policies such as medicare, minimum wage, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, social welfare, subsidized housing, pensions, ...
Corporatization of society: citizens pay for corporate fraud and crimes (the financial collapse of 2008, and $3 trillion bailout of the private banks at the expense of taxpayers). Dismantling of worker protections: precarious (part-time, casualized, temporary) work, deskilling/standardization of work, surveillance of workers, weakening of trade unions. Superficial Institutional attempts to address inequality and discrimination	Centralized wage setting involving unions, business and government leads to more equity, living wage. Fair taxes on corporations lead to better infrastructure of social, medical, education and transit services. Students enjoy free or subsidized tuition for higher education. Subsidized housing for those who need it. Medicare for all. Better working conditions for all
Dichotomy between rhetoric and reality Trickle-down theory is a fantasy. The self-adjusting free market is a myth; monopolies, predatory capitalism is creating vast inequality and environmental destruction. Public institutions forced to become more for-profit businesses rather than serving the public good	Dominant discourses deployed by neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies have diminished the popularity of this ideology

Transformative / Counter Ideologies
A strong collectivist state can organize society equitably and sustainably White supremist capitalist hetero-patriarchy must be systematically dismantled—cannot be reformed Inequality is not natural; organize society for equity and justice. Wealth for few cannot be prioritized over inequality, oppression, exploitation and environmental disaster
Humans by nature are good and can work towards the common good. Historically humans generally lived in classless cooperative societies. Many of these societies were matriarchal. The introduction of private property normalized greed, selfishness and inequality. Socialization determines what we value
Different strands of Collectivist movements against oppression: socialism (18th century) exposes exploitation of emerging working class under capitalism. White and African American women's suffrage challenge patriarchy and white supremacy. Anti-colonial movements challenge oppressive structures of colonization and imperialism
African American women activists and academics and allies present intersectional analysis and resistance to white supremist capitalist hetero-patriarchy. Draws attention to ongoing violence, discrimination, inequality in public and private institutions and state-facilitated genocide, environmental destruction, present-day corporate land and resource grabs Activism has led to development of human rights code, employment equity, and labour policies. Weakens during neoliberal/neoconservative governments
Inequality & systemic discrimination fostered by harmful ideologies and discourses of neocolonial white supremist capitalist hetero-patriarchy embedded in the settler states and policies and practices of social institutions Must connect all forms of oppression through intersectional analysis. State should dismantle oppressive structures or be dismantled itself. The natural world has intrinsic value and must return to the commons. The environment must be preserved and protected
Dismantling of discriminatory ideologies, predatory capitalism, disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples and other minoritized groups. Ban on slave-like conditions to maximize profits for corporations
Revolutionary social action—Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Indigenous resistance movements—are gaining traction but the majority view these as radical interest-based movements Not all feminists, anti-racists, environmentalists and other activists critical of capitalism embrace intersectionality—may embrace social aspects of liberal or even conservative ideologies on certain issues (e.g. some anti-LGTBQ2S, give lip service to disability rights)



Social Structure and Institutions

SELOM CHAPMAN-NYAHO

Rules and Procedures



Photo by Jeff Siepman on Unsplash

My first after-school job was as a cook in a restaurant. Although it was many years ago, I still remember the first day well. Everything was confusing. Since I was learning while the restaurant was open, the head cook would show me how to cook each order as it arrived. In between orders, he would teach me rules about kitchen hygiene and show me how and where to prepare and store the ingredients. It was overwhelming. Part way through the day I was convinced that I was going to be fired, but at the end of the shift, the head cook looked at me and said, "You're going to be fine." I didn't believe it at the time, but within a couple of months I really was fine. Not too long after that, I was the one reassuring new employees that they would be okay.

This may seem like a strange introduction to a unit on social structures and institutions, but it has a purpose. We have all been in a situation where we quickly have to learn what to do and how to act. We learn to follow an established pattern of rules and procedures. Over time we become so used to these rules and procedures that we follow them while barely even noticing. Sometimes we even break the rules when we know we can get away with it. Either way, these rules and procedures (the structure) shape our behaviour. Different settings and organizations (institutions) have their own rules and procedures, and when we look at how they all work and interact with each other, we can start to see how different societies have distinct social structures.

In the Identity unit, we learned how the way that we see ourselves (and how others see us) is shaped by our families, education, the media, and other institutions. In this unit, we will explore in greater depth the role of institutions, the ways in which they can deal with social issues, and how they structure our societies.

Social Structure

In sociology, structures are often defined as "relatively stable patterns of social relations" (Brym, 2014, p. 8). They are the actions that are commonly implied (understood as acceptable) in "routine, implicit rule-following activity" (Craib, 1997, p. 113). However, this can be a very vague and confusing definition. For this course, it is more useful to think of **social structure** as the way that any specific space is organized and the rules people are expected to follow while in that space. Sometimes these rules are explicit (think of signs, instruc-

tions, formal contracts), but more often they are simply the ways we have learned to behave through socialization. In any society, the key component to the structure is the development and function of the institutions that make up its core.

social structure: The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.

social institution: Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.

Social Institutions

Social institutions are established areas within a society that exist to serve an organizing purpose. Society is structured through its institutions. Some examples of institutions include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law. Each of these organize large numbers of individuals in a way that allows us to live together in a relatively stable pattern. In essence, institutions turn individuals into a society. They are the key feature of the way society is organized—the social structure.

A far simpler way to think of them is as an established way of doing things. For example, education is designed to teach young people specific subjects and skills that may be useful in their lives. The law is an organized way to settle disputes between people, to punish those who have hurt others, and to protect communities from those who damage them by taking unfair advantages for themselves. Religion is meant to provide us a moral and ethical framework within which to live our lives and relate to others. Mass media is meant to provide entertainment and information to people who are separated over large distances. All of these are institutions because they exist to serve a social purpose. They arrange the way we live together. Given this, it is interesting to consider how some of these institutions first developed and why they are set up the way they are.

How We Shape Institutions

All of the institutions listed in the last sub-topic existed before we were born and will continue to exist long after us. This is what sociologists mean when they describe the social structure as "relatively stable." While the way they are organized may change, the institutions themselves (family, economy, education) will continue. For social analysis, however, it is useful to consider how they came to exist and whether they still best serve the purpose for which they were designed.

One way to think of social institutions is as the product of historic problem-solving. As societies grew and developed, more formal organized systems were needed for efficiency, safety, and productivity. Historically, as communities became larger and more crowded, and the range of economic activities grew, institutions developed to organize the increas-



Artwork by Kenneth Reaume is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

ingly complex set of interactions between us. This process did not always happen quickly though. Some institutions developed over centuries. They continue to develop. We constantly shape and reshape them according to our needs. And this does not happen without controversy and compromise.

Take policing, for example. Most of us cannot imagine a society without policing, but the institution of modern policing (publicly employed officers who act to uphold the laws created by the state) is actually less than 200 years old. Prior to the 19th century there were soldiers and people employed in a capacity similar to today's private security guards. Rulers commanded the army, but had to be very careful about using them too often against their own people for fear that the population would revolt and/or the soldiers would turn against their boss. Wealthy nobles and landowners would employ their own private guards (often former soldiers) to protect their property and households. They received as much protection as they could afford. Most everyone else had to rely on the collective sentiment and energy of the communities in which they lived to deliver justice in the event of a dispute.

As trade and industrialization increased and cities grew, millions of people moved from rural farms and villages to crowded urban areas with factories, ports, and businesses. According to politicians, newspapers, and the general public at the time, crime increased dramatically. Theft, assault, riots, and even murder became pervasive fears throughout society. A solution was needed, and the result was a public police force.

Modern public policing draws from a number of sources but is mostly attributed to Sir Robert Peel's London Metropolitan Police. What was unique about Peel's police was that they were not beholden to a ruler or a wealthy landowner, but to the law. They were tasked with enforcing the rules of society equally among everyone. The idea was the police would restore order to society (Silver, 2005). But while it may have sounded good in theory, there was initially a lot of resistance to the new force.

People were suspicious of the idea of the police. It looked, to many, like an attempt to create a permanent army that would be stationed within the city—a practice that since ancient Rome had been rightfully feared as the first step towards establishing a dictatorship. The proposal was unpopular among citizens, politicians, and journalists. The phrase

"No standing armies!" was taken up around the city. In order for society to accept the police, they were forced to demonstrate their legitimacy (Ignatieff, 1979). They did this by establishing a set of principles, and a system of accountability such that officers who did not act according to the law could be disciplined or removed (Source: "Peel's Principles of Law Enforcement," n.d.). Thus, public policing is an example of how social institutions were created to deal with historical social issues.

https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/about-us/Peel-s-Principles-.aspx

Of course, by now you know that it could never be so simple and tidy. While it may be true that institutions are examples of historical problem-solving, critical thinking challenges us to ask who was in a position to do this problem-solving and whose interests did the proposed solution really serve. Such is the case with policing. While public police officers were technically responsible for upholding the law beyond any ruler or individual, we have to ask, who made those laws? And who were the laws designed to protect? In 19th-century England, the clear answer to both questions was wealthy land- and factory owners.

Rather than fighting crime, much of the early work of the new public police involved protecting private property. This was particularly important as more and more previously common areas were purchased by wealthy elites (see the video in the Go Deeper section to learn more about this). Even more significantly, when thinking of policing today, the public police were used to break up strikes and protests by factory and dock workers demanding better conditions and higher pay for their work. These protests were declared illegal within the law, but that law was created and used to protect the interests of the wealthy class. There is little need to protest when everything is already working in your favour.

Institutions are created and shaped by people, but some people have more power than others to shape these institutions in ways that benefit them. Thus, we can see that institutions are formed ideologically. They conform to the way those in positions of power believe society should work. In the above example, we focused on policing (and the law), but the same scrutiny can be brought to all of society's institutions. What ideologies shape education, for example? How is the media structured to protect dominant interests? What assumptions and ideas are considered foundational to the way that our economies are run? How do things like religious and family values get used in public to promote certain viewpoints and responsibilities? So many of the issues and topics covered in this book stem from the complex interaction between ideologies and institutions and the effects these things have on our individual lives.



GO DEEPER

Watch this video to learn more about how and why the commons became private property in England. (Source: Geof Glass, 2011)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0nM5DU4ADI

How Institutions Shape Us

While we collectively shape institutions, with some people having far more influence than others, another crucial consideration in social analysis is how these same institutions shape us. Thinking back to the unit on identity, we can see perhaps even more clearly now how the way society is organized and the various rules and expectations within its structure and institutions profoundly affect the way we behave and, ultimately, how we see ourselves and others. Institutions shape us both socially and psychologically. One of the most well-known examples of this is the infamous Stanford Prison experiment.

In 1971, Stanford University professor Philip Zimbardo recruited 24 male college students to participate in a mock prison experiment. Twelve of the students were randomly assigned to be prisoners and the other 12 were randomly assigned to be prison guards. The basement of the psychology lab at Stanford was transformed into a jail cell, and the students were given just basic instructions on how the experiment would work (Zimbardo, 2005). What resulted is one of the most controversial and widely discussed social science experiments of the 20th century. Watch the following documentary, keeping in mind how prison functions as an institution and the kinds of pressures it places upon all the individuals involved. Also consider how in almost all countries around the world, most people who are released from prison not only reoffend but go on to commit more serious offenses than the ones for which they were first sent to prison.

Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment (Source: Zimbardo, Musen, & Stanford University, 2004)

http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=centennial&url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1822612296?accountid=39331

Summary

We create institutions, but these same institutions go on to shape us in very powerful ways. An awareness of this is crucial for critical thinking and social analysis. Identities, ideologies, and social institutions collectively structure our lives. They, themselves, are all structured by relations of power.



KEY CONCEPTS

social institution	Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.
social structure	The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.

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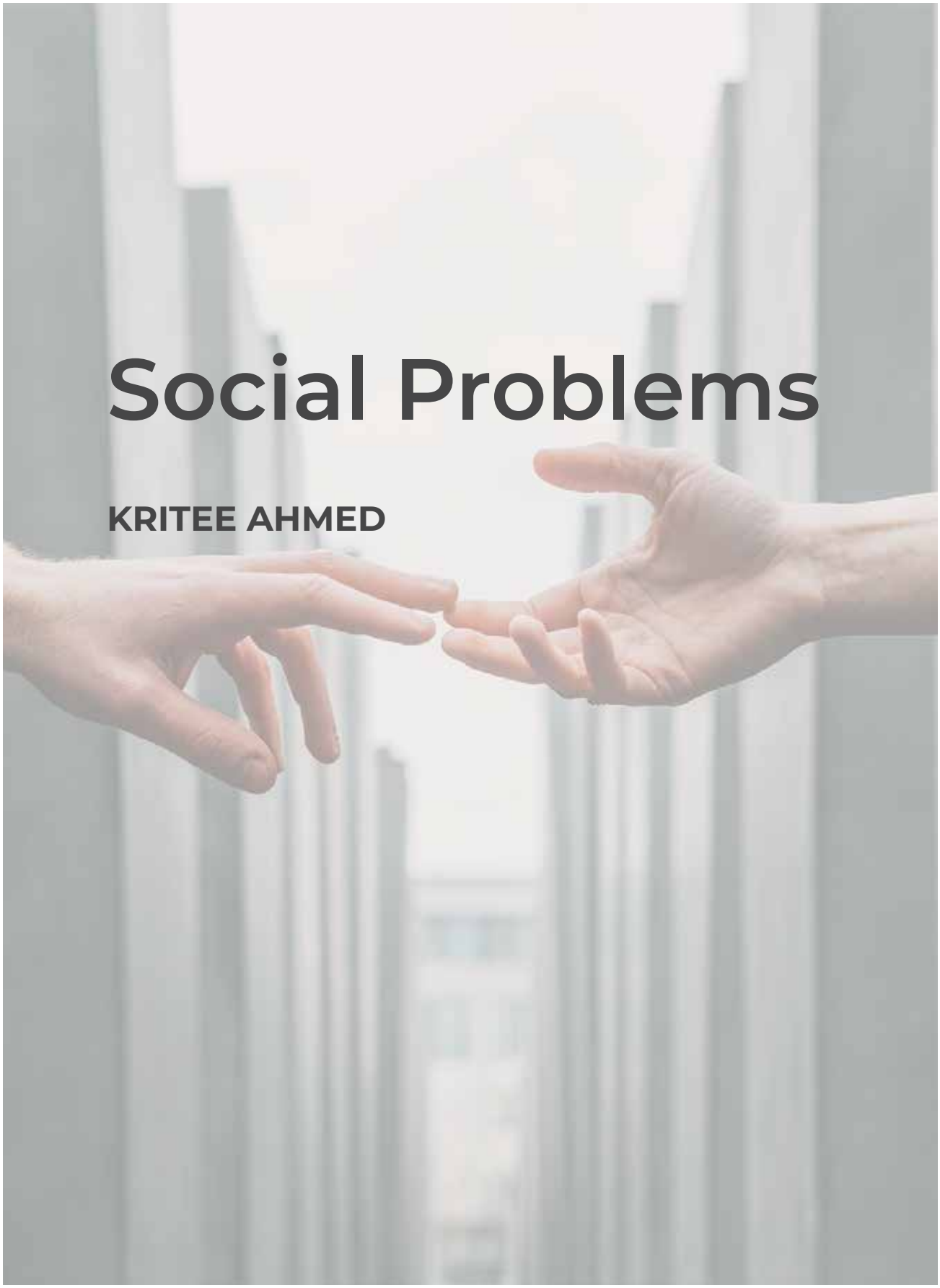
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Social Problems

KRITEE AHMED



Why Is It Taking So Long? A Social Problem?



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Image by Jonathan Borba on Unsplash

Imagine you are sitting in a hospital waiting room because you have a stomach ache. You arrived at the hospital emergency room at 2 a.m., registered, and sat down to wait. It is now 3:30 a.m. You have been moved to another room, but you're still waiting. You're weary and frustrated. Why is this taking so long? Why are "they" so "slow"?

You may have asked these questions or similar ones in different scenarios, whether it was waiting for a bus, standing in a queue, or making a call. *Why is it taking so long? Why are "they" so "slow"?* But have you gone further to think through what might cause such a delay. Is it just that the workers are "too slow"? Or could other issues be the cause? Perhaps the hospital staff are overstretched and lacking resources. As you try to make sense of the scenario, ask yourself: what assumptions are embedded in how you understand the situation? The scenario above reminds us that we all make assumptions, especially when trying to understand and solve problems. This doesn't mean our assumptions are always correct, a topic we will explore further in this module.

If many other people are experiencing a problem, such as delays at the hospital, an issue may be more than just an **individual problem**. It may be a **social problem**, something which affects a population more widely. This module asks us to look at the problems we encounter in our everyday lives and ask, Is there more to this story? Are others experiencing these problems too? How come? And how can we address this?

Individual problem: Problems typically experienced by few people; problems that can be linked to individual misfortune. Individual problems may be resolved by individuals.

Social Problems and the Sociological Imagination



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In order to understand how our individual problems, such as being stuck in a hospital waiting room, might be understood in a wider context, we can use what C. Wright Mills (1959) calls the **sociological imagination**. The sociological imagination is a way to link the things that trouble us individually with bigger problems in society's **social structure** or in how society is organized. (You learned about social structure already in the last module.) For Mills (1959), the sociological imagination distinguished between personal troubles and public issues. Personal troubles, or **individual problems** as we'll call them, are things that happen in our individual experience or to the people around us. In contrast, public issues, or **social problems** as we'll call them, are "matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of [one's] inner life" (Mills, 1959, p. 9). With public issues or social problems, Mills wanted us to reflect on and analyze society's social structure. Thus, the sociological imagination allows us to think about how changes in social structure may affect our personal experiences. More than this, we can use it as a **methodology** for conceiving of and understanding social problems.

social problems: Problems that affect groups of people and are caused by how society is structured and organized. Social problems are particular to specific societies and times. Solutions to these problems are beyond the reach of any single individual.

sociological imagination: An approach developed by C. Wright Mills that links everyday problems individuals experience to the greater context of social issues in order to understand the roots of those social issues.

social structure: The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.

methodology: An approach or framework used to make sense of phenomena, issues, or problems.

How does this work? Using the sociological imagination requires us to take a step back from the way we normally try to understand the world—through our personal knowledge and experiences. Instead, we try to see and understand how society is organized to recognize the social problems or issues that affect people's everyday lives. It's important to remember that just because we believe something to be true doesn't make it so (see Go Deeper). When we use the sociological imagination, we collect data, do research, and analyze our findings. Most importantly, we use our critical thinking skills. We try to see beyond our own **standpoint**—and the **prejudices** and assumptions we might hold—to formulate what social problems are, why they exist, and how we may act to create positive, lasting solutions that help as many people as possible.

In this way, using the sociological imagination is an important aspect of global citizenship.

standpoint: A perspective adopted by a person based on their specific individual experiences and circumstances.

prejudices: A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).



GO DEEPER

Truthiness, Assumptions, and Social Problems

Comedian and talk-show host Stephen Colbert developed the concept of truthiness to describe how something can seem true to us because we strongly feel or believe it is. This concept allows us to reflect on assumptions we make and ways we view the world that may not be based in fact.

Watch the video to get a sense of the concepts of truthiness and "post-truth." (Source: The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ck0yqUoBY7M&t=303s

After watching the video, answer the following questions:

1. What is truthiness and "post-truth"?
2. How do you think truthiness and "post-truth" are related to stereotypes and prejudice?

3. Why is thinking about a social problem in terms of "a gut feeling you have" dangerous?

The discussion about truthiness and post-truth is very relevant to the discussion on "fake news" you will see here and in the Social Media and Disinformation module. Should you decide to read ahead, consider the assumptions embedded in "fake news," who produces it, as well as the viewpoints about the world and people it promotes.

Have you ever succumbed to truthiness? What are some ways to identify and critique its effects?



Individual Problems vs. Social Problems

Understanding the distinction between individual problems and social problems can help us find deeper explanations for why we experience the world the way we do. It gets us to reflect on our experiences and how they are related to how society is organized and works. It reminds us to analyze where our problems come from and how they may impact people beyond us. This allows us to avoid making assumptions in shaping our answers.

So how do individual problems and social problems differ?

Individual problems may look like individual misfortune or unluckiness. Consider the example of job loss and unemployment (Mills, 1959, p. 10). That you or someone you know lost their job is an example of an individual problem. It's something that a single person, or a few individuals, experience. When understood in this way, the problem can be resolved through individual action: find another job.

Social problems, on the other hand, are collectively experienced by people. They aren't the sort of thing that individuals can resolve on their own. For example, if many people are experiencing unemployment, or statistics show high unemployment, this suggests that people are increasingly losing their jobs and having trouble finding new ones. If we look at this as a social problem rather than an individual problem, we reflect on how the structure of society is creating unemployment and hardship for people. And to resolve this problem, we may need to change how society is structured. This will require collective effort and responses from public institutions such as government, as well as corporations.

Ultimately, social problems impact individuals. On the other hand, individual problems may not necessarily be linked to social problems.

Think of an everyday problem you face. Can the sociological imagination help you figure out whether your everyday troubles can be connected to a social problem?





GO DEEPER

COVID-19 and Employment in Canada

Have you considered how the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected employment and unemployment? Have a look at Statistics Canada information from July 2020 here. (Source: Statistics Canada, 2020)

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200807/dq200807a-eng.htm

After looking at the data, think through the following questions:

1. Explain why losing a job during the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered an individual or social problem.
2. Whose responsibility is it to resolve this problem?
3. How does the pandemic make you think about how the job market is structured? How could it be made fairer?

But... What Is a Social Problem?

While the last sub-topic highlighted the differences between individual and social problems, you may still be wondering how to spot or identify a social problem. The list below gives key characteristics of social problems.

The Characteristics of Social Problems*

1. A social problem exists when there is a sizeable difference between the ideals of a society and its reality.
2. An issue only becomes a social problem when people have been able to convince others that it requires public attention and collective action.
3. Power and exposure influence the extent to which people can be convinced a given issue is a social problem.
4. Social problems are determined not just by the number of people they affect but by how they affect them.

Defining a social problem involves convincing the public that both the causes and solutions for a problem lie beyond individual responsibility.

**This list contains material from "Week 2: Social Analysis Part 1," by Selom Chapman-Nyaho, in the GNED 500 online course content © Centennial College.*

This list of characteristics shows us that identifying and defining a social problem is no easy matter. It requires an ideal vision of society. Others have to be convinced it exists and requires action. It can't only have consequences for a group of people, but it must also affect them in particular and specific ways. Finally, in persuading others, one must also be ready to make the case why it's not problem a person has responsibility to resolve individually.



Image by Shutterbug75 from Pixabay

These characteristics highlight the role we play in constructing social problems. This doesn't mean that they don't exist, or that we make them up out of thin air. It means that to recognize them and resolve them in meaningful ways, we need to think through what a social problem is and justify our reasoning. This may require doing quality research on our social problem, so we can talk about it with depth, using facts.

Take, for instance, the issue of police power, violence, and racism. You may have heard about this issue early in the COVID-19 pandemic when George Floyd and Breonna Taylor were killed by police in the US. It also arose in Canada with the deaths of Ejaz Choudry (Gamrot, 2020) and Regis Korchinski-Paquet (CBC News, 2020).

On first look, it may appear that in these cases, police violence is an individual problem. It affects only a few people. If we think of it this way, we can imagine that individuals can resolve this problem through individual action: acting differently the next time similar situations arise. But what if we start to see this as a pattern? As stories of police violence and racism continue to be told throughout Canada and the US, we must consider whether this is a social problem that requires further investigation and changes to how society is organized (its social structure) to ensure no one else dies. We must ask: can individuals alone end police violence?

If the answer to this question is no, the sociological imagination becomes useful. We can use it to consider whether a so-called individual problem (a death by police) may be part of a broader social problem (police violence and racism). To do this, we will want to think through how police and policing function and are structured within and as part of society. This may lead us to ask questions such as:

- What is the history of policing?
- What are the functions of police?
- How and why are people affected by police violence?
- What type of power do police hold?
- What does this tell us about policing?

By thinking through these questions, we will eventually be able to identify if this is a social problem and why. This will allow us to engage in a social analysis [see module on social analysis] to figure out what can be done to address and resolve the problem.



GO DEEPER

Police Violence in Canada

In Canada, we like to believe that American social problems only exist "over there" and that we don't have our own unique versions of them. In this blogpost, activist-journalist Desmond Cole highlights and links to articles about victims of police violence in Canada and reminds us that many of these problems are "over here" too. (Source: Cole, 2020)

https://thatsatruestory.wordpress.com/2020/04/17/remembering-27-black-indigenous-and-racialized-people-killed-by-canadian-police/

A Sample List of Social Topics or Issues

Here is a sample list of topics or social issues that may help you think through what social problems could be. Remember, you'll need to be able to talk about why these topics or social issues are social problems and be able to talk about your topic as a social problem. Sometimes a social issue may be too broad to think about as a social problem. You can narrow your focus by thinking through more specific aspects of your topics. This is how you arrive at a topic that might be explored as a social problem.

LIST OF TOPICS

Unemployment	Waste disposal
Climate Change	Social assistance provision
Wage inequality	Anti-Black racism
Affordable childcare	Indigenous-settler reconciliation
Oil production	Islamophobia

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Let's practise turning one of these broad social issues into a topic that we can explore as a social problem. Take the topic of wage inequality. This is a vast topic. It's too broad to look at as a social problem. Imagine trying to resolve wage inequality for every person experiencing it in the world. Would the same set of solutions work for them all? Of course not. Because, while we may be connected throughout the world by globalization and a capitalist economic system, the root causes of the wage inequality people are experiencing will vary. These causes depend on context, location, and social group.

To examine a broad social issue as a social problem, you need to narrow it down in terms of geography and a group of people you are interested in knowing more about. Let's say you choose the geographical region of Canada, and your group is women. This could lead your topic to focus on gender wage inequality in Canada—here, you've narrowed your broad topic to a more manageable one. Now you can start to research your topic more specifically, so you can find the root causes. You could also look at racial wage inequality in the UK. Or you could think through the topic of income disparities between those living in rural Canada and those living in cities. Remember selecting a topic isn't enough. You need to go deeper and think through what aspect of the topic you're interested in and research it, in order to think about it in terms of a social problem.

Social Problems in Context

To understand a social problem, we can't simply look around us to see how it shows up in our everyday lives. We have to go deeper. Our understanding of social problems is socially constructed—that is, it is shaped by historical, economic, political, and cultural forces.

The sources of information we use to understand social problems matter. This is because different sources have different biases and will tell us different things about a social problem. Let's say you wanted to know more about minimum wage to explore the social problem of growing economic inequality in Canada. You may find relevant research from **think tanks**, but think tanks produce information from a certain political view. So the research on minimum wage produced by the social democratic and social justice–oriented Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (n.d.) will differ from that produced by the conservative, free-market-oriented Fraser Institute (Murphy, Lammam, & MacIntyre, 2016).

think tanks: Organizations that produce research based on particular political principles. Think tanks have a variety of political views and so provide a variety of perspectives.

Keep in mind that if you kept your research problem as broad as this (studying all of Canada), your analysis of the social problem may not be as rich or interesting! Narrowing your focus to look at provinces, cities, or demographics might reveal different things. In doing this, you may find that the context of your research has changed and that the roots of the social problem you're studying are far more complex than you might have imagined.



Furthermore, as feminist and anti-racist historians have pointed out, our understanding of history is told from the perspective of powerful white men. We know a great deal about Christopher Columbus but very little about the people whose land he took over and were massacred. Elementary students continue to learn about the heroic acts of European settlers but little about the experiences of First Nations who already lived on this land and experienced cultural genocide and deaths in residential schools. This reminds us that knowledge is not neutral. What we know and what we are able to know are shaped by our sources of information. This in turn affects what we know about social problems and how we act in relation to them. Our understanding of social problems is always shaped by history, politics, and culture.



GO DEEPER

Think Tanks and Research

Below is a list of some think tanks and organizations that produce research on various social problems:

THINK TANK / ORGANIZATION	LINK
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	https://www.policyalternatives.ca/
Fraser Institute	https://www.fraserinstitute.org/
Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council	https://triec.ca/
International Labour Organization	https://www.ilo.org/global/lang–en/index.htm
United Way Greater Toronto	https://www.unitedwaygt.org/home
C.D. Howe Institute	https://www.cdhowe.org/
Broadbent Institute	https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/
Wellesley Institute	https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/

Summary

In this module, we learned about social problems to help us make a link between our everyday experiences and broader social issues that arise because of how society is structured. We also noted how assumptions can colour how we view social problems and ultimately whether we decide to act on them. We thought about how to formulate social problems from topics of interest. Thinking about social problems helps us engage in big-picture thinking and reflective practices—key aspects of global citizenship. Now that you understand and can think through social problems, you are well prepared to begin a social analysis, which is tackled in the next module.



KEY CONCEPTS

individual problems	Problems typically experienced by few people; problems that can be linked to individual misfortune. Individual problems may be resolved by individuals.
institutional problems	Social problems caused by institutions. Fixing the institution, it is believed, will resolve the problem.
methodology	An approach or framework used to make sense of phenomena, issues, or problems.
power	The ability to construct how ideas or groups are represented through the organization of meaning (e.g. whether one describes a particular armed person as a terrorist or a freedom fighter). In other words, having power means setting the terms and conditions within which people and groups are able to act in a particular context.

prejudice	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
social problems	Problems that affect groups of people and are caused by how society is structured and organized. Social problems are particular to specific societies and times. Solutions to these problems are beyond the reach of any single individual.
social structure	The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.
sociological imagination	An approach developed by C. Wright Mills that links everyday problems individuals experience to the greater context of social issues in order to understand the roots of those social issues.
standpoint	A perspective adopted by a person based on their specific individual experiences and circumstances.
systemic/ structural problems	Problems caused by how society is structured and organized. Understanding social problems as systemic/structural problems acknowledges that resolving them is incredibly difficult but creating change through social action (based on the principles of global citizenship) is meaningful and can be long-lasting.
think tanks	Organizations that produce research based on particular political principles. Think tanks have a variety of political views and so provide a variety of perspectives.

Global Citizenship Example

Researching social problems will inevitably lead you to finding multiple perspectives on the same issue. Which is the correct answer? Which reveals the absolute truth?

First, it is important to understand there is no correct way to figure out the truth. Understanding that, we still must try to step back from the assumptions we hold about an issue. Take the introduction example of waiting in line at a hospital. Did you make certain assumptions about who is to blame? Did you consider why the issue or problem arose in the first place?

Just as the sociological imagination requires us to make connections between everyday problems and how society is structured, global citizenship asks us to refuse simple answers to everyday problems by seeing them in a larger context. When we make connections between our experience and the experiences of others, we are thinking like global citizens. This is big-picture thinking at work.

And when we do research to learn more about social problems, we are engaged in reflective practices. What happens if our assumptions are challenged? Do we accept the findings of strong research conducted by others, or do we hold on to our assumptions because we believe them to be true? In these moments, we face cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance refers to the tension that results from holding two different beliefs or from struggling with new information in light of past knowledge (Gorski, 2014). But by letting go of our assumptions about issues and problems, we can gain clarity on important issues and work towards justice and action. Getting to the root of social problems is the first step to resolving them.

Indigenous Example



Image by Parentingupstrea from Pixabay

In September 2020, an Indigenous woman, Joyce Echaquan, lying in a Quebec hospital, took a Facebook video recording hospital staff making racist remarks towards her. Shortly after taking the video, she died (Barrera, 2020). In 2008, an Indigenous man in a Winnipeg, Manitoba, hospital died in a wheelchair while waiting for care in the emergency room. Healthcare workers had assumed the man, Brian Sinclair, was drunk or "homeless and had come [in] to avoid the cold" (Geary, 2017). An inquest into his death failed to address key aspects of Sinclair's story, including what role racism in the healthcare system played in his death (Geary, 2017).

These stories might initially strike us as one-off incidents. But are they?

These are not the only stories of Indigenous-specific cases of racism in the Canadian healthcare system. Alisa Lombard, a lawyer based in Saskatchewan, is leading a proposed class action lawsuit to represent Indigenous women who were either coerced or forced into sterilization. As Lombard says, this is "symptomatic of a colonial hangover. And I think it has a lot to do with eugenics of course, these ideas that some people should have children and others are not fit to" (Ward, 2020). This might lead us to think through the effects of the continuing legacy of colonialism and the racism in the Canadian healthcare system, and how these affect Indigenous well-being and vitality in Canada.

Research also suggests we may be looking at a social problem. British Columbia's government decided an independent investigation was needed into Indigenous-specific racism within BC's healthcare system (Wyton, 2020). An attempt to provide context for Indigenous-specific racism in Canadian healthcare was tackled by the Wellesley Institute in a report titled *First Peoples, Second Class Treatment* (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Tang and Browne (2008) have also explored the effects of Indigenous stereotypes and racism in accessing health care.

All this reminds us that social problems may look like individual problems at first, if we don't put them in context or do research. We have to look beyond what may seem like isolated cases. Researching an issue can allow us to think through whether and how a social problem exists.

Critically Thinking About Social Problems

There are three ways to view problems. The first is as **individual problems**. Individual problems, as you'll recall from earlier sub-topics, view individuals as the source of their problems. And it is the individual who needs to play an active role in resolving the problem.

The other two ways to view problems relate to social problems. However, they frame social problems differently.

One way to view social problems is as failures of public institutions, or **institutional problems**. Public institutions are funded and/or regulated by the government and provide services to the public [see the module on Social Structure and Institutions; Sub-topic 2:Institutions. Examples of these include public libraries, the education system, and the banking system. When we view social problems in this way, we're suggesting that if these institutions did a better job, social problems wouldn't exist.

The other way social problems can be understood is as systemic and structural, or **systemic/structural problems**. Through this lens, social problems arise due to the way society is organized politically, economically, historically, and culturally. To

Individual problem: Problems typically experienced by few people; problems that can be linked to individual misfortune. Individual problems may be resolved by individuals.

institutional problems: Social problems caused by institutions. Fixing the institution, it is believed, will resolve the problem.

systemic/structural problems: Problems caused by how society is structured and organized. Understanding social problems as systemic/structural problems acknowledges that resolving them is incredibly difficult but creating change through social action (based on the principles of global citizenship) is meaningful and can be long-lasting.

resolve social problems, then, requires a deep exploration of how society functions and how its structure allows these social problems to emerge and continue to exist.

How a social problem is framed and viewed will affect how we try to resolve it.

To help illustrate these three ways to view problems, let's take the example of youth unemployment. Take a look at the chart below. Do you see how the same issue gets taken up in different ways, based on different assumptions, and may lead to entirely different solutions?

Type of Problem	How the Problem Gets Viewed	Assumptions Made by the Problem Type
Individual Problem	• "Today's youth are entitled and lazy. They expect too much." • "We must take for granted that good jobs are a thing of the past. The new reality is that work is unstable, low paying, without benefits or pensions." • "There are jobs out there; if you try really hard you will find work."	• Individuals just have to get used to the way the labour market is now. • If you're not finding work, it's really your fault for not looking hard enough, or not having a good enough resume. • Individual youth need to be less picky about the jobs they'll take. • This framing assumes that the individual must solve the problem on their own.
Institutional Problem	• "Students are being short-changed by the educational system. Schools don't adequately prepare students with appropriate skills and knowledge for the job market."	• If the education system better prepared youth for the labour market, there would be no youth unemployment. • This framing assumes that fixing a public institution will solve the social problem for everyone.

Type of Problem	How the Problem Gets Viewed	Assumptions Made by the Problem Type
Systemic / Structural Problem	• "Young people are under-employed in many sectors of the economy because government policies favour profits for the corporate sector at the expense of the general public. Contributing factors include government cutbacks and outsourcing along with corporate down-sizing, deskilling and union bashing. Hence, low paying, unstable and temporary jobs, where many people and particularly youth are vulnerable to becoming the working poor."	• A number of different factors, which at first glance may not seem related, come to create the social problem of youth unemployment. • This framing assumes that the roots of the social problem run deeper than any one thing, but rather are a product of how society is organized.

Thinking of problems as individual or institutional seems to lead to simple solutions to solving them. But when you look at a social problem as systemic and structural, solving it becomes a lot tougher and more complex. Therefore, how a social problem is framed is political. When a social problem is identified as an individual problem, this may be a way to dismiss a bigger problem. By simply saying the individual can solve the problem for themselves (i.e. by actively searching for work), no deeper understanding of the problem or issue is needed. On the other hand, when a problem is framed as structural, any response will require significant and collective effort and change to how society works and is organized.

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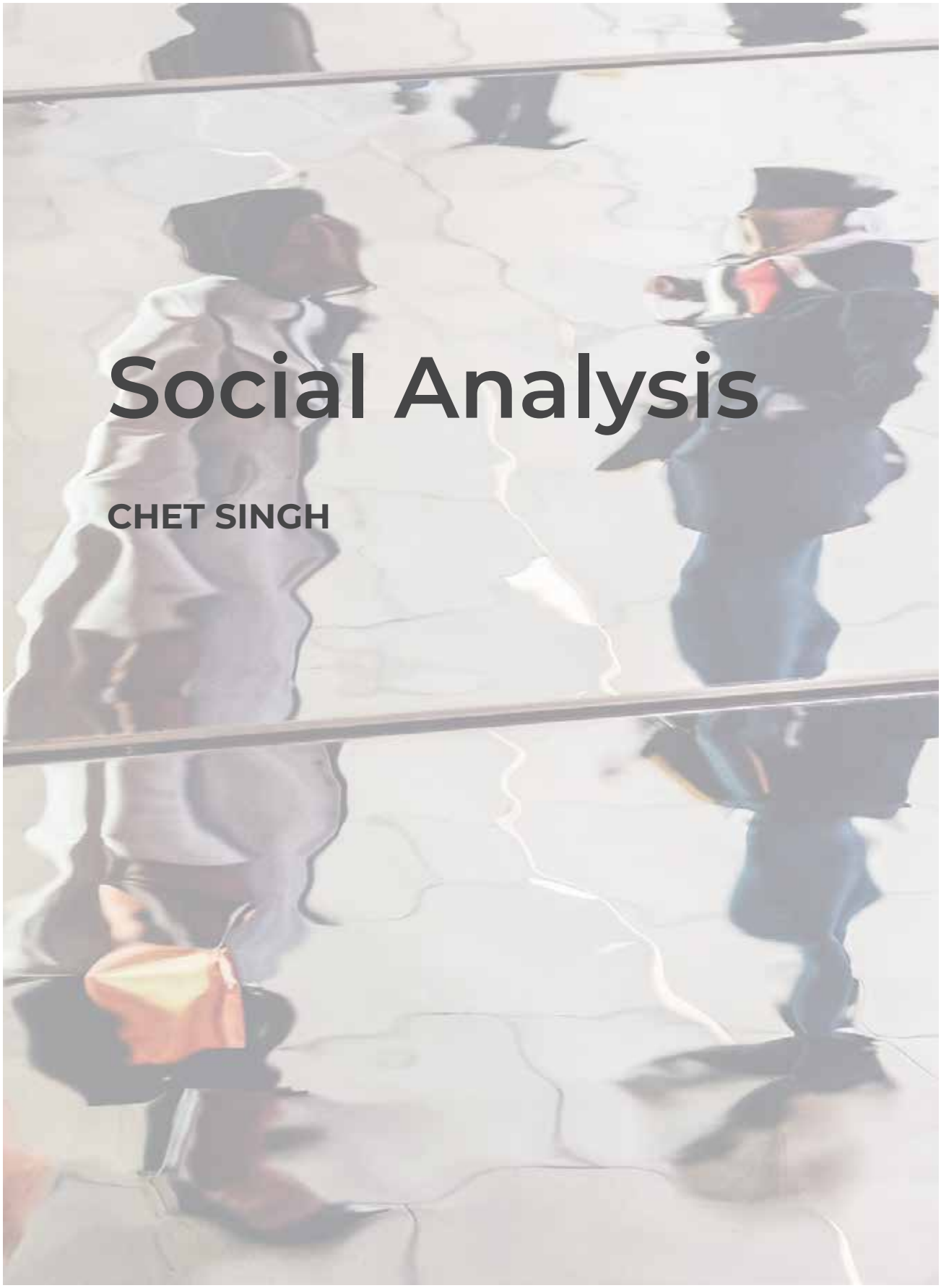
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Social Analysis

CHET SINGH

From Fable to Social Analysis



Image by Andrew Neel on Unsplash

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Our perceptual filters are the prejudices, stereotypes and biases we hold that affect how we see the world. In the following adaptation of a Zen Buddhist fable, consider how our perceptual filters limit what we can know and understand.

It's the colonial era, and a British anthropologist has travelled deep into a forested region to study a people he and other colonizers regard as "uncivilized." This Indigenous group does not know poverty or hunger as their land provides for their needs. After living among the people for some time, the scholar has got to know one of the elders very well. They often sit and have long conversations over a special bush tea prepared by the elder. During one such conversation, the British scholar shares his views on the virtues of European culture, the value of progress and hard labour, and how wealth leads to individual happiness. The elder listens but says nothing. As the scholar winds up, the elder begins refilling their teacups. But this time, when the cup is filled to the brim, she keeps pouring. The tea spills over onto the table. Still she pours. The scholar is dumbfounded. "What in the world are you doing?" he exclaims. "The cup is already full! There's no room for more tea!" The elder replies, "That is exactly the point." She continues, "You have come here to learn about us, but your mind is full of your own ideas and assumptions. You cannot know us until you know yourself. Go empty your mind and then we can talk as equals." As they both retreat into silence, the scholar thinks, "There's no helping some people," while the elder thinks, "How can this man know so much and so little?"

In this parable, the elder points out the scholar's inability to see beyond a particular

set of ideas and assumptions. Even as he lives in the village, collecting information and asking questions, the scholar filters what he learns through dominant ideologies we would now call Eurocentrism, capitalism and white supremacy. These ideas construct and represent Indigenous peoples as inferior savages (and were used to justify dispossession, slavery and genocide). The scholar was there to learn, but his learning was limited by his core beliefs and mental models, which are deeply ingrained. Now consider: How might our filters affect how we view social problems?

In the parable, the elder tells the scholar that to make room to know her people, he must start by knowing himself. Engaging in **self-analysis** is an important part of analyzing social problems. We have to be aware of our **perceptual filters** in order to move beyond them.

The adapted fable provides an example of a simple form of social analysis. The elder's responses show us how history, ideology, discourse, and institutions shape how we view the world—and also structure our societies. In this course, we will use social analysis to understand how social problems are created and maintained. Once we understand the roots of those problems, we can act and think differently as we work to create lasting social change.

self-analysis: A process by which you become aware of your blind spots and perceptual filters such as your ideologies, biases, stereotypes, and common-sense assumptions. It also requires understanding how your social identities potentially provide you with advantages or disadvantages.

perceptual filters: Refers to the prejudices, stereotypes and biases that affect how you see the world.



GO DEEPER

The above fable refers to the colonial era. Decolonization is a term used to describe efforts to undo the damaging effects of **colonialism**. To learn more about decolonization, visit the following sites:

colonialism: The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.

Colonization and Decolonization: A Manual for Indigenous Liberation in the 21st Century (Source: Zig-Zag, 2006)

https://www.indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/colonization_decolonization.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Executive Summary (Source: Todic et al., 2016)

https://www.standcanada.org/truth-reconciliation-commission-report-summary/

What Is Social Analysis?

To address social problems, we have to identify their roots. We do this through social analysis. Social analysis is a **critical** thinking strategy for understanding **social problems**. It examines why people have conflicting views about the causes and solutions to social problems. It also considers why harmful conditions continue despite efforts to bring about positive social change.

social problems: Problems that affect groups of people and are caused by how society is structured and organized. Social problems are particular to specific societies and times. Solutions to these problems are beyond the reach of any single individual.

critical: Critical as used in this module does not mean negative. It means being mindful, aware, and analytical.

Social analysis is about asking the right questions, not getting the right answers. To ask the right questions, consider the variables involved in creating and perpetuating social problems. As discussed in other modules, these include:

- the conflicting ideologies and discourses people adopt to make sense of the world (Ideology module);
- the dominant ideas (ideologies and discourses) that inform and legitimize the policies and practices of social institutions and create social norms (Social institutions, Media 1, and Media 2 modules);
- systematic patterns related to who benefits and who is negatively impacted by structures of power (Identity 2, Equity 1, and Equity 2 modules);

- the role of identity and how it shapes one's experience within institutions and society (Identity 2, Equity 1, and Equity 2 modules);
- the larger historical context within which social problems arise (Identity 1 module); and
- different stakeholder approaches to addressing social problems (Social Action module).

Social Analysis, Critical Thinking, and Identity



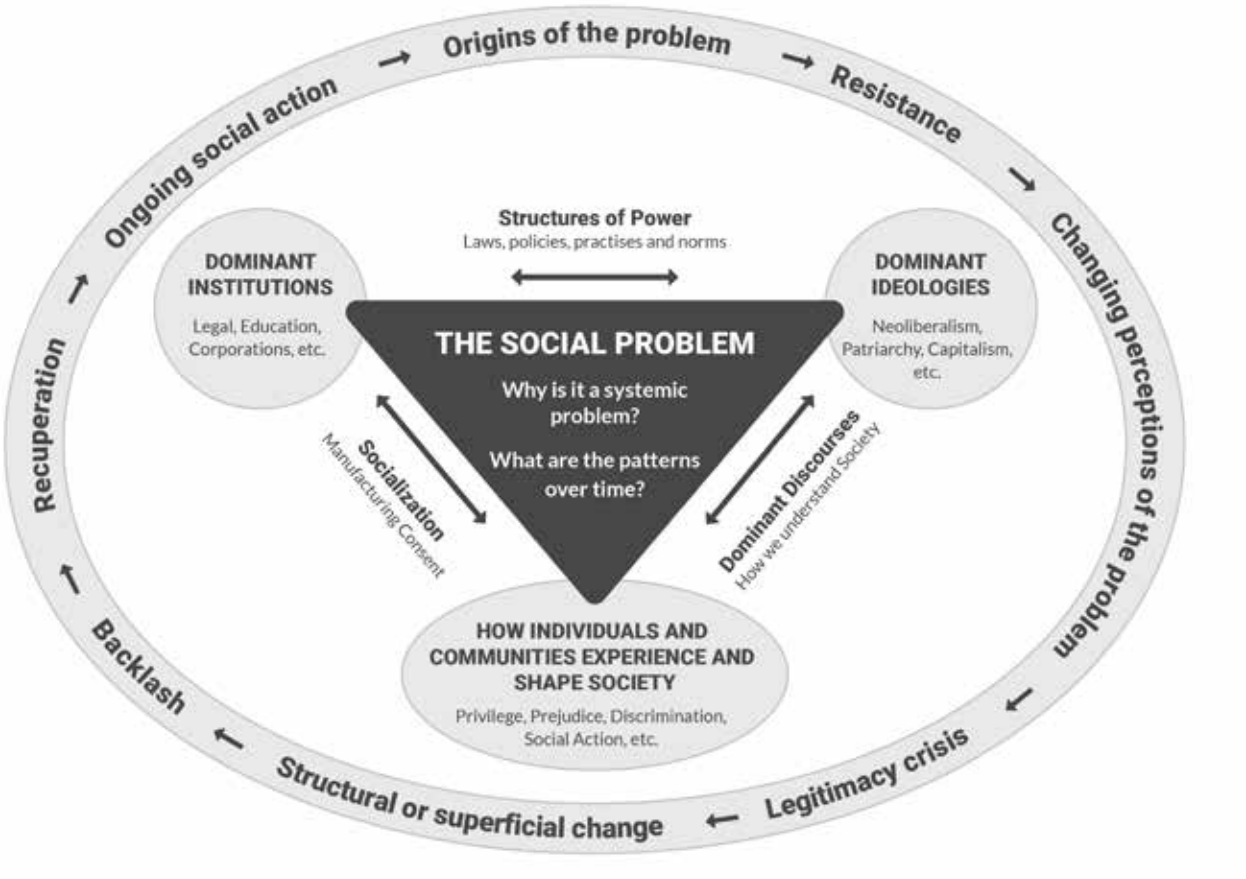
Image by Juan Rumimpunu on Unsplash

To engage in social analysis, we must be aware of our own identities and how they are positioned in society. As the fable that opened this module showed, how we see and experience the world is filtered through our social identity. This identity is socially constructed, and thus influenced by history, ideology, social institutions, and the like (see Identity 1 and 2). Through socialization, we develop perceptual filters that shape our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. We are exposed to dominant ideas and practices that affect our thinking patterns and social experiences. These, in turn, form our biases, stereotypes and prejudices, which influence our behaviours towards others and our interpretation of events. Due to confirmation bias, we tend to reinforce these beliefs, rather than question them.

So how do we develop the awareness needed for social analysis? Critical thinking is key. Critical thinkers examine the perceptual filters that may influence their ability to evaluate situations objectively or accurately. They recognize the need to be knowledgeable about competing ideologies. This allows them to question the ideas and values they hold. Critical thinkers know the difference between fact and opinion. They recognize misinformation and lies. They draw conclusions that are informed and thoughtful. Finally, they recognize the need for good research to engage in solid analysis.

Using critical thinking, we can recognize how our identities, ideologies, and factors like history and institutional norms shape our views and experiences of social problems. This can be useful in thinking through how we may be complicit (involved) in perpetuating the social problems we are investigating or negatively affected by them. In the end, thinking critically about ourselves can help us engage in and see the usefulness of a social analysis of a social problem. Now, let's look at how to do a social analysis using the triangle model.

The Triangle Model of Social Analysis



"The Triangle Model of Social Analysis" by Chet Singh, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Listen to the voiceover to help make sense of the triangle model of social analysis. You will notice that this model has a number of layers. Employing it will be useful to understanding the roots of social problems, how they become normalized, and how they are challenged by individuals and communities.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

This chart illustrates the methodology used for analyzing social problems in this course. The analytical components of this model include:

1. The aspect of the social problem are you analyzing.
2. The larger context within which the problem emerges and is challenged.
3. How do individuals and communities experience, perceive and respond to the social problem.
4. The relevant social institutions involved,
5. And relevant ideologies – those that normalize the problem and those that challenge the problem.

We must consider these components to fully understand why social problem persists in spite of social action strategies to bring about systemic change. Now let's consider each component of the triangle model:

The social problem (inverted triangle): Is there evidence that demonstrates this is systemic and not an individual problem? What dimension of the problem are you looking at? Is it the social, economic, political, physical, psychological, or environmental impacts, or will you analyze a combination of these variables?

The larger context (outer circle): Bring you attention to the outer circle of the triangle. This includes the larger historical context of the social problem. It represents the hegemonic tensions that result as harmful norms, policies, laws, and practices are challenged by social action.

Where/how/why/when did the problem originate? Why do so many people ignore the problem when it's not in their interest to do so? How are the negative impacts justified? What dominant discourses rationalize the problem? What societal tensions are created by this problem? Who has challenged the social problem historically? Have there been changes in laws, norms, practices and policies over time, or have dominant groups recouped their power and privileges? Why does the problem persist?

Individuals and communities: How do individuals and communities experience the problem? Who is privileged? Who is marginalized by the problem? How do individuals view the problem? Who sees it as a social problem? Who does not? How do individuals respond to the problem? Who is involved in social action? Who discredits or minimizes efforts at social action?

Ideologies: What are the differing ideological views about the social problems? Which dominant ideologies normalize and perpetuate the social problem? Are these views based on fact or opinion? Do they rely on stereotypes, misrepresentation, omission, and/or the distortion of facts? Can you identify dominant discourses that shape our understanding of this problem? What do counter ideologies and discourses have to say about the problem?

Social institutions: What specific institutional laws, practices, policies, and norms are implicated in in producing and re-producing the social problem? Are these institutions governments, educational systems, corporate media, legal systems, religious bodies, international organizations, etc.? Have these institutions made superficial or structural changes?

Social action strategies (highlight outer circle): After considering the variables such as the ideologies and institutional policies and norms that perpetuate the social problem, let's go back to the outer circle. Remember, this represents the hegemonic tensions and historical patterns associated with the problem. Here, we can also consider the effects of social action strategies in addressing the social

problem. Why have social action strategies at the ideological, institutional, or individual levels been unsuccessful, or achieved limited results? In your opinion:

- What are effective social action strategies for challenging and exposing harmful ideologies, discourses, and institutional laws policies and practices
- How do we challenge the harmful attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals and groups that normalize and perpetuate the social problem?
- How can we make institutions accountable for harmful laws, policies, and practices?

Now that we understand the different components of the triangle model, we will work through an example: the social problem of youth unemployment, which was discussed in the previous module.

A Social Analysis Checklist—Preparation for Using the Triangle Model

Review the checklist of critical thinking concepts below to determine your preparedness for using the triangle model of social analysis. Review relevant modules if there are gaps in your understanding.

media framing: How mainstream media minoritizes groups and communities, as well as how it portrays ideas or topics from a particular ideological perspective.

- ☐ You know why some people frame social problems asindividual problems.
- ☐ You recognize the importance of history and context when examining social problems.
- ☐ You can identify what ideology (ideas, values, or interests) is being promoted by the ways a problem is framed in media (**media framing**), social interactions, or educational materials.
- ☐ Once you establish an author's ideological leanings, you use **critical** thinking to determine whether:

    1. other perspectives were considered,
    2. a range of sources were used,
    3. the perspectives of all stakeholders were considered,
    4. the author relies on facts, not just opinions,
    5. relevant voices or sources were not omitted to alter the conclusions, and
    6. common sense assumptions and **dominant discourses** weren't used to normalize, minimize, or blame the victim for social problems.

- ☐ You understand how institutions such as media, education, and think tanks produce common-sense assumptions and contribute to systemic problems such as social stratification and inequality.
- ☐ You know why some people deny the existence of **systemic** discrimination.
- ☐ You recognize various forms of **backlash** when **equity** measures are implemented to address **systemic** inequality (e.g. allegations of reverse racism, political correctness, call out culture….).
- ☐ You recognize negative and affirmative **social constructions** of identity and are aware of their personal, social and **systemic** impacts.
- ☐ You recognize when your identity and **social statuses** come into play in media and social interactions negatively (stereotyping and discrimination) or advantageously (through **norms** and **unearned privileges**).
- ☐ You know how **counter discourses** and ideologies (anti-racism, decolonization, feminism, ecologism) challenge common-sense assumptions and dominant discourses.
- ☐ You recognize that a person's ideological leanings influence their opinions about how social problems should be addressed through **social action**.

critical: Critical as used in this module does not mean negative. It means being mindful, aware, and analytical.

dominant discourses: How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.

systemic/structural problems: Problems caused by how society is structured and organized. Understanding social problems as systemic/structural problems acknowledges that resolving them is incredibly difficult but creating change through social action (based on the principles of global citizenship) is meaningful and can be long-lasting.

social stratification: The hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc.

inequality: Not equal or the same or even. Often used to note the unfair differences in people's circumstances.

systemic: Systemic, as used in this course, describes something that is embedded within the structure of society or the larger economic capitalist system. Changing it requires changing the system.

social constructions: Describes how our identities are the product of the interplay between individual, cultural, and social structures.

social status: The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.

norms: Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.

unearned privileges: Advantages gained by virtue of one's social status.

counter discourses: Discourses that question the "common-sense" ideas of dominant ideologies and dominant discourses. They draw attention to how dominant ideologies justify injustice and lead to inequality and discrimination.

social action: Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.

Social Problems: Historical Context Is Important

For insight into the complicated and complicating events ..., one needs perspective, not attitudes; context, not anecdotes; analyses, not postures. For any kind of lasting illumination, the focus must be on the history routinely ignored or played down or unknown.

– Toni Morrison



Image by Unseen Histories on Unsplash

Identifying the historical origins of social problems tells us the context within which a social problem has developed. For example, before thinking about youth unemployment, it's important to understand unemployment in general.

Unemployment originated with the development of the economic system of capitalism. In Europe, capitalism replaced the economic system of feudalism (Source: Kelly, 2020). Under feudalism, serfs (or peasants) would work and live on land that was "held" by knights and lords but was ultimately owned by the king. They would live off what they produced and give some of it to the noble who held the land, in exchange for use of the land and military protection. The emergence of capitalism privatized that land. The serfs were forced to leave. Now they needed money to afford the things necessary to survive, like food and shelter. The only way to get money was

to work and earn a wage. Those who were unable to find work in this new system of capitalism became the unemployed.

https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-capitalism-is

As capitalism evolved in 16th and 17th centuries, labour conditions were very oppressive (Source: Munroe, 2019). Governments made it illegal for workers to organize into unions to improve working conditions. Many union organizers were arrested and killed by the police. As socialist ideologies emerged to challenge these conditions, many European workers elected socialist and communist politicians to parliament. Chronic (continued) unemployment has historically been built into capitalism to keep the power of labour unions in check and keep wages low. If there was full or close to **full employment**, workers could bargain or organize for better wages (Braverman, 1998).

https://www.thoughtco.com/winnipeg-general-strike-1919-510002

Though unions were made legal after the Great Depression (1930s), recent governments have introduced legislation to weaken the power of unions (Source: Hogler, 2016). Many citizens are influenced by corporate media and think tanks, such as the Fraser Institute, that produce studies to promote dominant discourses and policies favourable to the economic interests of the wealthy (Source: Godeanu-Kenworthy, 2020). These views are reflected in government programs that hire temporary foreign workers (Source: Thompson, 2016). These programs increase inequality for vulnerable workers such as youth workers, drive wages down, create exploitative conditions for foreign workers, and reduce the ability of workers to organize (Source: Block, 2013).

full employment: For neoliberals and neoconservatives, full employment occurs when inflation (constant increase in the price of goods and services occurring with a steady decline in purchasing power) rises and employers can find enough workers for the types of available jobs. So, it does not mean that everyone has a job as would occur in socialist economies.

https://theconversation.com/why-americas-labor-unions-are-about-to-die-69575

https://theconversation.com/how-socialism-became-un-american-through-the-ad-councils-propaganda-campaigns-132335

https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/how-employers-temporary-foreign-workers-get-away-low-pay-and-bad-working

http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Reducing-Labour-Market-Inequality.pdf

As capitalism has evolved, living wages and stable employment have declined. Unemployment ranges from 3.5% to as high as 25% in times of crisis. In 1980 in the US, union membership was 23%; today it is 10%. In Canada, unionization has declined from 38% in the early 1980s to 28% in 2015 (CUPE, 2016).

Now that you have a broad sense of the social problem of unemployment, let's consider how people perceive the social problem of youth unemployment.

Questions to Consider: Understanding a Social Problem's Historical Context

1. Where/how/why/when did the problem originate?
2. How has the social problem been challenged historically and by whom?
3. How has the social problem evolved over time? Have there been changes in laws, norms, practices, and policies that affected it?
4. Has it been influenced by societal upheavals? Reforms? Revolution?
5. Why does the problem persist? How is hegemony achieved?
6. How have powerful groups prevented the social problem from being addressed? Have they made superficial changes that allow them to hold onto power? Or have they used overt institutional power such as the courts, military, or police forces?





GO DEEPER

The emergence of capitalism has had a number of long-term societal effects.

Read these articles to understand how it changed the nature of work for women.

How Capitalism Has Screwed Women Over (Source: Wolff, 2018)

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/capitalism-women-me-too-inequality_n_5bd1b5c8e4b0a8f17ef4ee5e

How Capitalism Turned Women into Witches (Source: Sady Doyle, 2019)

https://inthesetimes.com/article/capitalism-witches-women-witch-hunting-sylvia-federici-caliban

Watch this video to learn how capitalism disrupted Indigenous spiritual, economic and political systems in the newly colonized lands of the Americas and Australia. (Source: Flanders, 2014)

https://truthout.org/video/from-indigenous-socialism-to-colonial-capitalism-examining-native-history-of-a-settler-state/

How Individuals and Communities Perceive and Experience a Social Problem



Image by RF._.studio on Pexel

Now that we have established the social problem to be analyzed, and understand the context within which it exists, let's explore the aspect of the model that focuses on how individuals perceive and experience youth unemployment.

How Do Individuals Perceive the Problem?

For most of us, how we perceive youth unemployment is shaped by dominant discourses in the media and popular culture. In these discourses, there are three main causes of youth unemployment: the failure of public institutions (i.e. education), the failure of public policy (government), and the failure of the individual (too lazy, entitled, or not properly trained) (Source: Toynbee, 2021). Let's look at an example of how these dominant discourses sneak into discussions of unemployment.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/25/its-heartless-to-blame-job-losses-on-unemployed-people-but-its-how-much-of-britain-thinks

This article from a private online educational institute says there are four types of unemployment (Source: "Unemployment," n.d.). One of these is structural unemployment. This may cause you to think back to the last sub-topic, where we discussed how unemployment is built into the structure of capitalism. Capitalism requires a permanent pool of unemployed workers to drive down wages and limit the power of unions. Thus, people may be highly motivated but unable to find work because there aren't enough jobs. But is this what the article means by "structural unemployment"? No. It limits its definition of structural unemployment to "when the skills set of a worker does not match the skills demanded by the jobs available" or when worker can't relocate to get available jobs. No mention is made of any failure of the economic system itself. The individual is to blame.

https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/economics/unemployment/

Such discourses cause the majority of people to think of unemployment as inevitable or as an individual problem. We might think, "Things are really not that bad!" or "Nothing can be done anyway" or "This is just the way it is." We may even think, "This is the best we can do!" When we think like this, **resistance** to a structural or systemic problem seems hopeless. And as a result, the **hegemony** of dominant groups in the capitalist economic system is maintained.

resistance: Refers to individual and/or collective acts to change inequality, oppression and injustice in society. It can be organized, spontaneous or symbolic.
hegemony: The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.



GO DEEPER

Counter Discourses and Different Perceptions of Unemployment

Academics who study the problem of youth unemployment have proposed **counter discourses** that challenge dominant discourses on the topic. Many of these show how systemic inequality and discrimination factor into this social problem.

For example, an Australian study looked at the correlation between poor literacy and numeracy skills (reading, writing, and math) and unemployment. It concluded that rather than lack of training (poor literacy and numeracy skills), the cause of unemployment was **systemic**, created by economic conditions of poverty and limited employment opportunities. It further found that for the 27 jobseekers in the study, literacy was not crucial in their past work and would be unlikely to impact their ability to get a job in the future. Systemic factors were more important.

counter discourses: Discourses that question the "common-sense" ideas of dominant ideologies and dominant discourses. They draw attention to how dominant ideologies justify injustice and lead to inequality and discrimination.

systemic: Systemic, as used in this course, describes something that is embedded within the structure of society or the larger economic capitalist system. Changing it requires changing the system.

Whose Economic Wellbeing? A Challenge to Dominant Discourses on the Relationship between Literacy and Numeracy Skills and (Un)employment (Source: Black, 2002)

A 2018 South African study of youth unemployment found that contrary to the common media discourse that blames the individual and educational institutions, the cause was the systemic scarcity of jobs in the economy.

Examining Factors that Shape Technical Vocational Education and Training Engineering Students' Understanding of Their Career Choices (Source: Sibiya & Nyembezi, 2018)

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1189423.pdf

Socialist counter discourses argue that all institutions, including educational institutions, serve the interests of the capitalist class over the well-being of citizens, including youth. Such critics claim that higher educational institutions reproduce social hierarchies related to employment. This means that working-class people, often racialized, rarely benefit from opportunities.

As a result, working-class youth have been especially hard hit by youth unemployment. This group used to have access to stable, well-paying jobs by becoming apprentices for a range of skilled and semi-skilled trades. However, these opportunities have declined as companies move their manufacturing overseas for "cheap" labour. Now, working-class youth form a large section of the **precarious job market**.

precarious job market: The market for jobs that are contract, part-time, low wage, without benefits, security, or union protection. Increasingly common, these types of jobs are unable to meet the basic needs of workers, who are forced to rely on food banks and inadequate shelter, which affect their material and psychological well-being.

Lack of employment opportunities and an inability to be self-sufficient and productive create a host of social problems. Working-class youth are regularly labelled "at risk" by government institutions, including the educational system. This is another way of blaming the individual. It serves to marginalize youth and perpetuate the illusion that their unemployment is their own fault.

Gramsci and Shattering Some 'Common Sense' Positions on Youth Unemployment (Source: Mackie, 2014)

https://oldmanmackie.wordpress.com/2014/10/12/shattering-some-common-sense-positions-on-youth-unemployment/

Of What Value Is Classroom-based Education? A Quest for an Alternative Emancipatory Discourse (Source: Chuma, 2019)

https://www.pambazuka.org/education/what-value-classroom-based-education-quest-alternative-emancipatory-discourse

How Do Individuals Experience the Problem?

One way to understand how individuals experience unemployment is through statistics. In Canada, for example, between 27% and 45% of all workers do not have stable full-time jobs. Up to 25% of the paid work force is precarious (i.e. temporary, self-employed, or involuntarily part-time) (Cision, 2019). The youth unemployment rate is usually twice that of adults. In Canada, youth unemployment can be as high as 20–25% (Tancer, 2020).

Consider these statistics in light of inequality in Canada. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 44 billionaires added $63.5 billion in wealth collectively, while working-class Canadians lost 636,000 jobs, with 488,000 people working less than half their usual hours (Tencer, 2021). "Women and marginalized racial and ethnic groups are bearing the brunt of this crisis," said Diana Sarosi, director of policy and campaigns for Oxfam Canada. "They are more likely to be pushed into poverty, go hungry or be excluded from healthcare. And

yet, they are more likely to work frontline jobs that increase their exposure to the virus" (Tencer, 2021).



Image by William Fortunato on Pexels

The experience of unemployment is racialized further. African Canadian youth have more than twice the unemployment rate (26.8%) of all youth born in Canada (11.2%). Hasford (2016) concludes that dominant cultural discourses that stereotype Black youth as "scary," underachieving, incompetent, lazy, boisterous, etc., contribute to systemic discrimination in hiring and promotions. It also affects the experiences of Black youth in the workplaces. They are more likely to be subject to racial slurs, unfair discipline, or excessive punishment for minor mistakes, and microaggressions such as condescension and "friendly" racial jokes.

Read these articles to learn more.

Dominant Cultural Narratives, Racism, and Resistance in the Workplace: A Study of the Experiences of Young Black Canadians (Source: Hasford, 2016)

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajcp.12024

Employment and Disconnection Among Teens and Young Adults: The Role of Place, Race, and Education (Source: Ross & Savjlenka, 2016)

https://www.brookings.edu/research/employment-and-disconnection-among-teens-and-young-adults-the-role-of-place-race-and-education/

Questions to Consider: How Individuals and Communities Perceive and Experience a Social Problem

1. Are you privileged or minoritized in relation to the problem?
2. Who is privileged? Who benefits economically, socially, politically?
3. Who is marginalized or harmed? Who experiences discrimination, violence, exploitation, dehumanization, displacement?



How Ideologies and Discourses Relate to the Social Problem

> *The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied... but written off as trash.*
>
> *– John Berger*

We all have opinions on the causes and the solutions of social problems. Where do these come from?

One major source is the ideologies we hold. Ideologies help us to make sense of the world and are transmitted through **socialization** by families, schools, and media. They inform our everyday thinking, including our thinking about social problems. Despite this, they are invisible to most of us. However, failure to consider their effects can skew our understanding of the causes and solutions to social problems and what needs to be done about them.

socialization: The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

In the module on social problems, you were introduced to a chart highlighting different ways of viewing youth unemployment (chart in Critically Thinking About Social Problems section). The following chart adds the additional layer of ideology. Listen to the voiceover as you look at the chart to think through how ideology and discourses are related to and shape how social problems are perceived.

HOW IDEOLOGY INFLUENCES OUR VIEWS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

View of the Problem	Individual Problem	Institutional Problem	Systemic / Structural Problem
Corresponding Ideology	**Neoconservative**	**Neoliberal**	**Social democratic**
	• Does not acknowledge chronic unemployment is built into capitalism • Does not consider privilege, social capital, and class as advantages • The fittest of the fit survive. The weak are undeserving	• Acknowledges structural flaws within the system but will not change the system • Supports programs that help individual youth • Supports educational reforms	• Seeks to reform capitalism system and pushes for more equitable distribution of economic resources in society • Democratic socialist • Long-term goal is a socialist society where there is democratic decision making about economic policies and political structures • Decolonizing • Capitalism is destructive and oppressive. It must be dismantled
Dominant Discourses	• "Today's youth are too entitled, lazy, and lacking in ambition." • "Good jobs are a thing of the past." • "Get used to the gig economy. The new reality is work that is unstable, low paying, with no benefits or pensions." • "There are jobs out there; if you try really hard you will find work."	• "Students are being shortchanged by the educational system. Schools don't adequately prepare students with appropriate skills and knowledge for the job market."	• "Young people are underemployed because government policies favour profits for the corporate sector at the expense of the general public. Contributing factors include government cutbacks and outsourcing along with corporate downsizing, deskilling and union bashing. This has created low-paying, unstable and temporary jobs where many people and particularly youth are vulnerable to becoming the working poor." • "Capitalism is based on greed and short-term gain with no consideration of the harm to future generations."

View of the Problem	Individual Problem	Institutional Problem	Systemic / Structural Problem
Assumptions	• Individuals have to get used to competition in the labour market. • If you're not finding work, it's your fault for not looking hard enough or not having a good enough resume. • Individuals must adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and brand themselves to get work.	• If the education system better prepared youth for the labour market, there would be no youth unemployment. • Fixing a public institution will help youth find jobs.	• We need to look at a number of different dimensions when we look at this social problem, especially social status. • The roots of the social problem run deeper than any one thing. It is a product of a number of different social, economic, political and cultural factors in how society is organized.
Institutional Norms & Practices	• Does not support institutional measures to address the social problem • May engage in prejudging, stereotyping youth • Social identity may be a basis for employment discrimination	• Programs specifically targeted to hiring youth • Social identity may be a basis for employment discrimination • Policies create precarious work and unemployment	• Minimum living income for all unemployed workers • Seek more worker control and decision making in how the economy is organized • Wealth inequality benefits the wealthy. We need democracy, community, and inclusion, and must treat the earth as a living entity not a resource to exploit

"How Ideology Influences Our Views of Youth Unemployment" by Chet Singh, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

As you can see in the chart, neoconservatives tend to view unemployment as an individual problem. Dominant discourses align with these assumptions. While some youth do make poor choices and lack ambition, it is stereotypical to characterize all unemployed youth as lazy and lacking ambition. Neoconservatives do not acknowledge systemic issues like poverty, racism, sexism, or homophobia. This can create hostile workplaces for minoritized social groups and allow for employment discrimination. When it comes to unemployment and poverty, neoconservative governments and corporations are preoccupied with questions such as: "How can we stop people from cheating or abusing the welfare system?" or "How can we manage the poor so they don't disrupt the social order?"

Neoliberals also view unemployment and poverty as individual problems, but historically have acknowledged that social and economic systems are contributing factors. Institutional programs such as social work interventions, employment preparedness, retraining or further education are offered to help those who become "disadvantaged" by the economic system.

Neoliberals also favour privatization of services because they claim public services are inefficient. So they also see public educational institutions as partly responsible for the problem of youth unemployment. The discourse of "public institutions are inefficient and ineffective, and should be run like businesses" suggests that public educational institutions are not offering relevant educational programs and are poorly run. Consequently, governments have forced the public education sector to operate on business models rather than as essential and accessible public services. This has resulted in cutbacks and the elimination of programs. Another consequence of operating on the business model is the deregulation of tuition so that tuition for degrees that lead to well-paying jobs such as law and medicine is too expensive for most middle- and working-class students. While educational systems can always improve, this discourse of the "failure of public services" deflects awareness from the underlying structures responsible for creating unemployment and poverty in the first place and the instability of the capitalist economic system. Neoliberal discourses normalize unemployment and poverty and put the onus on individuals to find success through institutional programs that may or may not help them.

Those who view youth unemployment through the lens of transformative ideologies such as social democratic and antiracist/feminist focus on failures of the economic system and political structures as the primary cause of unemployment and poverty. Many advocates of this approach argue that the system cannot be reformed. What is needed is a fundamental change in the organization of society because it is currently structured to advantage the wealthy and powerful and exploit the minoritized and oppressed.

Questions to Consider: How Ideologies Affect Our View of the Social Problem

1. Can you compare and contrast various ideological perspectives on the social problem?
2. Why do some ideologies view it as a social problem and others do not?
3. Based on your research, what facts or evidence support the claims of neoconservative, neoliberal and transformative positions on the issue?
4. In the sources you consulted, do you notice ideological biases?



How Institutions Perpetuate the Social Problem

> *People with advantages are loath to believe that they just happen to be people with advantages. They come readily to define themselves as inherently worthy of what they possess; they come to believe themselves 'naturally' elite.*
>
> *– C. Wright Mills*

When I taught a college course on human resources management, I noticed that the textbooks did not view stress, overwork, or unemployment as systemic problems. Instead, they saw these as individual problems that could be corrected. You could sign on to an employee assistance program, take a class in mindfulness meditation, or retrain. The textbooks also didn't spend much time on discrimination in employment hiring practices. They didn't explore why workplaces lack diversity. Or make connections between sexual harassment and the problem of women leaving certain industries. By excluding these considerations, they demonstrated a number of dominant discourses and myths about work. For example, if you look hard enough, you will find work regardless of gender, race, or disability. They also didn't acknowledge that capitalism creates unemployment and how this affects youth entering the job market. In this way, these textbooks, and the education system itself, fed into a misrepresentation of the social problem of youth unemployment.

Institutions such as the media also tend to misrepresent social problems like youth unemployment (Source: Godeanu-Kenworthy, 2020). This is because for the most part, media companies are privately owned and tied to the capitalist economic system (see the Media 1 module). Corporate media and think tanks spread discourses that promote the idea that capitalism provides for us all. They gloss over the negative aspects of capitalism—like how it creates structural inequality that can affect groups like youth especially hard.

https://theconversation.com/how-socialism-became-un-american-through-the-ad-councils-propaganda-campaigns-132335

Dominant discourses promote the view that capitalism is a free-market system. This is a myth. Governments regularly help out corporations with bailouts and corporate welfare (like tax breaks and grants). Some critics have pointed out that if corporations get money and special treatment when they are going through hard times, why shouldn't individuals? Corporations and the think tanks they fund tend to deflect this question. They suggest that public services are inefficient and too costly to taxpayers. They propose more privatization of education, roads, utilities, social programs, and healthcare.

Parenti (2014) suggests that this amounts to "socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor." It is largely the taxes of the poor and middle classes that fund both public services and corporate welfare. Privatizing public services and utilities will only enrich corporations, who in their search for profit will likely cut more jobs. For youth, this might mean fewer government programs as they search for meaningful work and the chance to be successful.



GO DEEPER

These two articles explain some negative consequences of privatization.

Why the Movement to Privatize Public Education Is a Very Bad Idea (Source: Strauss, 2016)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/07/14/why-the-movement-to-privatize-public-education-is-a-very-bad-idea/

Water Privatisation: A Worldwide Failure? (Source: Vidal, 2015)

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/30/water-privatisation-worldwide-failure-lagos-world-bank

THE NEW CORPORATION: THE UNFORTUNATELY NECESSARY SEQUEL (Coming Soon)

Questions to Consider: How Institutions Create or Perpetuate the Social Problem

1. What are the specific social institutions involved in perpetuating the social problem?
2. What institutional laws, legislation, norms, and practices create and normalize the social problem?
3. Who benefits from institutional practices and norms?
4. Who experiences **oppression**, injustice, discrimination, dehumanization, violence, or annihilation?
5. Which dominant ideologies and dominant discourses normalize impacts associated with the social issue?



How do dominant ideologies and discourses promoted by institutions rely on stereotypes, objectification, misrepresentation, omission, and/or distortion of facts?

oppression: Refers to institutional policies, procedures, practices, and norms that create and sustain inequality and injustice. It also involves attitudes and ideas such as stereotyping and prejudices; as well as actions and behaviours such as discrimination.

What Did You Learn About the Social Problem?

Now that we have explored the different parts of the triangle model, we can see how the social problem we are investigating may end up being far more complex than we initially imagined. We have a sense of how social problems are tied to other social issues that impact people. (To look at how any one social problem can intersect with other issues, jump ahead to the Social Problems Intersect with Other Issues section of this module.) We also understand how our individual experiences and perception, ideologies, and social institutions are all bound up together by structures of power, through laws and public policies. And we see how social problems are created and shaped by these forces. Finally, we explored how discourses affect how we view and respond to a social problem.

At this point, you might want to think about how researching the social problem made you engage in self-analysis. How did your research help you identify the filters that affected your perceptions of the social problem? How might these filters play a role in perpetuating the social problem?

When thinking through the complexity of the social problem, we can, of course, consider different ways to resolve or address the social problem. This is the focus of our next sub-topic.

How Individuals and Communities Respond to the Social Problem and Create Change

> *To avoid the instability of capitalism and its huge social costs requires changing the system.*
>
> *– Richard Wolff*

How individuals and communities respond to a social problem is based on intersecting factors. These include whether they are personally affected by the problem and the ideologies they hold. Another factor is whether or not they understand the effects of social status or have experienced discrimination based on social status.

Based on these factors, some individuals and communities choose to engage in social action to address the problem. Others ignore it and hope it goes away on its own. And yet others don't see it as a problem at all and continue with harmful attitudes, behaviours, and practices. (For a thorough understanding of social action, jump ahead to the module on social action.)

For example, conservatives are unlikely to consider youth unemployment a social problem. Conservative think tanks like the Fraser Institute are funded by wealthy donors and argue for keeping minimum wage levels below the poverty level (Sources: Murphy, Lammam, & MacIntyre, 2016; North 99, 2018). This hurts youth, who are more likely to be working minimum-wage jobs. Neoliberals, on the other hand, acknowledge employment discrimination and are open to making superficial changes to the capitalist system to make it more fair to youth. For example, they may be open to increasing the minimum wage. However, both groups equate capitalism with freedom and democracy. They want to preserve the economic system—even if it harms groups like youth. Neoconservatives and neoliberals maintain that capitalism is the best economic system humans have devised and socialism when implemented has been a failure.

https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/raising-the-minimum-wage-misguided-policy-unintended-consequences.pdf

https://north99.org/2018/02/15/7-disturbing-facts-fraser-institute/

Unlike neoconservatives and neoliberals, many groups and individuals view the economic system as destructive and harmful to both humans and the planet.

Social democratic groups and think tanks such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Make Poverty History, and the Broadbent Institute seek changes to the system

such as a living wage and higher corporate taxes (Source: Wolff, 2015). These would directly help youth by increasing their pay and funding programs to help them succeed.

https://truthout.org/articles/critics-of-capitalism-must-include-its-definition/

Socialist economists argue that capitalism is unable to provide a future for most workers, including youth, since it is focused on profit motivated by greed (Source: M'membe, 2018). Capitalism is not concerned with meeting human needs or ensuring a healthy environment. It rewards corporations that exploit natural resources and workers, including children.

http://socialistpartyzambia.com/2018/05/29/high-unemployment-is-an-indication-of-unjust-economy/

In this view, capitalism cannot be reformed. It will never meet the basic needs of working people by providing employment, food, shelter, and leisure. Instead, socialists suggest that improvements in how we produce goods and use technology could result in productive and creative work for all workers, including youth. It would also reduce how much we work, which would lead to more leisure time. (Unfortunately, socialism in practice has not been able to achieve these goals for two reasons. One, socialist leaders have become dictators to maintain power. Two, experiments that were achieving successes such as Allende in Chile and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada were ended by the US during the Cold War.)

Such views are shared by many decolonizing, anarchist, anti-/racist, Black Lives Matter, **intersectional** feminist and LGBTQ2S activists and organizations. They too believe that capitalism must be dismantled because it is based on the control and exploitation of both Indigenous peoples and the planet (Source: Zig Zag, 2011).

intersectional: The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on different aspects of our identities.

The degrowth movement, which started in France, looks to create more equal, participatory, and ecologically sustainable societies (Source: Legendre, 2018). It calls for the wealthier countries that benefited from colonization and imperialism to volunteer to start this process. Capitalist societies are organized around profits, efficiency, and competition. These new societies would be organized around sharing, simplicity, and community. Furthermore, by tackling the intersecting issues with youth employment, they would engage with the problem of unemployment more fully.

https://inequality.org/great-divide/degrowth-movement-economic-health/

So how effective has social action been in addressing employment issues in the past?

Historically, **social action** and rebellion has brought about small but positive policy changes to employment practices under capitalism in liberal democracies.

For example, in the late 1800s white workers in Britain fought and earned the right to organize unions to help them negotiate better pay and working conditions. During the financial collapse of the 1930s, politicians and business leaders feared that the working class would rise up against them. As a result, governments of countries like Canada and the US adopted socialist policies that benefited workers.

social action: Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.

During the 1970s feminist activists made sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace social issues. This led to laws and policies addressing these issues. Anti-racist feminists, academics, and activists continue to work to get institutions to acknowledge race and gender harassment and discrimination. Similarly, disability rights and trans activists have challenged institutions to implement reasonable accommodations at work and end exclusion from the workforce.

Despite these positive changes, discriminatory attitudes still exist in popular culture and in workplaces. Many youths continue to face a hostile work climate, unequal pay, employment discrimination, and poor choice of jobs on the basis of gender, race, disabilities, and sexuality. Laws and policies to address these issues only work if we educate people on them, monitor youth experiences, and demand they be followed. In the case of youth unemployment, there's more work to be done.

Resistance, Rebellion, Revolution: What They Are and How They Intersect (Source: Diavolo, 2019)

https://www.teenvogue.com/story/resistance-rebellion-revolution-explainer-interviews



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Youth Activists Exposing Capitalism: Socialism for the Rich, Capitalism for the Poor

Capitalism has always had periods of crisis and instability. The stock market collapse of 1929 led to what is known as the Great Depression. During this time, governments were forced to adopt many socialist labour policies resulting in better pay and working conditions. However, after the economic crash of the 1970s, economic elites persuaded governments to adopt neoliberalism. This was a more exploitative system of capitalism that led to the loss of secure full-time jobs, and more poverty and homelessness (Street, 2014).

Our last major financial crisis occurred in 2008. To recover, the US government paid a trillion dollars of public money to bail out the big banks. US citizens will be paying it back for generations to come (Taibbi, 2019). No senior bankers went to jail (Auerback, 2018). However, millions lost their homes and jobs. And many small and medium businesses went bankrupt (Kotz, 2009).

In response to this most recent crisis, a group of anarchist youth started a global movement known as **Occupy Wall Street**. It exposed how corporations and governments work together to enrich corporations at the expense of working people, creating greater inequality. This social action by youth led to a new counter discourse about inequality, wealth and power that is now part of our vocabulary—the 1% vs. the 99%.

Read this article to learn more.

The Failure to Punish White-Collar Crime After the 2008 Financial Crisis Helped Produce President Donald Trump (Source: Auerback, 2018)

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/08/29/failure-punish-white-collar-crime-after-2008-financial-crisis-helped-produce

Occupy Wall Street: The name of the popular uprising after the banks that caused the financial crash of 2008 were bailed out with public money. It exposed the influence of the wealthy on government's economic, environmental, labour, and human rights policies.

Self-Reflection Questions

1. Can the economic ideology of capitalism ever solve the problem of youth unemployment?
2. Have you faced the social problem of youth unemployment? What do you think were the major reasons for your unemployment? The economic system? Your social identity? Inadequate education and training?
3. How do dominant discourses promote capitalism as the best economic system to solve the social problem of youth unemployment? How does this prevent meaningful change?
4. Why do neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies critique socialist or social democratic strategies to reduce the impacts of the social problem?
5. Historically which stakeholders or communities have organized to expose the root causes of the problem? What types of social action have they used? What demands have they made of the relevant institutions?
6. What do you think are the best ideologies and **social action strategies** to address this social problem?



social action strategies: Ways to bring about systemic change. Evolve from community and grassroots-based organizing and can involve:

• Awareness-raising strategies such as education and research, teach-ins, organizing and collaborating with other groups.

• Negotiation such as bargaining for changes in policies, practices and laws.

• Non-cooperation such as strikes and boycotts.

• Direct action/civil disobedience such as as disruption of services, protests, blockades, boycotts, riots, and confrontation. In rare historical moments it can also involve revolution.

Summary

In this module, we were introduced to social analysis and the triangle model. We started by exploring why it is important for us to recognize our perceptual filters. Then we explored the different aspects of the triangle model. This model helps us understand the origins of social problems and why they continue in spite of social action that seeks to create change. We looked at what shapes our perception of social problems. We considered the role ideologies play. Finally, we thought about how institutions can create and maintain social problems through policies, laws and social norms. By engaging in social analysis, we are able to find the root causes of social problems. This allows us to evaluate strategies to address them, change our attitudes or behaviours, and take social action.



KEY CONCEPTS

colonialism	The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.
counter discourses	Discourses that question the "common-sense" ideas of dominant ideologies and dominant discourses. They draw attention to how dominant ideologies justify injustice and lead to inequality and discrimination.
critical	Critical as used in this module does not mean negative. It means being mindful, aware, and analytical.
dominant discourses	How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.

equity	Can be understood in terms of "justice" and "fairness." Equity recognizes that treating everyone the same can still be unfair. Equity focuses on the needs of society's most under-resourced, oppressed, and disadvantaged people.
full employment	For neoliberals and neoconservatives, full employment occurs when inflation (constant increase in the price of goods and services occurring with a steady decline in purchasing power) rises and employers can find enough workers for the types of available jobs. So, it does not mean that everyone has a job as would occur in socialist economies.
hegemonic tensions	Refers to the tensions that occur when activists, academics, and affected communities expose the oppressive and exploitative aspects of the social order.
hegemony	The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.
inequality	Not equal or the same or even. Often used to note the unfair differences in people's circumstances.
intersectional	The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on different aspects of our identities.
media framing	How mainstream media minoritizes groups and communities, as well as how it portrays ideas or topics from a particular ideological perspective.
norms	Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.
Occupy Wall Street	The name of the popular uprising after the banks that caused the financial crash of 2008 were bailed out with public money. It exposed the influence of the wealthy on government's economic, environmental, labour, and human rights policies.

oppression	Refers to institutional policies, procedures, practices, and norms that create and sustain inequality and injustice. It also involves attitudes and ideas such as stereotyping and prejudices; as well as actions and behaviours such as discrimination.
perceptual filters	Refers to the prejudices, stereotypes and biases that affect how you see the world.
precarious job market	The market for jobs that are contract, part-time, low wage, without benefits, security, or union protection. Increasingly common, these types of jobs are unable to meet the basic needs of workers, who are forced to rely on food banks and inadequate shelter, which affect their material and psychological well-being.
resistance	Refers to individual and/or collective acts to change inequality, oppression and injustice in society. It can be organized, spontaneous or symbolic.
self-analysis	A process by which you become aware of your blind spots and perceptual filters such as your ideologies, biases, stereotypes, and common-sense assumptions. It also requires understanding how your social identities potentially provide you with advantages or disadvantages.
social action strategies	Ways to bring about systemic change. Evolve from community and grassroots-based organizing and can involve: • Awareness-raising strategies such as education and research, teach-ins, organizing and collaborating with other groups. • Negotiation such as bargaining for changes in policies, practices and laws. • Non-cooperation such as strikes and boycotts. • Direct action/civil disobedience such as as disruption of services, protests, blockades, boycotts, riots, and confrontation. In rare historical moments it can also involve revolution.

social action	Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.
social constructions	Describes how our identities are the product of the interplay between individual, cultural, and social structures.
social problems	Problems that affect groups of people and are caused by how society is structured and organized. Social problems are particular to specific societies and times. Solutions to these problems are beyond the reach of any single individual.
social statuses	The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.
social stratification	The hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc.
systemic problems	Problems caused by how society is structured and organized. Understanding social problems as systemic/structural problems acknowledges that resolving them is incredibly difficult but creating change through social action (based on the principles of global citizenship) is meaningful and can be long-lasting.
systemic	Systemic, as used in this course, describes something that is embedded within the structure of society or the larger economic capitalist system. Changing it requires changing the system.
unearned privileges	Advantages gained by virtue of one's social status.
working poor	Refers to members of the workforce who work full-time, but don't make enough money for food and shelter. Consequently, they live below the poverty line and rely on food banks and other sources to survive.

Global Citizenship Example

Global Citizenship, Social Analysis and Critical Thinking

Many students ask, "What's the point of taking courses like GNED 500? It has nothing to do with what I'm studying." One important reason is they help develop critical thinking skills. Employers place a high value on critical thinking, making it one of the most valuable assets you bring to your future career. And crucially, global citizens are critical thinkers. Several studies conclude that those who develop the ability to critically think are self-reflective, independent, creative and competent employees in all disciplines. Such employees can logically connect ideas, evaluate arguments, find inconsistencies, and solve complex problems. They think globally and work collaboratively with people of different abilities and backgrounds (Haber, 2020).

It's Time to Get Serious About Teaching Critical Thinking (Source: Haber, 2020)

https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/02/teaching-students-think-critically-opinion

Benefits of Studying Humanities and Social Sciences in the UK (Source: Study International Staff, 2016)

https://www.studyinternational.com/news/benefits-of-studying-humanities-and-social-sciences-in-the-uk/

Global Indigenous Example

When examining Indigenous youth unemployment, we must consider differing circumstances and issues.

Globally indigenous youth and adults continue to be dispossessed of their ancestral lands because of colonization, corporate agriculture, resource development, and military occupation (Sources: Dean, 2003; Yates-Doerr, 2018). Many youth are forced to survive in urban slums. If they have access to schooling, it is largely Eurocentric (about white settlers) as Indigenous teachings are devalued (Source: Dupere, 2016). Indigenous youth who live in cities encounter prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination that negatively impact their job prospects and employment experiences. A recent Canadian study found that 52% of Indigenous people feel "on guard" at work and 60% felt psychologically unsafe (Source: Deschamps, 2021). These figures double for Indigenous women. Another Canadian study found that currently white youth have an unemployment rate of 15.4%, black youth 31.6% and Indigenous youth 20.9% (Source: Block, 2021). The largest job losses since the pandemic are in sales and services, a sector largely made up of precarious work and predominantly staffed by female, Indigenous and racialized workers. First Nations youth

living on reserves in Canada encounter differing employment conditions and opportunities (Source: Restoule, n.d.). A few reserves are resource rich as a result of recent treaty settlements. However, many still face economic hardship and environmental racism from colonial policies that limit opportunities.

https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/indigenous-education-and-prospects-cultural-survival

https://www.sapiens.org/culture/guatemala-migrants-united-states/

https://mashable.com/2016/08/08/indigenous-education-inequality/

https://www.thestar.com/business/2021/02/10/60-of-indigenous-workers-feel-emotionally-unsafe-on-the-job-catalyst-survey.html

https://monitormag.ca/articles/racialized-and-indigenous-workers-are-bearing-the-brunt-of-pandemic-job-loss

https://www.coursera.org/lecture/aboriginal-education/8th-fire-episode-3-whose-land-is-it-anyway-imwVY

Social Problems Intersect with Other Issues

The module on social problems provides important context to understand social problems. We can still go deeper in thinking about them using the triangle model. As Audre Lorde says, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” The dimensions and impacts of social problems are vast and complex. When examining a social problem, ask yourself: What dimension of the social problem am I going to focus on? Will I explore the economic system? Will I look at institutional, social, physical, or psychological impacts?

Use the dropdown menu below to consider more in-depth aspects of social problems to explore. As you will see, the complexity and immensity of particular social problems become clear once we begin to ask critical questions. What are the impacts? Who is impacted? What are the patterns? How do the impacts differ?

Social Impacts

If you decide to focus on the social impacts, the first thing is to recognize that not all youth are the same. How does social status affect youth unemployment patterns? Does being Indigenous or of a certain gender, race, class, or sexuality affect someone’s ability to get a job and what kind of job they can find (Source: The Canadian Press, 2021)? Does disability, language, or citizenship make a difference? You may want to consider the effects of not being able to find a job. How do people react? Do they feel disillusioned about the future? Who do they blame for their unemployment? Is this who is actually responsible?

physical impacts

What about the *physical* impacts? Is there increased violence, vandalism and aggression among unemployed young men? Does being unable to find jobs make young women and men more vulnerable to sex trafficking and associated violence? Does it lead to malnourishment and other health ailments? What about cognitive problems associated with learning and schooling?

psychological impacts

What are the *psychological* harms caused by youth employment? Is youth unemployment associated with increased depression, self-harm, addiction, low self-esteem, eating disorders, or suicide? Do these consequences differ based on your social identity and status? Have the effects of colonialism and loss of territory made First Nations youth more vulnerable to these harmful impacts?

economic impacts

What are the *economic* impacts associated with unemployed youth? How does it affect the type of shelter, schooling and transportation available to youth from different social groups? Does underemployment lead to more shoplifting or crime? Does it make youth more likely to join gangs? How do economic impacts affect youth globally?

institutional impacts

What are the *institutional* impacts? How do the policies and practices of schools, governments, and corporations contribute to or help this problem? How does corporate media portray the problem of youth unemployment? Do these portrayals lead to flawed common-sense assumptions and stereotypes about youth?

Sources

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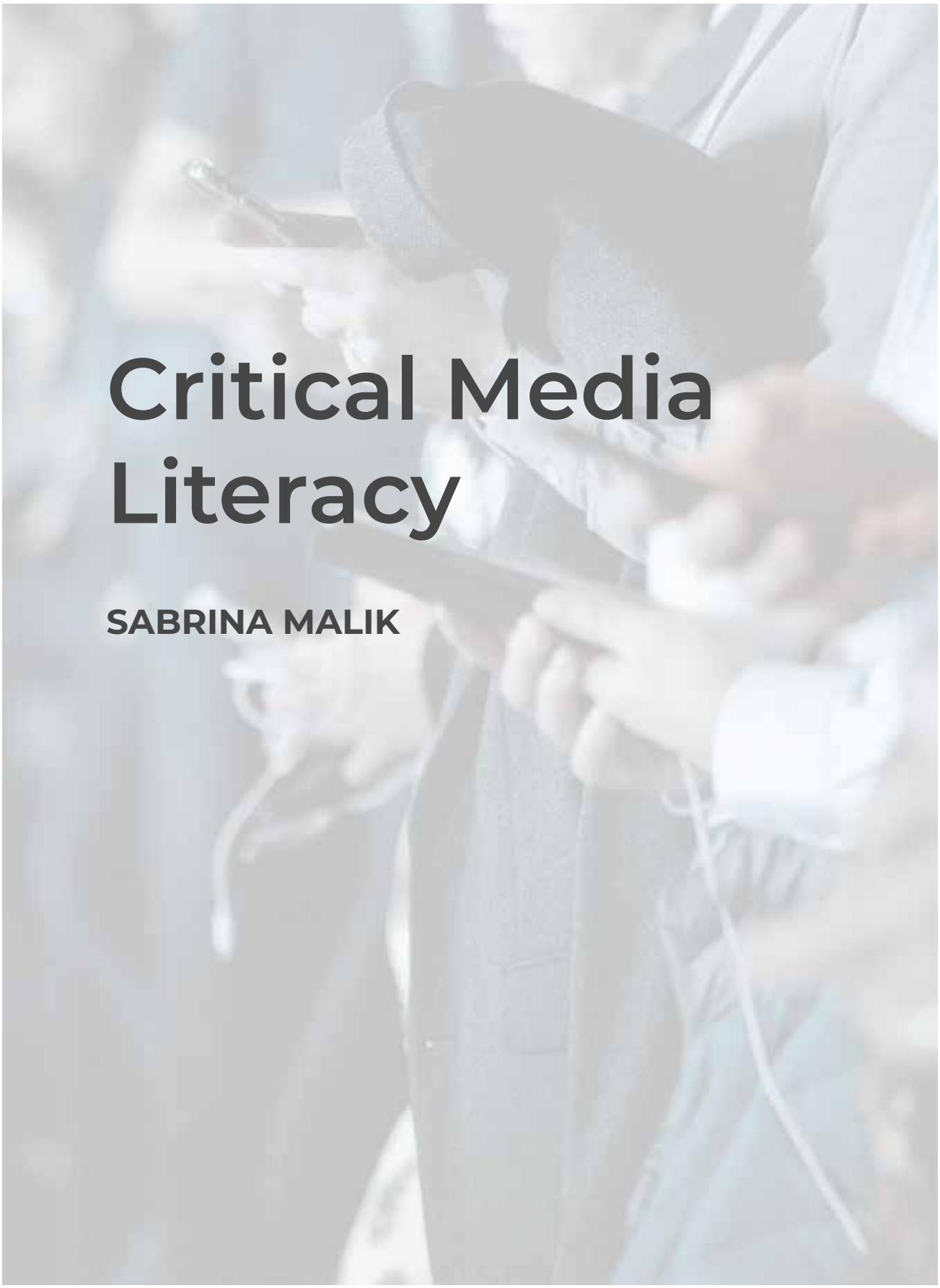
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Critical Media Literacy

SABRINA MALIK

Our Use of Media



Image by fancycrave1 on Pixabay

If you are like me, while you're working or playing you usually have at least one screen open. Maybe your laptop is open to your course shell while you're completing homework, and your television is playing a show on Netflix. Perhaps you are also chatting with your friends using your cellphone while streaming music online. More and more, we rely on media technology to connect with each other, gain information, entertain ourselves, and learn about the world beyond what we can experience directly.

As illustrated in the above scenario, the influence of media in our lives is undeniable. In today's interconnected world, where we find ourselves living in a **global village**, our ability to critique and analyze media messages is increasingly important. In this module, we will examine how we define media, the importance of critical media literacy, and media as a social structure. We will also explore media bias, regulation, and consolidation. Finally, we will consider how advertising and news coverage influences our understanding of social and global issues.

global village: The idea that the entire world is becoming more interconnected because of advances in technology. This makes it possible to deal with the world as if all areas of it were local.

Consider the impact of our increasing reliance on media: How does engaging with media shape our perceptions of each other, ourselves, and the world? Do you think media plays a role in informing your personal beliefs, opinions, and values? Why or why not?



What Is Media?

Media is a social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience. For example, some types of media are television, film, and radio; traditional print media such as books, magazines, and newspapers; and digital media such as the internet and social media. We use media for many reasons: to stay informed, to be entertained, to express our thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and to keep us connected to others in our social network.

> **media:** A social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience.
>
> **media messages:** The main idea or moral of the story that is communicated by the content and type of media, such as in a television show, an advertisement, a news article, a song, etc.

We are constantly surrounded by **media messages**. Think about the last time you commuted to school or work. Chances are you read several advertisements posted in the subway and on billboards. Perhaps you checked social media sites or watched your favourite television show on your mobile device. Maybe you picked up a newspaper to get caught up on local and world events. Media messages can be found everywhere. It is difficult to escape the impact these messages have on how we view ourselves and others.



Image by Victoriano Izquierdo on Unsplash



GO DEEPER

This short introduction explores what media is and how we define media. The video asks its viewers to consider the types of media they engage with daily. (Source: MediaSmarts, 2013)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBP_kswrtrw

This video explains what media is and why media analysis is important in the current digital era. An introduction to the necessity of critical media literacy is also provided. (Source: McPherson, 2018)

https://youtu.be/LIgQoBRPpSs

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTS

Are you using media, or is media using you? Have you noticed that when you click on a link, or if you like a post on social media, that you will suddenly start seeing ads that reflect what you clicked on or liked? Did you know that your cell phone service provider can track your movements and sell that information to marketing research companies? This is the new reality of “big data.” As we will learn later in this module, big data is not just about gathering information, it’s about profiling citizens for profit. Most of us are giving away our personal data without fully understanding that we’re doing it.

To learn more about big data and its implications, watch the video from The Guardian called “Big Data: Why Should You Care?” It can be found in the Go Deeper section under the Regulating the Internet and Big Data sub-topic

The Importance of Media Literacy



Artwork by Linh Le is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Media is so common in our everyday lives that we may take it for granted. We might assume, for example, that the news stories we read are reliable sources of information. We might see advertisements as forms of media that affect other people, but not us. We might think of social media as simply a way to share information and connect with friends. But, as we will see throughout the module, media does not exist outside the realm of power, ideology, and social structures.

Critical media literacy is an approach to thinking about media messages and learning to read **media text**. "Text," in this case, refers not just to words but also to images, sounds, and video. When you read media text, you consider all elements and how they contribute to the overall message. To "read" media text means to analyze its direct and indirect messages critically and actively. As you read, you will question what specifically is being communicated.

critical media literacy: The ability to analyze and evaluate how media messages influence our beliefs and behaviours. In this process, viewers are not just recipients of media messages. They actively critique media content.

media text: Refers not just to words but also images, sounds, video, taken as a whole message.



GO DEEPER

John Randolph (better known as Jay Smooth) is a cultural commentator, founder of New York City WBAI radio station's hip hop program Underground Railroad, and creator of the video blog Ill Doctrine. In this video, he explains what media literacy is. He also discusses how to use media literacy as a tool to navigate the many messages we receive through the mass media. (Source: CrashCourse, 2018a)

https://youtu.be/AD7N-1Mj-DU

Andrea Quijada is a media literacy educator and executive director for the Media Literacy Project. In this video, she speaks about her experiences teaching others how to "deconstruct" or analyze media messages. She asks us to consider the text and "subtext" (the hidden meaning) of media messages and encourages us to question what we see and don't see in the media. (Source: Quijada, 2013)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHAApvHZ6XE&t=17s

Media as a Social Structure

Media acts as a powerful agent of **socialization**. We learn about ourselves and others through the **media representations** we find in popular media, whether on television, in films, in advertisements, or online. These messages may not affect us immediately. Instead, as we are continually exposed to them, they become part of our worldview over time.

For example, consider how media and advertising represent gender roles. Girls' toys, such as baby dolls and toy kitchen appliances, are often based in the domestic realm. For boys, toys often mirror the world outside of the home, such as toy cars and trucks. As we age, we are continually exposed to gendered representations in the media that reflect these **norms** and expectations: that women belong at home, and men in the labour force.



Image by Public Domain Pictures on Pixabay



Image by cottonbro on Pexels

socialization: The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.

media representations: The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.

norms: Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.

dominant ideologies: Ideologies that are particularly influential in shaping our ideas, values, and beliefs because they are supported by powerful groups.

The media appears to mirror reality back to us. But this is an illusion. In fact, it gives us a very limited and often false representation of our world. For example, media often encourages us to adopt **dominant ideologies** and **norms**, ones that may create and maintain social inequalities. It takes time to reflect and critically analyze all the media messages we see and hear. We may see the same headline repeated in the news so often that we take the message as fact. In our busy lives, we often rely on limited descriptions of issues in the media to form our judgments and create our opinions.

Much of our view of reality is based on media messages, so it is important to consider who created the message and why. What is the purpose of the message? What is being communicated in the message, and what is being left out? By critically examining media messages, we have the power to pick and choose which messages are truer to us or more representative of our lived reality than others.



GO DEEPER

Educator, author, and social theorist Jackson Katz explores issues related to violent masculinity in popular media. This documentary examines representations of gender and race in popular films, television shows, and news stories. It discusses the impact of these harmful messages on culture and society. (Source: Katz et al., 2013)

https://centennialcollege.kanopy.com/video/tough-guise-2

Media Bias

Media bias generally refers to the particular slant or perspective of media messages that influences how specific issues or people are presented. For example, media representations often reflect bias. Media bias also refers to how media tends to represent and spread **dominant ideologies**. This can lead to **prejudiced** attitudes and opinions, as well as **stereotyping** and **discrimination**, most often of **minoritized** and marginalized groups.

The images and language used to describe an event or issue can reflect and contribute to the bias of a media message. For example, as we will see in the video found in the Go Deeper section below, an advertisement from the 1940s describes the camps where Japanese residents of Canada and the United States were imprisoned during the Second World War as “assembly centres.” In fact, these were temporary concentration camps for people of Japanese ancestry. Those forced to live and work at these camps spent an average of three months there before being transferred to a permanent concentration camp (Linke, 2015).

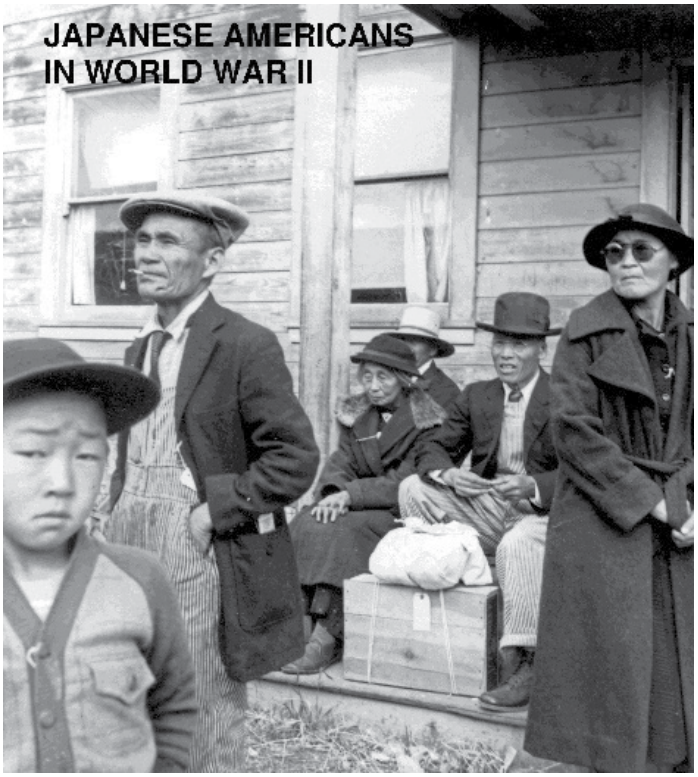
media bias: The act of favouring one perspective over others by the creators of media messages.

prejudice: A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).

stereotype: "A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person" or group ("Stereotype," n.d.).

discrimination: The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

minoritized: Experiencing discrimination and other disadvantages compared to members of the dominant group.



"Japanese Americans in World War II, a National Historic Landmark theme study" by Dorothea Lange, United States National Park Service (Public Domain).



"Anti-Japanese World War II propaganda poster war bonds" (Public Domain).

Biased news reporting influences how the public feels about issues. One way bias in the news can occur is through a process of **selection and omission**, where an editor may choose to include only some details of a story, while ignoring others. Another way bias can creep in is through the use of negative language. One survey of newspaper articles about unions found that negative terms such as "demands," "inconvenience," "labour unrest," and "greedy" kept occurring (Finn, 1983, as quoted in Naiman, 2008). How might this affect how readers feel about unions?

How an event is described and what choice of words are used feed into **dominant discourses**. These discourses recreate and maintain inequities. The way the world is represented in the media will always contain bias. So it is important to learn how to recognize limiting perspectives and to seek a variety of sources and points of view.

selection and omission: A process through which bias is expressed in the news, where editors may choose to share only some details of a story, while ignoring others.
dominant discourses: How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.

Identifying bias in a news headline

Consider the following headlines:

More than 900 people attended the protest!
vs.
Less than a thousand people attended the protest.



Are these headlines describing the same or different events? What is the perspective of each? How does the choice of words used in the headlines contribute to bias?



GO DEEPER

This video explores ways in which we can learn how to recognize bias in the media. What words are chosen to describe people and events can lead to biased reporting in the news, as well as issues surrounding false information disguised as fact – or "fake news." (Source: PBS NewsHour, 2017)

https://youtu.be/z4fwJHhv6ZY

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AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

We learned how bias is created in the media and specifically in news reporting in this module. Biased news reporting can occur in three ways: through selection and omission, placement, and headlines. As you now know, selection and omission refers to which aspects of the story are included and which are left out. This type of bias can be the outcome of space considerations or advertising pressure on editorial decisions. Because of this type of bias, it is important to consider different sources of news to get a fuller picture of events. Bias can also occur through placement—where does the story appear? Is it on the front page of a newspaper or magazine, or is it the first story covered in the news on television? Does it appear on the front page of the news website? Or is it buried somewhere and given a very small word count? Placement of news stories determines how relevant the story is to media producers, and ultimately to us as media consumers. It sends a subtle message to us about what is important and what isn't. Finally, bias can occur through the news headline. Headlines usually contain very few words, and these words are chosen carefully. In journalism, there's a saying that "if it bleeds, it leads": the more shocking or provocative the headline, the more likely it is to grab the reader's attention. You can read more about the creation of fear-based media in the article called "If It Bleeds, It Leads: Understanding Fear-Based Media" in the Go Deeper section of the Media Bias sub-topic.

Representation in the Media

Growing up as a child of immigrants to Canada, it was rare to see people like me fairly represented in the media. I didn't see many South Asian people on TV or in the films I watched. The representations that I did see were stereotypical, negative, and simplified. They made me feel ashamed of who I was. Over time, I began to question the validity of my experiences. Today, I see more diversity in popular media, but I still question how accurate and representative these depictions really are.

Do you see yourself fairly represented in the media? Are your experiences and lifestyle reflected in the films you watch or the news stories you read? Why might this be important to consider?



Representation in the media often reproduces stereotypes about gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, ability, and sexuality. This is because media recreates inequalities that exist in our society. When examining how diversity is represented in the media, it is important to consider three main issues: inclusion, roles, and control of production (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). For example, we may ask if media includes diverse perspectives of **racialized** groups in Canada. We may question how racialized groups are portrayed in the media by exploring the roles their members are given. Finally, we may consider who is controlling the creation and production of media.

Representation and Race

As we saw in the previous module on **media bias**, what the media chooses to reflect is very selective. Overt or obvious racism is less present in media representations today. However, subtle racism is still very much present (Hall, 1995). This often shows up in representations that feel natural but in fact hold unquestioned assumptions about race.

An example of this is how Africa is continually portrayed as a region marked by corruption, famine, and civil war. Those issues have been present in Africa. However, there are many other positive stories about Africa that are never mentioned. These include successful community development projects and the rapid growth of the movie industry in Nigeria.

This sort of subtle racism also occurs closer to home. Usually in stories about **First Peoples** in Canada, the focus is on corruption on reserves, violence, and alcoholism. Rarely do we hear positive stories about Indigenous art, culture, or leadership.

Media representations of Indigenous groups recreate harmful stereotypes. Stuart Hall (1995) describes this representation in popular media as having two sides. On one side is the stereotype of Indigenous groups as "noble and "primitive." On the other side is the stereotype of Indigenous groups as "savage" and "uncivilized" (p. 21). These representations have fed into the marginalization of Indigenous communities.

In these examples, we can see how the media reflects and contributes to the racism present in our society.

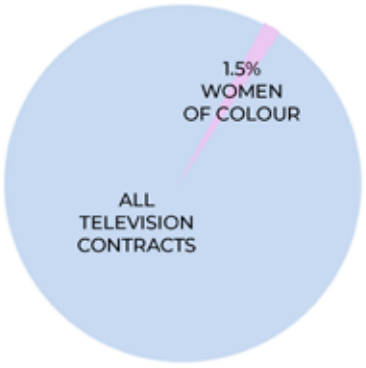
racialized: The process of creating, preserving, and communicating a system of dominance based on race.

First Peoples: Peoples indigenous to Canada; includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

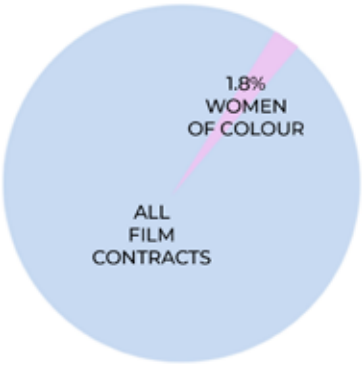
media representations: The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.

Representation and Gender

Although gender balance has improved in film and television in recent years, women of colour and Indigenous women in Canada are still extremely underrepresented in the media, both in front of and behind the camera. A recent study by the not-for-profit organization Women in View analyzed 90 television shows publicly funded by the Canadian Media Fund (CMF) airing between 2014 to 2017, and 1098 film productions funded by Telefilm between 2015 and 2017. They found that only 1.5% of television contracts and 1.8% of film contracts were assigned to women of colour. Alarmingly, only 0.7% of television and film contracts were assigned to Indigenous women. In 2017, of 24 television shows created, not one had any Indigenous women on staff (Collie, 2019).



1.5% of television contracts were assigned to women of colour.



1.8% of film contracts were assigned to women of colour.



0.7% of television and film contracts were assigned to Indigenous women.

(Data Source: Women in View, 2019)

Today, stereotypical representations in the media can be more subtle than they have been historically. Think of a television show or movie that you have watched recently and consider applying the **Bechdel test**. This test asks if there were at least two women in the film who talk to each other about something other than a male character. This is how it assesses if female characters are present and how complete or well-rounded they are. This simple test can help determine if there is equality of gender representation.

Bechdel test: A simple test to determine the representation and inclusion of well-rounded female characters in films and TV.

media representations: The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.

Representation and Class

Media representations of people experiencing poverty tend to frame their struggles as an individual problem, and not as a social problem. By doing so, they encourage us to be-

lieve that we can avoid such struggles through personal effort, such as hard work. Those who are struggling are often described as not working hard enough or exploiting social supports. In other words, they are blamed for their own poverty. For example, people who claim government benefits may be described in the media as "undeserving" of benefits or as committing fraud (Thompson, 2019).

Often we see media representations of wealthy lifestyles. These do not reflect the reality of most citizens. The vast majority of American and Canadian citizens work in service, manufacturing, or production jobs (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 218; Statistics Canada, 2020). These images are most obvious in advertising. For example, ads do not typically feature working class people. They portray images of white, middle class, and affluent upper-class people (p. 218). These messages make us feel anxious about our current lifestyle. They are also usually offering ways to fake our social status by purchasing luxury products and brand names. Consider the following question: How do these messages from advertising campaigns feed into the ideology of **consumerism**?

consumerism: An ideology that connects our happiness to the things we buy, own, and consume.

Reflect on the impact the media has on how you view yourself and others. How does the media feed into existing power structures? What does the media tell us about ourselves and those around us? What values, lifestyles, or points of view do you see represented or omitted in the media?





GO DEEPER

In this TED talk, researcher Min Kim explores how our understanding of others is filtered through media images and the perspectives chosen by the owners of mass media. He argues the benefits of direct experience over filtered experiences. (Source: TEDx Talks, 2017b)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpjWioF6iMo

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's theory of representation is explored in this video, with attention on his groundbreaking work on the relationship between stereotypes, power, and the media. (Source: The Media Insider, 2019)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJr0gO_-w_Q

Artist, photographer, and educator Bayete Ross Smith examines how media images of people of colour shape our perceptions and create stereotypes in this TEDx Talk. He explores how art and media can be used as tools to educate and expose the many stereotypical representations we see during our lifetimes. (Source: TEDx Talks, 2015)

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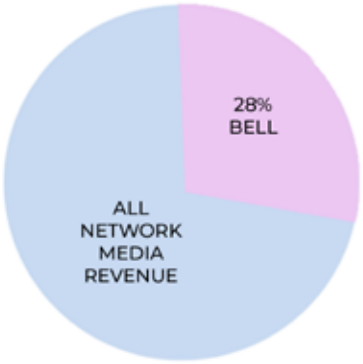
Media Ownership

In Canada and the US, most of the newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and internet providers are owned by a few very large corporations. This is referred to as **media consolidation**.

> **media consolidation:** The process by which the ownership of media is concentrated into the hands of a small number of large corporations.



Bell, Telus, Rogers, Shaw, and Quebecor accounted for 72.5% of the $81.2 billion network media economy in 2017.



Bell accounted for nearly 28% of all network media revenue in 2017.



Rogers, Telus, and Bell accounted for 92.3% of all wireless mobile's revenue in 2017.

(Data Source: Winseck, 2018)

The top five media companies in Canada are Bell, Telus, Rogers, Shaw, and Quebecor. These five corporations accounted for 72.5% of the $81.2 billion network media economy in 2017. Bell, the largest media company in Canada, accounted for nearly 28% of all revenue in 2017, up by one percent from the previous year. Wireless mobile is also extremely concentrated. Rogers, Telus, and Bell accounted for 92.3% of the sector's revenue in 2017 (Winseck, 2018).

From a critical media literacy perspective, we must ask what issues arise when a few very large companies own so many media outlets. For example, are these companies constructing media messages to gain and maintain power? Do they create and spread ideas that help them maximize their profits?

With this level of consolidation, it is important to question in whose interest media messages are created, and why.



GO DEEPER

Read the Media and Internet Concentration in Canada Report 1984–2017. (Source: Winseck, 2018)

https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/110.nsf/vwapj/972_CM-CRP_MediaandInternetConcentration1984-2017.pdf/$file/972_CM-CRP_MediaandInternetConcentration1984-2017.pdf

Learn more about the major companies in the media landscape here. (Source: Molla & Kafka, 2018; this source is kept updated)

https://www.vox.com/2018/1/23/16905844/media-landscape-verizon-amazon-comcast-disney-fox-relationships-chart

This video provides an overview of media concentration in the US. (Source: NowThisWorld, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awRRPPE3V5Q&feature=emb_logo

The history of media ownership and concentration is explored in the eighth installment of Jay Smooth's Crash Course in Media Literacy. Issues surrounding mergers and monopolies by media corporations are examined, including tech companies and access to the internet. (Source: CrashCourse, 2018b)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvSTIxJsKzE

Media Regulation

The government of Canada plays an important role in **media regulation**. In other words, it determines what media and media content we have access to.

In Canada, the government body that controls media is called the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The CRTC was created in 1968 by the Broadcasting Act. It oversees all sectors of the Canadian broadcasting system, including radio and television. Before the CRTC was created, this responsibility belonged to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The CBC was created in 1936 to provide an alternative to American radio.



Artwork by Linh Le is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

The CRTC plays many roles. Companies that wish to operate radio and television broadcasting networks must first apply for a license from the CRTC. In addition, companies that want to buy or take over other broadcasting companies must receive approval from the CRTC.

The main role of the CRTC is to ensure Canadian culture is represented in media. However, large media corporations have pressured the government to change their policies so that they do not need to represent Canadian culture in their programs. This has made it very difficult for the CRTC to fulfill this role (McChesney, 2008). In addition, the increasing concentration of media ownership in Canada has not been challenged by the CRTC.

Media can be controlled and owned in various ways. For example, private-sector control of the media includes media that is produced and distributed by corporations for a profit. In contrast, media controlled by the public sector refers to media that is produced and distributed as a public service, and not necessarily to generate any profit. Here are some examples of different ways that media can be controlled.

Corporate-controlled media

Media produced by media corporations and **media conglomerates** to make a profit.

media conglomerate: A media company that owns many other media companies.

State-controlled media

Media supported, regulated, and controlled by the government. State-controlled media acts as a tool for social control. The only information citizens have access to must be approved by the state and is most often in support of the government. In countries with state-controlled media, independent media sources may be suppressed or banned. This can threaten journalistic integrity and promote the state's interests over its citizens.

Public-controlled media

Media produced by public film and broadcasting organizations. It provides a public service by creating content that does not necessarily produce a profit. In other words, it serves public instead of corporate interests, e.g. TVOntario.

Citizen-controlled media

Media in which people directly participate. This includes citizen journalism, blogs, social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, opinion pieces, etc. It is also called participatory media.



GO DEEPER

Learn about the statutes and regulations of the CRTC here. (Source: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 2019)

https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/statutes-lois.htm

In this report, the Committee to Protect Journalists describes 10 countries where independent media is suppressed or banned. (Source: Wang, n.d.)

https://cpj.org/reports/2019/09/10-most-censored-eritrea-north-korea-turkmenistan-journalist.php

Regulating the Internet and Big Data

What do you do online in a typical day? Check your social media pages to get updates from friends? Read reviews on the latest cell phones? Post a picture on Instagram? Find a map for directions to a restaurant? Everything you do online is tracked. The online trail you leave of your interests, movements, and purchases is your personal data, and it's extremely valuable. If you've ever noticed advertisements "pop" up that seem to offer the kinds of products and services you've been recently browsing, then you've had a glimpse at why companies are willing to pay for your data. They harness it to target sales to you. Here's how it works.

Data vs. Big Data

The term "**big data**" is important to understand because your free internet is built on it. You likely pay for an internet connection, but once you are online, you don't pay for the actual internet—the online world where all your websites live. That is because there is an important difference between data and "big data." Data is simply information. Even if you have a lot of information, it may not

big data: "Extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally [by computers] to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions" ("Big data," n.d.).

be very useful. For example, if you tracked how many people purchased shoes online in Canada, you would have data. However, this data would not help you sell more shoes online. Big data takes online shoe purchase numbers and then combines them with other information about those shoe buyers, such as their age, income, etc. This combination of data produces very valuable information for advertisers. With big data, shoe companies know which shoes to advertise to which people. It also tells companies where to place those ads, when to place those ads, and what prices to offer the shoes in those ads. Big data is not about the shoe. It's about you. (Source: Anderton, Centennial College, 2020)

Regulating the internet is an issue of concern for most Canadians. The majority of Canadians (60%) believe that the government should step in to address **disinformation** and data privacy issues created by social media platforms (Wong, 2019). These issues have been highlighted by Brexit, the Trump presidency, and the Cambridge Analytica scandal (covered in more detail in Media 2). A general distrust is developing towards social media companies, in particular Facebook. People are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with how big tech companies target them for political and sales advertising. This, along with the fact that the internet is now controlled by a few large companies, has challenged the idea of **net neutrality** as well as democracy more generally.

disinformation: "Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country" (UNESCO, 2021).

net neutrality: "The concept that all data on the internet should be treated equally by corporations, such as internet service providers [ISPs], and governments, regardless of content, user, platform, application or device" (Kenton, 2020).



GO DEEPER

This video on big data by *The Guardian* explains how data is gathered on individuals. It also explains what companies can do with this information, such as target advertisements and political campaigns, or predict your future actions. (Source: The Guardian, 2019)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji18sDbWI_k&feature=youtu.be

In this video, senior reporter and policy editor Russell Brandom explains how the end of net neutrality has given big companies the power to control internet access and streaming services. (Source: The Verge, 2018)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIULYHz6BWA

After watching the videos on big data and net neutrality, do you think our role as global citizens is being challenged by big tech companies? Why or why not?



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Media and Advertising

Advertising is the primary way media companies make money. Because of this, advertisers have great control over the content of media, as well as the owners of media companies. As explained in Robert McChesney's Rich Media, Poor Democracy, **media conglomerates** now own many different types of companies. These may include publishing companies, promotion companies, production companies, television and radio stations, and newspapers. This is called **vertical integration**. It allows media conglomerates to maximize profits by a process called "**synergy**," which involves the following:

media conglomerate: A media company that owns many other media companies.

vertical integration: The control of two or more stages of media production by one media company.

synergy: When two or more media companies work together to produce and control one brand.

Cross-production

This refers to how conglomerates turn movies into books; books into movies; movie music into soundtracks; hit movies into TV shows, etc. Because media conglomerates own companies that create different types of media content, they can take one product and find many ways to profit from it.

Cross-promotion

This refers to when a corporation promotes their entertainment product (movie, book, etc.) within their own media outlets. For example, a movie production company may promote their movie on a television "entertainment" show or news program owned by the same company. Deals may be made with food companies and restaurant chains to have the characters appear on cereal boxes, "kids' meals," toys, bed sheets, video games, etc. Some of these companies might also be part of the same media conglomerate. This means the profits stay with the same company, another example of **vertical integration**. Disney is a good example of a powerful media company that uses cross-promotion for their products and branding.

vertical integration: The control of two or more stages of media production by one media company.



Image by Monique Pinto on Pexels



Image by Eno Eltora on Pexels

Blockbusters

Movie productions can cost hundreds of millions of dollars. This makes them very risky and expensive. That risk is reduced if the production company is owned by a media conglomerate. The conglomerate has the ability to aggressively promote the film. It can make sure it gets good reviews in the newspapers, magazines, and television media it owns. It can advertise and promote it widely. Therefore, big media corporations can help reduce risk and guarantee their products make money.

In the 1990s in both the US and Canada, governments removed some regulations on media companies. This allowed them to merge different media sectors together to create media conglomerates. As new technologies emerged, these too were taken over by media conglomerates. This deregulation was supposed to promote competition. However, it caused media companies to overpower and buy competing companies. So, in fact, it reduced competition. The 1996 Telecommunications Act made it possible for corporations to own large segments of the media sector. As a result, deregulation benefited these businesses more than the public.



GO DEEPER

Media theorist Robert McChesney and media scholar Mark Crispin Miller demonstrate how conglomerates influence media content in this film. They show how power in the hands of a few produces a system of media that feeds into consumerism and biased news reporting. (Source: Smith et al., 2003)

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Manufacturing Consent: The Five Filters

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman are American media analysts and educators. They argue that corporate media uses five "filters" to determine what is considered "newsworthy." These filters are: corporate ownership, advertising, sourcing, negative responses to a media statement or program ("flak"), and creating polar opposites.

Corporate ownership

Due to **media consolidation**, a small number of large corporations control the media. Major media corporations are very large companies seeking to make money, and they directly influence editorial content. Chomsky and Herman remind us that very wealthy and politically connected people sit on the boards of these corporations.

media consolidation: The process by which the ownership of media is concentrated into the hands of a small number of large corporations.

Advertising

Advertising is essential to the success of any newspaper or television station. It is how they make money. Because media outlets want to attract and keep their advertisers, they are often biased towards their business interests. Chomsky and Herman point out that corporations that buy major advertising space can influence what content is printed or broadcast. These large companies have the power to withdraw their advertising dollars if they disagree with editorial content.

Sourcing

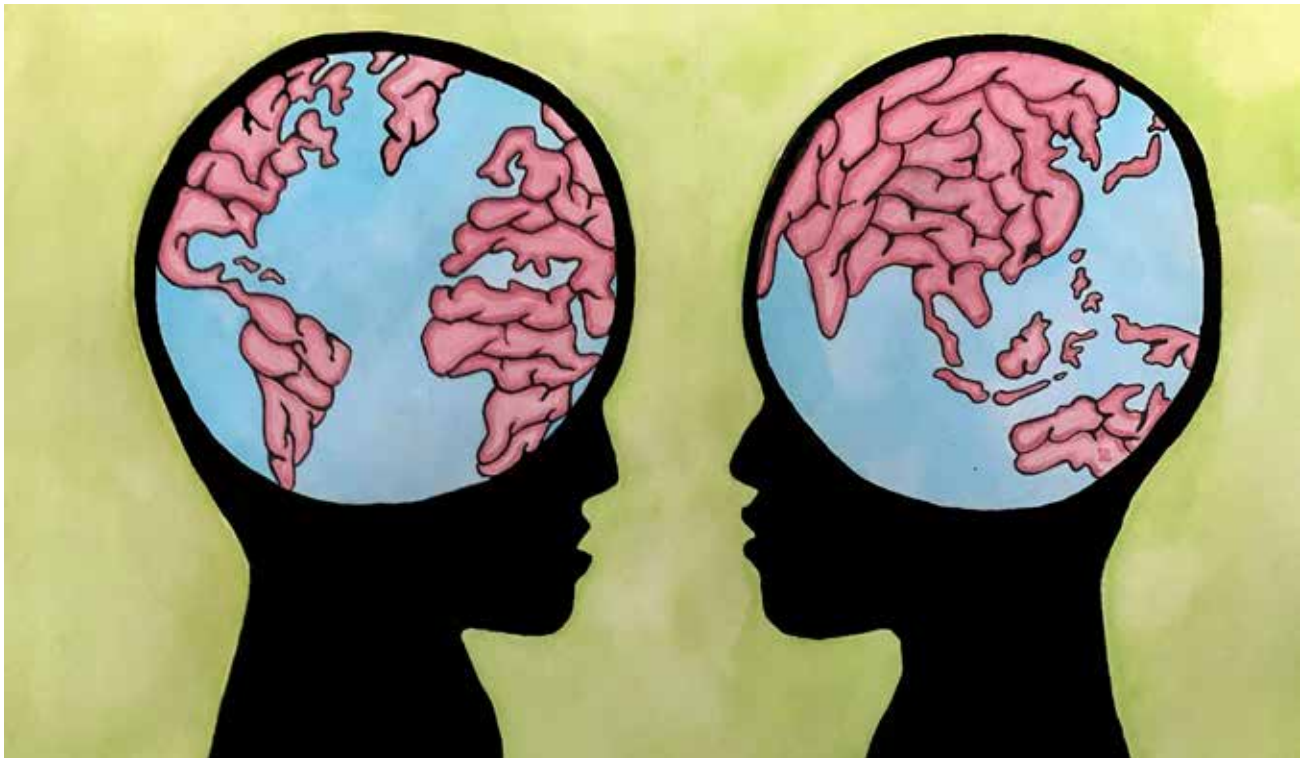
Sourcing is where media outlets get their news information. For example, the media gets information about important issues involving the government from government sources. This means that this information is highly controlled and regulated. Governments also control media through the laws they create. These laws might protect public interest or promote competition among media outlets. Those who control and regulate the media can influence what stories and information are presented in the news.

Flak

"Flak" refers to negative responses to a media statement or program. It may take the form of letters, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches, and legislation. It includes any type of complaint, threat, and punishment. These responses may be highly organized by a group or independent actions of individuals. For example, governments and advertisers can control media content by providing inaccurate, misleading, or biased information. They can threaten to pull their business (ads). In the case of the government, it can cut off their sources of information if they don't cooperate. They can also threaten media companies with lawsuits (libel) and forced public apologies.

Creating polar opposites

This filter refers to the ability of the media to create a perceived enemy or "other." Major media outlets may create a story of "us" versus "them," or "good" versus "evil." This influences the public to pick a side. Usually, the public is encouraged to side with the position of the government or corporations and support their goals. These goals might be to buy more products (consumerism) or to support a political agenda. For example, in Canada the oil industry in Alberta is often portrayed in the media as benefiting the country's economic interests. The Green Party of Canada (concerned with the environmental issues related to big oil) is shown as not representing national interests.



"A Conversation" by Zia Foley is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

GO DEEPER

In this video, the five filters of media are explored in relation to the propaganda model from Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's writing in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (1988).*

https://youtu.be/34LGPIXvU5M

Summary

In this module, we examined how media is defined, the importance of critical media literacy, media as a social structure, media bias, regulation and consolidation, and the influence of advertising and news coverage on our understanding of social and global issues.



KEY CONCEPTS

Bechdel test	A simple test to determine the representation and inclusion of well-rounded female characters in films and TV.
big data	"Extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally [by computers] to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions" ("Big data," n.d.).
consumerism	An ideology that connects our happiness to the things we buy, own, and consume.
critical media literacy	The ability to analyze and evaluate how media messages influence our beliefs and behaviours. In this process, viewers are not just recipients of media messages. They actively critique media content.
discrimination	The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.
disinformation	"Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country" (UNESCO, 2021).
dominant discourses	How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.
dominant ideologies	Ideologies that are particularly influential in shaping our ideas, values, and beliefs because they are supported by powerful groups.
First Peoples	Peoples indigenous to Canada; includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

global village	The idea that the entire world is becoming more interconnected because of advances in technology. This makes it possible to deal with the world as if all areas of it were local.
media	A social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience.
media bias	The act of favouring one perspective over others by the creators of media messages.
media conglomerate	A media company that owns many other media companies.
media consolidation	The process by which the ownership of media is concentrated into the hands of a small number of large corporations.
media messages	The main idea or moral of the story that is communicated by the content and type of media, such as in a television show, an advertisement, a news article, a song, etc.
media regulation	Government control of mass media through laws that may protect the public interest or promote competition among media outlets.
media representations	The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.
media text	Refers not just to words but also images, sounds, video, taken as a whole message.
minoritized	Experiencing discrimination and other disadvantages compared to members of the dominant group.
net neutrality	"The concept that all data on the internet should be treated equally by corporations, such as internet service providers [ISPs], and governments, regardless of content, user, platform, application or device" (Kenton, 2020).
norms	Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.

prejudice	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
racialized	The process of creating, preserving, and communicating a system of dominance based on race.
selection and omission	A process through which bias is expressed in the news, where editors may choose to share only some details of a story, while ignoring others.
socialization	The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.
stereotype	"A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person" or group ("Stereotype," n.d.).
synergy	When two or more media companies work together to produce and control one brand.
vertical integration	The control of two or more stages of media production by one media company.

Global Indigenous Example

The Indigenous Media and Communication Caucus at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was founded in 2016. It was created by Indigenous journalists and media practitioners from Bolivia, Guatemala, Nepal, and Venezuela. The aim of the caucus is to increase Indigenous voices and participation in media, as well as access to media. It also seeks to strengthen the use of Indigenous languages in the media within state and international legal frameworks.

Read this article to learn more about the caucus. (Source: Sunuwar, 2019)

https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-media-caucus-amplifies-indigenous-voices-globally

You can visit the caucus website here. (Source: Indigenous Media Caucus, n.d.)

https://www.indigenousmediacaucus.org/



Image (2018) by Indigenous Media Caucus & Cultural Survival, © All Rights Reserved. Used with permission.

Global Citizenship Example

In this module, we learned how big data has created issues with disinformation and privacy rights. However, it can also be used to identify social problems and solutions. For example, access to clean cooking fuel is a huge problem in India. The traditional cooking method can expose a person to toxins equivalent to smoking 400 cigarettes. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas partnered with SocialCops to bring clean cooking fuel to 80 million women below the poverty line in just four years. To do this, they used big data to identity the need for liquefied petroleum centres (LPGs) in rural communities in India.

To learn more, watch this TedX video. (Source: TedX Talks, 2017a)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6WKt6fJiso

You can also visit the SocialCops website here. (Source: "Data to decisions," n.d.)

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Social Analysis Example

Social structures and institutions are a way of organizing society and creating patterns of social behaviour. As we have learned, the media reinforces dominant ideologies. Because of this, it is important to approach a social analysis of media using the following questions:

Who has created the message? Why? Who benefits from this message? Who loses? What techniques are used to attract my attention? How might different people understand this message differently from me? What are the roles, norms, and expectations communicated by this message? What is being left out, hidden, or omitted altogether? What types of representations are considered valuable or desirable, and which are not? How has media influenced what I believe, how I think, and how I behave?

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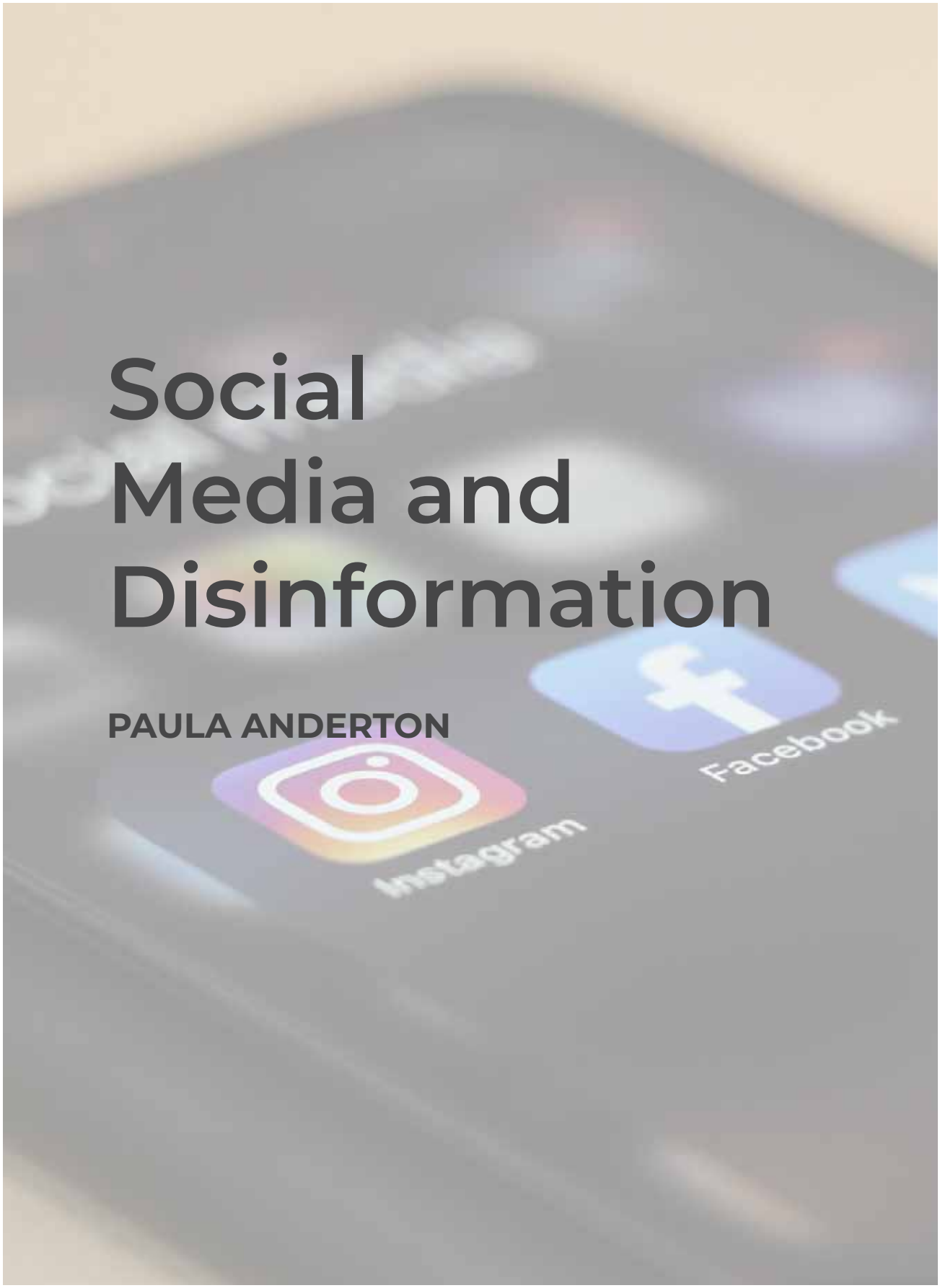
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Social Media and Disinformation

PAULA ANDERTON

Real or Fake?


The Real News Network
Sponsored
ONTARIO COLLEGES EXPOSED STUDENTS TO CORONAVIRUS
Ontario colleges exposed students to coronavirus weeks before they shut their doors. A management source from a college in the Greater Toronto Area claims that several students were known to have the COVID-19 virus while still attending classes, exposing thousands of other students, faculty, and staff to infection. Coronavirus can survive on hard surfaces for a month, including door handles, desks, and walls. In addition, several of these students lived in campus residence, a high-risk environment for spreading the virus. At least one international student has died from COVID-19 after returning home. It is not known how many students contracted the virus before the colleges closed their doors.
43
View 28 more comments
User
I can't believe they would do this to their own students! Is there no accountability left in the world anymore?

THIS IS FAKE NEWS! The entire story is made up. Could you tell this news story is false while you were reading it? Or did you assume it was true? Here are the clues that this is fake news:

- Why is the information so vague—which colleges are involved? How many is "several students"?
- "A management source"—how do you know there was an actual source for this information?
- "Coronavirus can survive on hard surfaces for a month." Not true—look it up!
- How do you know the "international student" named in the story died from COVID-19 that they got at a Toronto-area college—or if that student *even exists*?
- How do you know any students contracted the virus at college before they "closed their doors"? Notice how this is implied without any proof.
- How can you be sure *any* part of this news story is true? There are no individuals quoted or named, no schools named, and the source of this story is unknown.

This "fake news" story is designed to scare you and make you angry without providing any evidence that it is true. Fake news is a common type of disinformation that counts on you to tell your friends and family about it without asking questions. We can't rely on our emotions when we are reading information online—we need to use our heads! We need to think before we react to information. That is what this module is about.

Media literacy on the internet is vital for understanding how political, social, and economic groups use the online space. This module will look at the new realities of social media and how it can both bring people together and divide them. This includes an examination of "big data" privacy issues, and the online battle over facts and truth—information vs. disinformation. Global citizenship is based on the interconnectedness of people around the world, and understanding the impact of social media is vital for our exploration of social justice and equity.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Let's ask ourselves some questions. If you read a news item on your social media feed about a celebrity who is abusing drugs, would you believe it? How about a news story linking refugees to terrorism—does that make sense to you? Did you believe the COVID news story that opened this module? How do you know if something's true? Because it appears in what looks like a professionally produced news story, or maybe you've heard someone else talk about it...? We all tend to believe what we want to believe, it's called bias, and there are people who take advantage of that to manipulate us. Sometimes this manipulation is intended to control our political views. Sometimes it's just to get our attention online so someone can make money from the pages we visit. When half-truths or falsehoods are presented as facts, this is called disinformation, and social media is the easiest and most effective place to spread it. This module will introduce you to what disinformation is, show you how it works, and give you some tools to spot it and resist its influence on you. Our access to a huge range of information in the online space is a good thing, but we need to be smart about how we read and use that information.

Social Media and Public Opinion



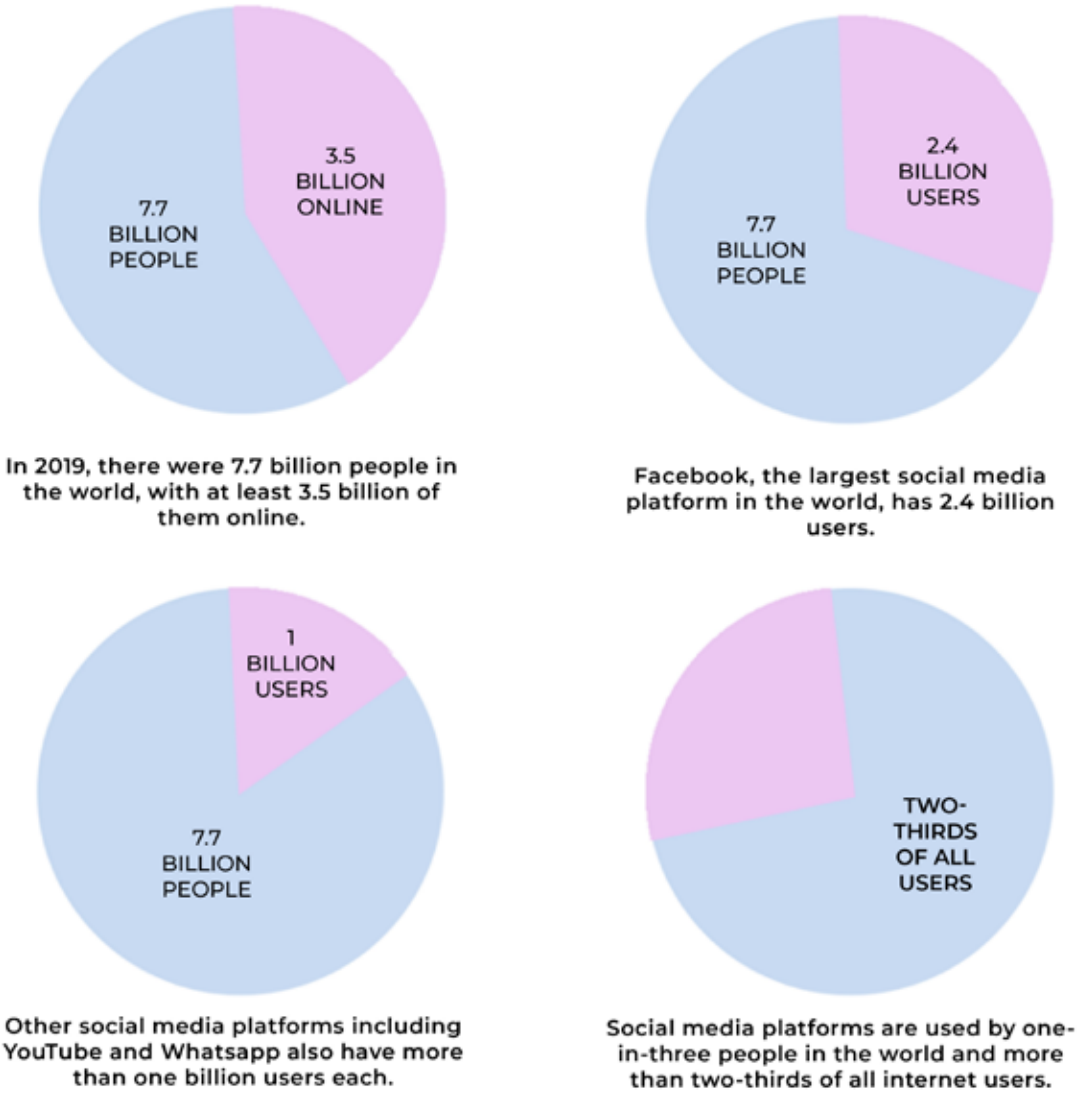
Image by Thomas Ulrich from Pixabay.

Social media is the new battlefield for **public opinion**. The "public" is you and everyone you know. On the internet, many individuals and groups try to shape your opinions, whether it's advertisers competing with one another to sell you products, or politicians trying to get your support.

Today, social media platforms compete with traditional information providers like newspapers and television as sources for current events. If you use social media to stay

in touch with friends or keep up with popular trends, you may wonder why you should care about political content on your favourite site. Let's start by looking at some statistics on social media use, globally.

public opinion: The opinion or attitude of the majority of people regarding a particular matter ("Public opinion," 2020).



(Data Source: Ortiz-Ospina, 2019)

Almost half of the world's population is online, and a significant number of those people use social media. Clearly platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Whatsapp are impacting the opinions and ideologies of citizens around the globe. Given these numbers, it is important to consider who is creating that impact on opinions, and how they are doing it. We should also consider how this is affecting social institutions like democratic government, free speech, and public information.

Social Media and Interest Groups



Image by stux on Pixabay

Social media has a global reach far greater than any other source for information. This makes social media platforms a powerful vehicle for **interest groups**. Interest groups use social media to promote their agendas to politicians and the general public. Using social media, interest groups can impact the outcome of national elections and important policy decisions that affect the lives of citizens—including those of us who just use social media for fun. That is why it is vital that you understand the damaging effect of online disinformation.

See the TED Talk by journalist Carole Cadwalladr in Case Study #1 for an example of how England's "Brexit" vote was impacted by social media.

interest groups: Associations whose members share similar concerns and try to influence public policy to benefit themselves or their cause. Their goal could be a policy that benefits group members or one part of society (e.g. government subsidies for farmers) or a policy that has a broader public purpose (e.g. improving air quality). They attempt to achieve their goals by lobbying—which means applying pressure to the people who make the policies. Other names for interest groups are special interest groups or pressure groups (Thomas, 2017).



CASE STUDY #1: SOCIAL MEDIA AND BREXIT

Major political movements can be influenced by interest groups using social media. A recent example is "Brexit" in the United Kingdom (UK).

In June 2016, the government of the UK asked its citizens to vote on whether to stay in the **European Union (EU)** or leave. The results of the **referendum** were 54% of the British population voted in favour of leaving the EU. This has created controversy and uncertainty over the economic and social future of the United Kingdom. This decision will have an enormous impact on the lives of both British and European citizens, and the economies of their countries, for years to come. How did the citizens of the UK make their decision? Where did they get their information about it?

Watch the TED Talk by Carole Cadwalladr for insights into the impact social media made on the Brexit referendum (Source: Cadwalladr, 2019).

https://www.ted.com/talks/carole_cadwalladr_facebook_s_role_in_brexit_and_the_threat_to_democracy?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

In this video, Carole Cadwalladr, a Welsh journalist, explains her investigation into why average British people voted "yes" to leaving the European Union. She discovered that Facebook was a huge influence on voters. This is where voters read anti-EU disinformation, purchased by right-wing interest groups. Cadwalladr explains that these interest groups, who posted lies and inaccuracies about the EU, are impossible to trace due to Facebook's policies.

"Case Study #1: Social Media and Brexit" by Paula Anderton, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Do you think the Brexit result could have gone differently if British citizens knew that much of the information they were reading about it on social media was designed to manipulate them to vote "yes"?



European Union (EU): The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade, which means goods can move between member countries with fewer restrictions or extra charges. The EU also allows free movement of people, to live and work in whichever EU member country they choose.

referendum: "A vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question" ("Referendum," n.d.).

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

In the next section, we'll do some social analysis on this Brexit case to try and uncover how fake news could have impacted the attitudes and votes of regular people. You'll see examples of how disinformation could be used on platforms like Facebook to sway British citizens towards voting in favour of leaving the European Union. The examples in the next section were written for this module to demonstrate how fake news can be created around certain key issues like immigration, to trigger the pre-existing fear and biases of viewers. Biases and fears are powerful emotions that make us vulnerable to believing disinformation. In the case of Brexit, fake news that used common fears and biases to nudge British voters in a certain direction may have played a significant role in the outcome of the referendum, as Carole Cadwalladr explains in her TED Talk.

Social Analysis: Disinformation, Ideology and Brexit

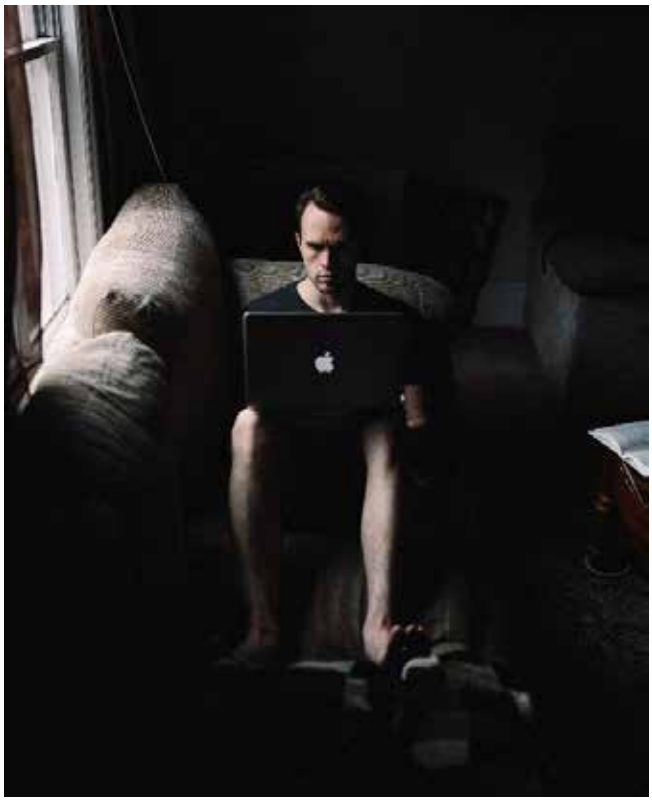


Image by Andrew Neel on Unsplash

Why is disinformation so effective? Because people want to believe it, especially when it confirms their own opinions. Recall from the Ideology module that ideologies include the beliefs, ideas, and values of individuals. The case studies you've read in this module are examples of fake news and disinformation aimed at people with "**right-wing**" beliefs and values. Those same people can spread that disinformation to other people who think the same way. They are hearing what they want to hear and ignoring the facts. It is important to note that people with any ideology are prone to believe what confirms their own views.

Let's apply this to the Brexit case study. How could fake news on Facebook influence people to vote in favour of leaving the European Union (EU)? Here are some examples of how this could work:

- If you are **nationalistic**, fake news about the threat that immigration poses to England's security could sway you to vote in favour of leaving the EU and closing England's borders.
- If you already believe that England's traditions and identity are threatened by immigration, then fake news could confirm this—again, you'd vote to leave.

right-wing/left-wing: Right-wing and left-wing represent contrasting approaches to political and social change. Left-wing views welcome change that will create more equitable conditions in society. They support a greater role for government and are collectivist—in other words, they give priority to the group over the individual. Social democrats and feminists would be considered to have left-wing ideologies. Right-wing thinking favours the individual over the group, and it sees equality as undesirable and unattainable. Right-wingers resist change and support the existing social order. They tend to believe in capitalism and that the government should not interfere in people's lives. Conservatism and neoconservatism are examples of right-wing thinking (Chet Singh, Centennial College).

- If you were recently unemployed and you were angry about it, then fake news stories could lay the blame on the EU for your job loss—yet again, another vote for Brexit!

> **nationalism:** Refers to a set of shared values and myths of a nation or group. Nationalism can be political, cultural or racial. People who support a nationalist ideology believe their nation is superior to others. This can lead them to marginalizing those not belonging to the nation or group. They may even regard others as enemies and go to war or commit genocide under certain circumstances. Nationalists are inward looking and, therefore, opposed to internationalism or globalization unless it is favourable to their interests (Chet Singh, Centennial College).

Let's put the points above in some real perspective. A study by King's College London's Policy Institute compared what British people believe about immigration with the actual facts about immigration in their country. They asked a group of British citizens if they believed that European migrants to England received more welfare payments than they paid in taxes. In other words, did they take more out of the system than they put in—a typical argument used in favour of Brexit. The answer, from Britain's Migration Advisory Committee, is:

> In 2016/17, "EEA [European] migrants as a whole are estimated to have paid £4.7bn more in taxes than they received in welfare payments and public services." (Dunt, 2018)

Converting that to Canadian money, European migrants to Britain paid approximately eight billion Canadian dollars more into their tax system than they took out in welfare payments and public services! Yet, of the people polled in this study who voted in favour of Brexit, only 16% got this right. Most wrongly believed that immigrants cost the British government more than they contributed. You can see there is a disconnection between the perception of European immigration to Britain and the reality of it—and this type of misunderstanding can be fueled by disinformation, as it was in the Brexit vote.

When we are emotional on an issue, our bias is firmly in control of our thinking. Disinformation capitalizes on that. It uses our own ideologies to bend and shape our opinions and our votes, regardless of the facts.



GO DEEPER

Read the post by Ian Dunt on Politics.co.uk for more examples of how perception did not line up with reality in the Brexit vote. (Source: Dunt, 2018)

https://www.politics.co.uk/blogs/2018/10/29/new-study-shows-brexit-is-drenched-in-fake-news

Disinformation and Democracy



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Carole Cadwalladr's TED Talk explains how interest groups influenced Brexit voters in Britain using social media. They did this by spreading **disinformation**—false information used to deceive or manipulate people.

> **disinformation:** "Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country" (UNESCO, 2021).
>
> **fake news:** False stories, usually online, that seem like genuine news and can be used to sway the opinion of the viewer.

One form of disinformation is **fake news**. This refers to false stories, usually online, that seem like genuine news and can be used to sway the opinion of the viewer. As the Brexit case illustrates, disinformation and fake news can seriously affect the functioning of a democracy. This section will explore what this means for you, as a national and global citizen. We'll start by defining democracy, then look at the role of information in a democratic society.

What We Mean By Democracy

In this section, we use the word **democracy** to mean representative government. This is also how it is commonly used in media. In other words, "democracies" are countries where citizens elect their governments to represent their interests.

However, this common definition of democracy is simplistic. It does not reflect the reality that many groups are not represented by their governments, even in Canada. For example, Indigenous peoples, poor people, and other groups may not be recognized nor served by their elected governments to the same extent as privileged groups within this country. Dominant groups have greater power, even in elected governments.

Citizens need information to fight this **inequity**. We also need tools to identify disinformation designed to mislead us. Only then can we build a fairer democracy or even a better system of government. When we explore the "threat to democracy" represented by disinformation in this section, it should not be from a perspective that this system of

democracy: On a basic level, it is the ability of citizens to participate in fair and open elections to choose their representatives in government. Another perspective argues that democracy must function beyond elections by involving citizens in ongoing government decisions that affect them.

inequity: Lacking equity; unfair and injust.

policies: "A set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party" ("Policies," n.d.).

accountable: To be responsible for actions and decisions and able to explain the reasons for them.

government is perfect, but that information is vital to fixing it.

Media and Government

Media plays a central role in the democratic system of government. Citizens rely on information from a variety of media sources to make informed decisions. These decisions might include which government **policies** to support, which government actions to oppose, and who to vote for in elections. Without accurate information from the media, citizens can't hold their governments **accountable** for their actions, or choose another government to replace them.

As you saw in the first media literacy module, bias in the media cannot be avoided. Even the most reliable sources of journalism select and omit information based on ideology or because they have limited space. The only way citizens in a democracy can get a balanced picture of what is going on in their countries and the world around them is to access a wide variety of media sources. Each source will contribute information that adds to a complete picture of events.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

It is important to note that the term "fake news" has been used widely, by people with different definitions of what it means and different motivations for using it. The way it is used in this module, to mean misleading or false information presented as fact, is a definition that aims to distinguish untrustworthy online news from genuine news from reliable sources. As you will see as you read on in this module, this definition of fake news includes disinformation produced for political reasons and also for profit. The term, however, has created backlash—many sources of fake news accuse genuine journalists of the same thing! Donald Trump is famous for making statements that don't pass fact-checking, yet he is also famous for accusing reputable news agencies like the Washington Post and New York Times of be-

ing “fake news” sources whenever they criticize his actions. Accusing an information source of being “fake news” is a weapon that can be used to discredit and undermine. Sometimes the mere accusation is enough to make people believe it, especially when it feeds their own biases. It is important that you make up your own mind about fake news, using critical thinking. For more information about the debate about the term “fake news” and its impact on democracy, read the article from The Conversation in the Go Deeper section of this module.



GO DEEPER

Read this article to learn more about how the term “fake news” may be hurting democracy. (Source: Habgood-Coote, 2018)

https://theconversation.com/the-term-fake-news-is-doing-great-harm-100406

Democracy and Information



Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

“Voters can keep their governments **accountable** only if they are informed about what their governments are doing. In a modern democracy, such information comes mainly through the media” (Kennedy & Prat, 2018).

accountable: To be responsible for actions and decisions and able to explain the reasons for them.

Democracy and Online News

Democracy depends on free access to information through a variety of media platforms. Most disinformation is spread online, through social media, blogs, and fake-news sites. These sources take advantage of the open nature of the internet. On the internet, anyone can post content for millions of people without the scrutiny and fact-checking (see links in Go Deeper) that traditional media sources undergo. Consider what this means as you look at these statistics from 2019 about online news consumption of Canadians:

> The most recent data shows that the internet was the leading media outlet used by Canadians for news, with 77 percent going online for news on a typical weekday compared to just 42 percent reading news in print publications. Further, 59 percent of Canadian consumers use the internet to get the news at least once daily. (Watson, 2019)
>
> https://www.statista.com/topics/4779/news-in-canada/
>
> https://www.statista.com/statistics/800190/frequency-use-internet-for-news/



Image by Kaboompics .com from Pexels

The combination of widespread online news consumption with unrestricted disinformation poses a threat to democracies, worldwide. Citizens cannot debate, protest, or make informed voting decisions if their online information is corrupted by disinformation and fake news.

Watch the video on "Disinformation and Democracy" to learn how disinformation threatens democracies. It also describes how the European Union is trying to address this problem (Source: European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018).

https://youtu.be/-KH1uj1ZB3A

This video features Naja Bentzen, a policy analyst for the European Parliamentary Research Service. She explains how disinformation on social media is designed to deceive

us for a specific purpose. For example, it may aim to distract us from real issues, make us believe something untrue, or undermine our governments. The European Union is developing tools and policies to stop the spread of disinformation. These include fact-checking units, software to uncover fake photos and videos, and pressure on social media platforms like Facebook to take responsibility for fake news on their sites.



GO DEEPER

"Fact-checking" resources on the internet:

https://guides.library.umass.edu/fakenews/factcheck
https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/

Fake News: An Old Story in a New Format

Picture this:

> Europe—43,000 years ago. A Neanderthal encounters a new group of people—Homo sapiens—moving across the landscape he calls home. After enduring a visual inspection and a few pokes with a finger, our Neanderthal picks up a stick and draws in the dirt. It's a picture of a deer. The Homo sapien group instantly recognizes the animal. The Neanderthal points excitedly in the direction where the herd can be found. As the Homo sapiens move off towards the new hunting ground, the Neanderthal watches them, then hurries back to his family. He knows that there are no deer in the direction he pointed...

We will never know who created the first "fake news" story. Perhaps it was a wily Neanderthal protecting his resources. One thing is certain: humans love stories, and that makes us susceptible to untruths.

False stories, particularly **sensationalized** ones that generate fear or amazement, have always been effective at rapidly spreading and have sometimes even influenced the course of history. This section will dig deeper into fake news. We'll look at why and how fake news is made, some of the different forms it can take, and how to spot it.

sensationalism: The use in media of shocking or exciting headlines and content to attract readers, with little or no regard for facts or accuracy. News that is sensationalized is designed to trigger emotion. This will often generate more interest than fact-based news that appeals to reason.



GO DEEPER

Read this article for historical examples of fake news, some of which have had terrible consequences that persist today. (Source: Soll, 2016)

https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/fake-news-history-long-violent-214535



CASE STUDY #2: HOW AND WHY FAKE NEWS IS MADE

What motivates people to produce fake news and disinformation? Why would anyone want to do it? The examples, below, show how fake news can be used for both political purposes and profit.

Example 1: Fake news—real profit

It's 2016, and somewhere in Eastern Europe, a jobless, tech-savvy student is thinking of a way to make money. The answer may be online. He knows that Google, YouTube and other advertisers will pay him for "views" if he can set up a website that generates interest. He notices that news stories about celebrities have a strong following, so perhaps he can grab some of that web traffic.

Our student searches the Internet and finds that the more outrageous celebrity news stories get more views—who's had plastic surgery, who has a drug problem, etc. He locates those stories on other sites, makes minor modifications to them like changing the headlines or a few details, and reposts them on his site as original, celebrity news. He even finds celebrity stories on humour websites that are openly fictional and reposts them as genuine news. He mixes real stories in with the fakes—a formula that makes his website look credible. He might also add a scandalous headline like "Tom Hanks Secret Sex Tape" to attract attention. This is known as **clickbait**—a headline designed to be so irresistible to viewers that it will get them to follow the link to its source—even if that headline is fake, like this one.

Services like Google write algorithms or computer "rules" to spot plagiarized and stolen content. Our entrepreneur gets around this by modifying copy and by blending content from multiple online sources into "new" material. Google's algorithms give its users a false sense of security—they begin to believe that Google's systems ensure that fake news is screened. But our enterprising student has fooled these security codes by changing the content just enough that it gets through undetected.

As his celebrity stories start to get noticed, he opens social media pages that drive even more traffic to his website. As the number of views multiplies, advertisers take notice and start paying him for space. With very little time and investment, he's making significant money from his celeb-info business. Once views number in the millions, Google, Facebook, etc., have little motivation to remove his content—it makes them money, too. Nor do any of his advertisers require verification or fact-checking on any of his content, for the same reason.

Our online entrepreneur steals news, manufactures news, and repackages news about celebrities with one motivation—to make money. He has no particular interest in celebrities or the truth of his stories about them. His name is nowhere on his sites or any of the posts. If he gets into trouble, he can disappear in the time it takes to press "delete." All in all, it's pretty easy money.

Example 2: Trick or tweet—fake news goes viral

A citizen in Texas has been hearing about local protests against Donald Trump. While driving, he notices something that sets off an alarm in his head. He sees a group of unmarked buses arrive close to the location where an anti-Trump event is taking place in his city. He concludes this can't be a coincidence. The buses must be bringing in anti-Trump protesters to inflate the numbers at the rally. The implications are clear. Local anti-Trump rallies are a deception. The numbers of protesters are made to look greater than they actually are by a hidden organization working against Trump. He posts photos of the buses, along with his theory about them, on Twitter.

In the space of half a day, his tweet is "liked" and reposted thousands of times. This Texas businessman with a Twitter following of 40 people has spawned a **conspiracy theory** about a shadowy, anti-Trump organization, and it will go **viral** within one day.

Within two days of his initial post, other social media services pick up his tweet and rewrite it, adding to the theory. As the story spreads through the internet from multiple sources, it starts to look less like a local tweet and more like genuine news. Facebook pages, discussion forums, and websites repeat it. This theory about paid, anti-Trump protesters is redistributed thousands of times, particularly among online sites that support Trump. More theories spring up about who is

funding these "fake protests" and paying "fake protesters." Donald Trump, himself, tweets his support of the theory.

Fox News contacts the bus company for comment. The company's marketing director states clearly that their buses were not involved in the anti-Trump protests. Meanwhile, the Texas businessman who posted the tweet that started it all admits that he has no real evidence that the buses were connected with the protests. It simply seemed suspicious to him that they were in the same area of the city.

Basic fact-checking reveals this conspiracy theory to be false. The buses, it turns out, were bringing people to a computer software convention. But the truth doesn't spread the way the fake news story did. Thousands of Trump supporters still believe there is an organized, well-funded plan to undermine him using paid fake protesters to make the anti-Trump movement look bigger than it is. They do not see the facts, or choose to ignore them.

"Case Study #2: How and Why Fake News is Made" by Paula Anderton, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

clickbait: A headline designed to grab the attention of viewers and entice them to follow the link to its source.

conspiracy theory: "An attempt to explain harmful or tragic events as the result of the actions of a small, powerful group. Such explanations reject the accepted narrative surrounding those events; indeed, the official version may be seen as further proof of the conspiracy" (Reid, n.d.).

viral: "Spreading or becoming popular very quickly through communication from one person to another, especially on the internet" ("Viral," n.d.).

Critically Thinking about Fake News

The two case studies, above, illustrate several key points about disinformation like fake news:

- Much fake news is created for money.
- Fake news is also created for political reasons.
- Sensational stories are easier to "**monetize**" on the internet, as they attract more views and, thus, more advertisers.
- People with ideological biases will embrace and spread fake news if it reinforces their views.
- Conspiracy theories are easy to create and spread online.
- People are willing to believe and spread fake news and conspiracies without checking the facts.

monetize: When applied to social media activity, to monetize is to generate revenue from web content, usually by attracting advertisers to the site.



GO DEEPER

Read *The New York Times* article about the actual people and events depicted in Example 2: Trick or tweet—fake news goes viral. (Source: Maheshwari, 2016)

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer

Deepfakes—The Future of "Fake"?

The last section illustrated how simple it is to misinform people through social media. If it's that easy to fake news and information online, you may find relief in the thought that at least video doesn't lie—or does it? Video technology is now so sophisticated that virtually anyone can create fake video, or "**deepfakes**," that look convincing.

Deepfake videos can be used to entertain, or harm. It may be funny to see actor Nicholas Cage's face on Lois Lane's body. However, it is also disturbing to know that actors' faces can be dropped into pornographic videos - as can the faces of regular people. In terms of politics, the implications for election disinformation are grave. Candidates can be "deep-

faked," appearing to say things that are highly offensive and damaging to their campaigns. Cybercriminals are also using deepfake technology to defraud businesses for huge sums of money. Their victims include large corporations with sophisticated security systems.

Watch the following videos to see how deepfakes work and the implications of this technology.

> **deepfake:** "A term for videos and presentations enhanced by artificial intelligence and other modern technology to present falsified results. One of the best examples of deepfakes involves the use of image processing to produce video of celebrities, politicians or others saying or doing things that they never actually said or did" ("Deepfake," n.d.).

It's Getting Harder to Spot a Deep Fake Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLoI9hAX9dw

(Source: Bloomberg QuickTake Original, 2018)

Video Description: This video by Bloomberg summarizes how deepfakes are made and the ways they can be used to harm individuals and public figures. It also describes the positive uses of this type of technology, like creating artificial voices for people who can't speak due to injury or illness.

Can Facebook and Google Detect And Stop Deepfakes?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YpoYvhVmDw

(Source: CNBC, 2019)

Video Description: This video by CNBC describes the danger of deepfake videos. This includes how they've been used for cybercrimes, political disinformation, and manipulating public opinion. The video explains the measures Google and Facebook are taking to try and identify deepfakes on their social media platforms.

Fake News and Video—Where Do We Go from Here?

By now you may be wondering how to spot fake news and video. Clearly, this type of disinformation can be very convincing. If you aren't an expert on the topic, how can you tell if news and information you see online is real? What can you do to distinguish a conspiracy theory from a factual report? With their reputations at stake, social media giants like Facebook and Google are hurrying to develop software that will detect fake news, especially malicious and damaging articles and videos. However, relying solely on the platforms that spread fake news to find a solution is not an approach you can count on. Using your own critical thinking skills is the best defense against disinformation of any kind. Your brain is the best tech for spotting fake news. The next section has some tools to help you hone your fake-spotting skills.

Disinformation Online: How to Recognize It

The infographic below, from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, outlines some strategies you can use when confronted with online news, video, or information. You'll notice that some of these approaches require extra effort, perhaps following links or investigating sources. If you find yourself thinking you don't have time or you can't be bothered to do this fact-checking, stay flexible and critical. When you can't rely on information, rely on yourself. Here are things to keep in mind:

- **Prioritize:** You may not have time to fact-check everything you see on social media, but you can commit to investigating information when it is important to you or has an impact on you.
- **Be bias-smart:** If you have a strong, immediate reaction to an online story, it may be triggering your unconscious biases. Don't buy in. Refuse to be vulnerable to manipulation of your emotions and beliefs.
- **Keep a healthy skepticism:** Your best defense against fake news is rational doubt. You may not have time to investigate, but you can maintain a position that you simply "don't know" if something is true or not—a solid stance when you are unsure of the facts.

In many ways, deepfake videos are harder to spot than fake news, especially as the artificial intelligence software that creates them gets better every year.

Watch this video, produced by the US Public Broadcasting Service, for information and tips on spotting deepfakes when you're watching video (Source: Above The Noise, 2019).

https://youtu.be/Ro8b69VeL9U

This video from the American Public Broadcasting Service explains how deepfake videos are made and what methods viewers can use to detect them



GO DEEPER

This article from The Guardian has more information and tips for spotting deepfake videos. (Source: Sample, 2020)

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/13/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-you-spot-them



How to Spot Fake News by IFLA is licensed under a CC BY 4.0 license.



Activity—Challenge your fake-spotting skills

Take this quiz from the media learning site Channel One Media to see if you can spot the fake news story. (“Quiz: Can You Spot the Fake News Story?,” n.d.)

https://www.channelone.com/feature/quiz-can-you-spot-the-fake-news-story/

Big Data and Disinformation



Image by ev on Unsplash

In the first media module, you learned about "big data" and how it's used by tech companies, advertisers, and others. Big data isn't just used to sell you products. It is also used to sell you ideas. Collecting information about people's behaviours reveals their ideologies and biases—and how to manipulate them. In the Brexit case study, you learned how English Facebook users were targeted for disinformation and fake news about leaving the European Union. Big data can be used to create disinformation for political purposes: to sway your opinions and even your vote.

The most famous case of big data being used for political purposes in recent years is Cambridge Analytica. Read Case Study #3, below, to find out how Facebook leaked massive user information that may have impacted the 2016 US election.



CASE STUDY #3: CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

How could research that had been used to predict and stop the recruitment of terrorists online influence a US election? In 2016, Cambridge Analytica, a UK political research firm, contributed to the campaign of Donald Trump by **profiling** and targeting Facebook users to sway votes. Watch the two videos to understand how this happened and how social media can be used to spread disinformation.

The first video, from The New York Times, explains how Cambridge Analytica

used research on Facebook users and their contacts to manipulate their political views without their consent (Source: The New York Times, 2018).

https://youtu.be/mrnXv-g4yKU

The second video, from the Wall Street Journal, explains how Facebook made it easy for outside parties to misuse user information (Source: Wall Street Journal, 2018). This led to the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the privacy debates that have followed.

https://youtu.be/U4qooWtovhU

Research from Cambridge University showed that you could predict a lot about people, including their political views, using their Facebook pages. One Cambridge professor, Aleksandr Kogan, developed an app to gather this information from Facebook users and their contacts.

When Cambridge Analytica went into business with Kogan, they purchased his information on millions of Facebook users. They then looked for potential pro-Trump voters and targeted them with disinformation that promoted racist views and conspiracy theories. These were designed to make them "vote Trump." Those Facebook users were unaware they were being politically manipulated.

In an interview for National Public Radio in the US, former research director at Cambridge Analytica Christopher Wylie explains why he risked his own career to expose his company:

> They targeted people who were more prone to conspiratorial thinking. They used that data, and they used social media more broadly, to first identify those people, and then engage those people, and really begin to craft what, in my view, was an insurgency [uprising] in the United States. (Gross, 2019)

"Case Study #3: Cambridge Analytica" by Paula Anderton, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

profiling: Online "profiling" is collecting information about internet users by tracking their online behaviour, including which sites they visit, comments they post and purchases they make. This reveals their interests, preferences, opinions and biases, information that is valuable to both advertisers and political interest groups—including those that produce fake news.



GO DEEPER

Read more about how Cambridge Analytica attempted to affect the 2016 American election:

Whistleblower Explains How Cambridge Analytica Helped Fuel U.S. 'Insurgency' (Source: Gross, 2019)

https://www.npr.org/2019/10/08/768216311/whistleblower-explains-how-cambridge-analytica-helped-fuel-u-s-insurgency

Mark Zuckerberg Apologises for Facebook's 'Mistakes' over Cambridge Analytica (Source: Wong, 2018)

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/21/mark-zuckerberg-response-facebook-cambridge-analytica

See another example of how Facebook was used to manipulate political views during elections in India and Pakistan:

Facebook Removes 'Inauthentic' Accounts for Posts About Indian Election, Pakistani Military (Source: Kalra & Reuters, 2019)

https://globalnews.ca/news/5117071/facebook-india-pakistan-fake-accounts/

Critically Thinking About Cambridge Analytica

The actions of Cambridge Analytica created a huge controversy. Some key questions were asked:

- Why was Facebook allowed to give away access to the personal information of millions of its users without them knowing about it?
- Does social media need to be regulated to protect the privacy of its users?
- How can we make social media less vulnerable to disinformation?
- How can we make sure social media can't be used to threaten democracy?

These issues are still being debated around the world.

After Cambridge Analytica, governments in the United States and Britain launched investigations into Facebook's actions. In 2015, Facebook changed its policies to prevent "**third party**" companies from accessing its user profiles without consent. Still, this issue is not settled.

The moment any of us log on to the internet, we are tracked and profiled. Our information is then bought and sold. This kind of "**competitive intelligence**" (see below), as it is known in the business world, has blurred the line between what consumers are willing to share about themselves and their private information.

third party: In the world of online data, a third party is a company or organization that gathers or purchases information about online users, often without their knowledge or consent.

competitive intelligence: "Competitive intelligence, sometimes referred to as corporate intelligence, refers to the ability to gather, analyze, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market factors that contribute to a business's competitive advantage" (Bloomenthal, 2020).

Competitive Intelligence



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Competitive intelligence is a type of research done in the business world. The term "intelligence" refers to information businesses gather to better understand their customers, which is often purchased from third parties. Businesses also gather or purchase intelligence about their competition and other factors like the economy, all in an effort to be successful. Just as political parties profile voters by following their social media pages, businesses profile consumers to understand how they can better sell them products.

In the business world, consumer **profiling** is considered a necessary practice, especially since the internet has increased competition for sales. The debate about what businesses should be allowed to know about you is detailed in the video from *The Guardian* called "Big Data: Why Should You Care?" from the first media module. The problem Cambridge Analytica brought to light is privacy on social media. In particular, it poses the question, who owns your information: you or the platform? This is an issue for social media giants like Facebook. These companies wish to keep their platforms open and free for the public by

monetizing their sites through advertising and selling information on their users. The downside is that this practice leaves social media open to be used by groups who post damaging disinformation.

Free access versus privacy—this may be the biggest issue facing social media in the 21st century. As yet, the issue of consumer rights and privacy versus the use of consumer information by third parties is still being debated worldwide.

profiling: Online "profiling" is collecting information about internet users by tracking their online behaviour, including which sites they visit, comments they post and purchases they make. This reveals their interests, preferences, opinions and biases, information that is valuable to both advertisers and political interest groups—including those that produce fake news.



GO DEEPER

Read this article from Futurity for an explanation of how "third parties" are watching us on the internet. (Source: Urton-Washington, 2016)

https://www.futurity.org/third-party-web-tracking-1230222-2/

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

From what you've read so far, you may be thinking that spotting fake news, deepfakes or other types of disinformation is not easy. That's true, but it's worth doing. A quick Google search of someone you see in a video blog can tell you a lot about who they are and what they stand for—before you believe what they say. You many find out they aren't very reliable or credible, and be glad you didn't re-post it! It's okay to be unsure of information you find online—what's not okay is to believe something just because it seems to make sense, or because it backs up your suspicions about something. You want to have opinions that are well-informed, not misinformed, and the only way to do that is to be willing to challenge your own assumptions, be willing to adjust or change your perspective, and not believe everything you see, read or hear online. Information that is balanced and accurate is necessary for you

to understand your world! None of us can cast a meaningful vote in an election, understand the causes and solutions for social problems, or even communicate with our fellow human beings in a beneficial way if we can't distinguish truth from lies. Disinformation is disrespect for you, the online, global citizen. Even the three words "I don't know" will go a long way towards resisting it.

Summary

What do you know about social media and disinformation after reading this module? As great as social media can be for connecting people, it is also a means to influence people—even without their knowledge. We are profiled on social media. That "consumer intelligence" is sold and used. When distorted or untrue information is intentionally placed on social media to disrupt elections and major policy decisions, it threatens democracy. Disinformation, fake news and deepfakes are everywhere online. It's up to you, the user, to look critically at the content you are seeing, check the facts, and resist being manipulated by your own biases. See the additional materials for ways that social media can be used to give communities a political voice, without the need for disinformation. The Social Action section later in this textbook will also provide more examples of social media being used for social good



KEY CONCEPTS

accountable	To be responsible for actions and decisions and able to explain the reasons for them.
big data	"Extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally [by computers] to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions" ("Big data," n.d.).

clickbait	A headline designed to grab the attention of viewers and entice them to follow the link to its source.
conspiracy theory	"An attempt to explain harmful or tragic events as the result of the actions of a small, powerful group. Such explanations reject the accepted narrative surrounding those events; indeed, the official version may be seen as further proof of the conspiracy" (Reid, n.d.).
competitive intelligence	"Competitive intelligence, sometimes referred to as corporate intelligence, refers to the ability to gather, analyze, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market factors that contribute to a business's competitive advantage" (Bloomenthal, 2020).
deepfake	"A term for videos and presentations enhanced by artificial intelligence and other modern technology to present falsified results. One of the best examples of deepfakes involves the use of image processing to produce video of celebrities, politicians or others saying or doing things that they never actually said or did" ("Deepfake," n.d.).
democracy	On a basic level, it is the ability of citizens to participate in fair and open elections to choose their representatives in government. Another perspective argues that democracy must function beyond elections by involving citizens in ongoing government decisions that affect them.
disinformation	"Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country" (UNESCO, 2021).
European Union (EU)	The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade, which means goods can move between member countries with fewer restrictions or extra charges. The EU also allows free movement of people, to live and work in whichever EU member country they choose.
fake news	False stories, usually online, that seem like genuine news and can be used to sway the opinion of the viewer.

inequity	Lacking equity; unfair and injust.
interest groups	Associations whose members share similar concerns and try to influence public policy to benefit themselves or their cause. Their goal could be a policy that benefits group members or one part of society (e.g. government subsidies for farmers) or a policy that has a broader public purpose (e.g. improving air quality). They attempt to achieve their goals by lobbying—which means applying pressure to the people who make the policies. Other names for interest groups are special interest groups or pressure groups (Thomas, 2017).
monetize	When applied to social media activity, to monetize is to generate revenue from web content, usually by attracting advertisers to the site.
nationalism	Refers to a set of shared values and myths of a nation or group. Nationalism can be political, cultural or racial. People who support a nationalist ideology believe their nation is superior to others. This can lead them to marginalizing those not belonging to the nation or group. They may even regard others as enemies and go to war or commit genocide under certain circumstances. Nationalists are inward looking and, therefore, opposed to internationalism or globalization unless it is favourable to their interests (Chet Singh, Centennial College).
participatory media	Media platforms where the audience plays an active role in collecting, reporting and sharing information.
policies	"A set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party" ("Policies," n.d.).
profiling	Online "profiling" is collecting information about internet users by tracking their online behaviour, including which sites they visit, comments they post and purchases they make. This reveals their interests, preferences, opinions and biases, information that is valuable to both advertisers and political interest groups—including those that produce fake news.

public opinion	The opinion or attitude of the majority of people regarding a particular matter ("Public opinion," 2020).
referendum	"A vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question" ("Referendum," n.d.).
right-wing/left-wing	Right-wing and left-wing represent contrasting approaches to political and social change. Left-wing views welcome change that will create more equitable conditions in society. They support a greater role for government and are collectivist—in other words, they give priority to the group over the individual. Social democrats and feminists would be considered to have left-wing ideologies. Right-wing thinking favours the individual over the group, and it sees equality as undesirable and unattainable. Right-wingers resist change and support the existing social order. They tend to believe in capitalism and that the government should not interfere in people's lives. Conservatism and neoconservatism are examples of right-wing thinking (Chet Singh, Centennial College).
sensationalism	The use in media of shocking or exciting headlines and content to attract readers, with little or no regard for facts or accuracy. News that is sensationalized is designed to trigger emotion. This will often generate more interest than fact-based news that appeals to reason.
third party	In the world of online data, a third party is a company or organization that gathers or purchases information about online users, often without their knowledge or consent.
viral	"Spreading or becoming popular very quickly through communication from one person to another, especially on the internet" ("Viral," n.d.).

Global Indigenous Example

IndigenousX is a website based in Australia that has become a hub for Indigenous peoples in the Pacific Rim and around the world. Indigenous Australians have used the online space to form effective partnerships in media and government, and create a unique, online community.

> While previous Indigenous media initiatives were unheard, we have grabbed the attention of key democratic institutions and decision-makers, who are becoming increasingly engaged with the proliferation of Indigenous voices enabled by **participatory media**. ("Our Story," 2019)

Check out their website to see how IndigenousX is giving Indigenous Australians a powerful social and political voice (Source: IndigenousX Showcasing & Celebrating Indigenous Diversity, n.d.).

https://indigenousx.com.au/

participatory media: Media platforms where the audience plays an active role in collecting, reporting and sharing information.

Global Citizenship Example

Watch the video from BBC Monitoring, called *The Greta Generation – Youth Activism Around the World*, to see how social media has become a powerful tool for young activists to join forces as global citizens (Source: BBC Monitoring, 2019).

The video describes how social media is the main tool young activists are using to bring a wide range of issues to a global audience. The video includes some of the challenges these activists face when they put their cause online.

https://youtu.be/6NaqdvSphaU

Social Analysis Example

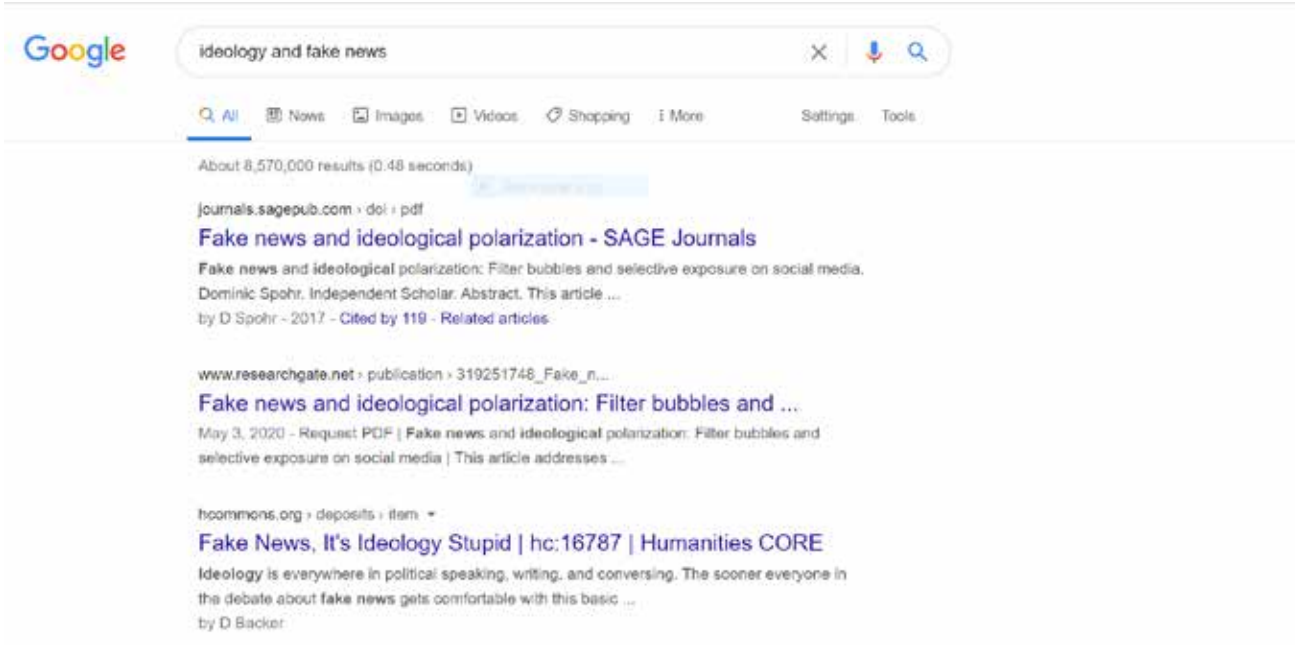
How to Identify Ideology

A good way to start a social analysis on the ideology behind fake news is to make a list of questions:

- Who is producing fake news—is there a pattern in their beliefs or agendas?
- Who consumes and spreads fake news—do they have similar values?

- What political parties benefit the most from fake news—what do they stand for?
- What kinds of topics appear in fake news—do they reveal a bias?
- Who benefits from fake news—is it a certain political party, candidate, or agenda?
- Who is attacked by fake news—do they tend to share certain identities, cultures, or values?
- Why would people believe fake news—how does it confirm beliefs they already have?

Start with a basic search—for example, on ideology and fake news—to get a general overview. Then, start searching more specific questions, like the ones above, to get a deeper understanding. See the sample search, below:



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Introduction photo by dole777 on Unsplash.

Sub-module "Real or Fake" social media graphic features photo by Roman Kraft on Unsplash, Jayana Rashintha on Unsplash, and CDC on Unsplash

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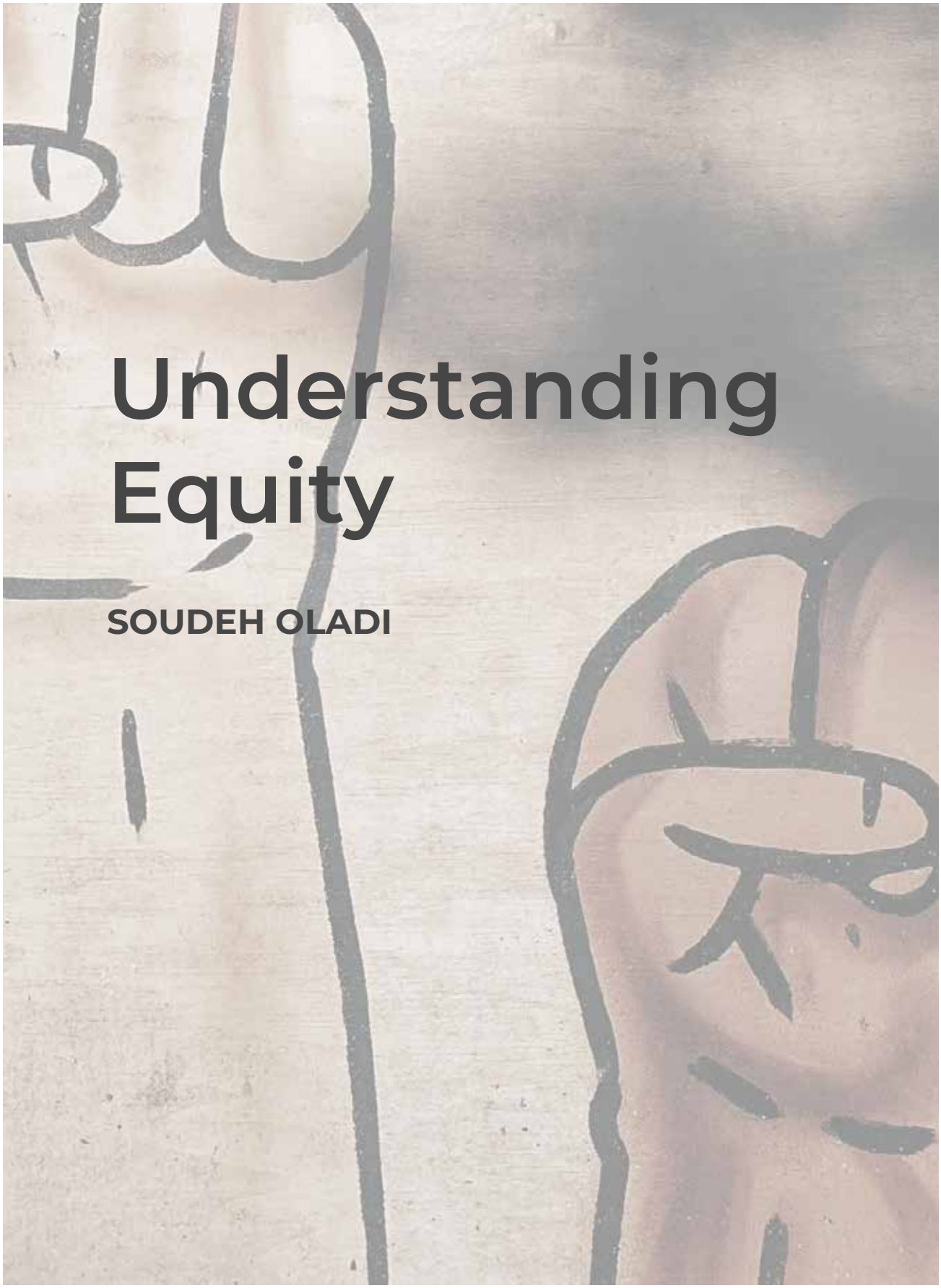
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Understanding Equity

SOUDEH OLADI

Introduction to Equity



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Equity has become a buzzword in different circles, so it's likely you've heard of it. But to better understand this term, we need to consider concepts that may be less familiar: neoliberalism, deficit thinking, and meritocracy. For example, one narrative we continue to hear is that if we work hard enough, we will climb the social ladder. If we fail to "make it," it is because we lack the resilience and drive to succeed. This is an example of the concept of **meritocracy**. Some say that a multicultural country like Canada is built on meritocracy. In other words, that talent and effort are all that is needed for success. But is this really true? Others warn that concepts like meritocracy act as 21st-century opium of the masses and are a delusion (Littler, 2017). These concepts fail to consider the institutional and systemic barriers many people face due to racism and discrimination. Instead, they blame the individual for their situation. If we understand equity as who gets what, when, and how (Frick, Parsons, & Frick, 2019), we will better understand how during a pandemic, for instance, some groups have more access to resources, supports, networks, and opportunities than others. All these themes will be looked at in depth in this module on equity.

meritocracy: A social order where people are ranked and rewarded based on their abilities with no consideration of contextual factors that may affect their performance (DeSario, 2003, p. 485).

Equity vs. Equality: What Is the Difference?

You may have seen the terms equity and equality used interchangeably. But they have different meanings. **Equality** can be understood in terms of "sameness," while **equity** can be understood in terms of "justice" and "fairness." Equality is when all people, regardless of circumstance or characteristics, are treated in exactly the same way.

Equality: Can be understood in terms of "sameness." Equality is when all people, regardless of circumstance or characteristics, are treated in exactly the same way.

equity: Can be understood in terms of "justice" and "fairness." Equity recognizes that treating everyone the same can still be unfair. Equity focuses on the needs of society's most under-resourced, oppressed, and disadvantaged people.



Photo by Matteo Paganelli on Unsplash

Equity recognizes that treating everyone the same can still be unfair. It focuses on the needs of society's most under-resourced, oppressed, and disadvantaged people. It is important for us to remember that **ideology** and **discourse** determine how we view equity.

Here are four ways that we can create a more equitable society (Rezai-Rashti, Segeren, & Martino, 2017):

- Allow fair and just access to resources regardless of gender, socio-economic status, racial, ethnic, or religious background
- Examine your own subtle and invisible privileges [i.e. **white privilege**]
- Respect every individual's dignity
- Eliminate hierarchies in society

ideology: A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.

discourse: How we speak of something. See dominant discourses and counter discourses, for examples.

white privilege: Taken-for-granted power and a system of benefits, advantages, and opportunities experienced by white persons simply because of the colour of their skin.



GO DEEPER

Watch this TED talk by Rodney Robinson entitled "What Is Equity and Why Do Our Children Deserve It?" (Source: TEDx Talks, 2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lg3MytDC-Y&feature=emb_logo

Watch this video on "Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo." (Source: General Commission on Religion and Race of The UMC, 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwIx3KQer54&feature=emb_logo

Equity and Deficit Thinking

One area where a focus on equity is particularly important is education. In schools, students who fall behind are often blamed for their failures. Their poor performance in school is linked to personal problems or deficiencies, or those of their family, or social or racial group. This is called **deficit thinking**.

Deficit thinking mainly impacts students from marginalized communities. It focuses on what students "lack" and aims to "fix" them, while ignoring or minimizing the structural and systemic issues that affect their lives and learning experiences. It looks for simple answers to complex issues like racism, sexism, and classism.

Deficit thinking strengthens stereotypes, discourages students, leads to low expectations of students, and has a negative impact on students' overall education (Baroutsis & Woods, 2018).

There are different ways deficit thinking can be challenged. For example, in the Toronto District School Board, Black students have higher suspension rates than white students. To address this, Michelle Bailey proposes using **restorative justice** instead of suspensions for minor breaches of school rules and codes of conduct (Rankin, Rushowy,

deficit thinking: [in education] When students who fall behind are blamed for their failures. These students' poor performance in school is linked to personal problems or deficiencies, or those of their family, or social or racial group.

restorative justice: An Indigenous-based healing and peacemaking process that tries to bring together victims, offenders, and the community in order to get to the bottom of a problem and restore balance and harmony for everyone involved and impacted.

& Brown, 2013; James & Turner, 2017). Restorative justice is an Indigenous-based healing and peacemaking process. While the Western justice system tries to reduce crime through punishment, restorative justice tries to bring together victims, offenders, and the community in order to get to the bottom of a problem and restore balance and harmony (Mirsky, 2004).

How would you react if you heard someone express these opinions?

1. Most newcomers to Canada struggle at school because of their poor English.
2. When students fail, it's because they lack motivation or because their families don't do enough to support them academically.
3. International students must have Canadian work experience before we can be certain they are capable in their field.





Image by Shubham Sharan on Unsplash

Listen to the following excerpt from Life in Schools by Peter McLaren (Source: McLaren, 2015).

Then consider the critical-thinking questions.

1. Why do you think the students in this story behaved differently?
2. Do you see traces of deficit thinking in this story?

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

It would drive anyone a little crazy. At least half the class wandered around the room at any given time, despite my attempt to keep them working quietly at their desks. The constant movement was threatening.

Relief happily appeared with Hartford, the gym teacher, who took my kids twice a week for half-hour sessions.

Usually I ended up chatting with a small group of kids who had forgotten their gym equipment and remained behind. It was the same group every week, a coincidence, I'm sure. I looked forward to my half-hour talks with these kids, nick-naming them "the rap pack." I dreamed of what it would be like to have a class with only six or seven students. There were kids in the group whom I could barely tolerate in a normal classroom with thirty-five students. But individually or in the small group, they were easy to talk to, sensitive, and communicative.

When the rest of the class returned from the gym, pleasant young people reverted to their former selves: distant, rowdy, agitated.



GO DEEPER

Read this article to learn more about the differences between equity and equality. (Source: Adhikari, 2017)

https://www.publichealthnotes.com/equity-vs-equality/

Use this framework adopted from the book Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education (2014) when analyzing a case study based on equity. (Source: Gorski & Pothini, 2017)

http://www.edchange.net/cases/Case-Analysis-Model.pdf

Watch this video showing college students racing to win $100 while acknowledging various forms of disadvantage and inequities. (Source: Peter D., 2018)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5fbQ1-zps

Equity and Neoliberalism

It is important to remember that ideology can affect how we view equity. Neoliberalism is a dominant ideology in Western society. Some see it as the magic bullet that can resolve all of our problems. In this sub-topic, we'll discuss the limits to that point of view. But first, what is **neoliberalism**?

> [Neoliberalism is] a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey, 2007, p. 2)



"The Museum of Neoliberalism, Lee" by Loz Flowers is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

In simple terms, neoliberalism is when the rules of the market are applied to every aspect of our lives. Neoliberal logic states that individuals are solely responsible for their own well-being (Brown, 2003). Instead of valuing care and compassion, neoliberalism values competitiveness (Brown, 2015).

What's wrong with this? Well, let's consider the example of education. Under neoliberalism, the focus of education has shifted from teaching students how to be caring democratic citizens to assessing and ranking them through tests. Students are held solely responsible for how well they do in this system. No consideration is given to the different opportunities and resources students have (tutors, private schools, extracurricular activities). Everyone is judged by the same standards. This system has success stories, but it doesn't give everyone the same opportunity to succeed. Even as it celebrates the individual's ability to "make it," it masks structural inequalities in our society. Brochures for colleges and universities are filled with images of racialized minorities, but these are the people who are most often put at a disadvantage in this system. Upon closer inspection, one can see examples of "**tokenism**."

neoliberalism: "A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2).

tokenism: The "practice of including one or a small number of members of a minority group to create the appearance of representation, inclusion, and non-discrimination, without ever giving these members access to power" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015).

The Myth of Sisyphus as the Modern Neoliberal Human

Neoliberal logic has been compared to the classical Greek myth about Sisyphus.



In this myth, Sisyphus, the king of Corinth, is punished by the gods for his sins and condemned to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain for all eternity. Each time he reaches the top, it rolls back down to the bottom again.



This myth is used as a metaphor for tasks that seem pointless and unending (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2017). Under neoliberalism, people are pushed to endlessly struggle for success, but there is no end point where success is achieved according to the logic of the system.

This makes the process, like the task given to Sisyphus, inherently fruitless and unattainable. Professor Lauren Berlant (2010) calls this kind of unending search for success "cruel optimism," and critical educator Paulo Freire (1997) believes it is based on "false hope."



GO DEEPER

Watch this video in which five people use slam poetry to explain how being racialized impacted their learning experience. (Source: Poekert, 2010)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K64tVm_CJkE

Watch this video where Alex Gendler retells the myth of Sisyphus. (Source: TED-Ed, 2018)

https://youtu.be/q4pDUxth5fQ

Now listen to the poem "Red Canoe" by Chet Singh. (Source: Singh, n.d.)

https://www.chetsingh.com/

Equity and the Question of Race

When speaking about equity, the issue of race cannot be sidelined. Race for the Greeks and Romans, for instance, was a matter of power relations and not skin colour (McCoskey, 2012). However, by the 15th century in the Western world, the concept of race became directly linked with skin colour and used as a way to label certain people inferior. By the 19th century, racial groups were seen as unique biological types in the West. Some went so far as to argue that different races experienced evolution and became human at different times. But the mapping of the human genome proved without doubt that race has no biological basis.

At the turn of the 20th century, African-American sociologist and civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois rightfully projected that the issue of race and **colour blindness** would be a central problem for American society (Du Bois, 2008).

colour blindness: The belief that racial categories should not be considered when examining everyday social relations (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).



Image by Chiamaka Nwolisa on Unsplash

When did the word "race" first appear in European vocabulary?

The word "race" was introduced into the European lexicon in the 16th century just as the Europeans were colonizing the Indigenous peoples of sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas

A study published in 2019 entitled *How Segregated Is Toronto?* Inequality, Polarization, and Segregation Trends and Processes (Hulchanski, 2019), by the Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement, offers statistics about economic disparities in Toronto along race lines.



https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/centre-for-immigration-and-settlement/RCIS/publications/featured/Segregation_Trends_in_Toronto_Hulchanski_at_Ryerson_14_Feb_2019_w_Appendix.pdf

For centuries, Western liberalism has practiced "**collective historical amnesia**" (Mills, 2014) and refused to acknowledge the role of **white supremacy** in reproducing inequalities. Through the refusal to see colour and by prioritizing factors such as economics over race, Western liberal democracies have come to deny their role in keeping racism alive (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). It has become clear that pretending race does not exist cannot lead to the end of racism.

collective historical amnesia: Collective historical amnesia happens when members of a society conveniently forget their active role in exploitation and oppression of different groups of people.

white supremacy: The social ideology used to justify colonization. Positions white people as superior to non-white people.

Collective historical amnesia is also reflected in how the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada continue to be brushed aside. Let's look at one recent example.

In September 2014, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) opened in Winnipeg and immediately faced controversy regarding the use of the term "genocide" in an exhibit on Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples (Whitt & Clarke, 2019). At first, the museum decided to label the exhibit featuring human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples as "Settler Co-

lonial Genocide." But just before opening, the museum's steering committee suddenly changed its mind and made this statement:

> *We're not declaring it as genocide. We're not declaring it as not genocide. Visitors will be encouraged to come to their own conclusions.* (Whitt & Clarke, 2019, p. 8)

Critics accused CMHR of "sanitizing the true history of Canada's shameful treatment of First Nations" (Edmiston, 2013).

Consider these questions:

1. If you were on the museum's steering committee, how would you have addressed this matter?
2. If you could rewrite this statement, what would you write?

Equity and Internalized Colonization



Portrait of Frantz Fanon by Pacha J. Willka is licensed is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

A wise person once said that if fish were anthropologists, the last thing they would discover would be the water. We are not too different from the fish, swimming in a sea of inequity and injustice (Banks & Banks, 2019). **Colonization** has acted as the sea of inequity and injustice for centuries and created hierarchies around gender, race, sex, ability, and class that can be difficult to see, let alone resist. The hidden injury of oppression and colonization can lead to the "spiritual collapse of a nation" (Mohaw, 2004). When the spirit of a nation collapses through colonization, individuals tend to develop hate, racist attitudes, and hidden biases towards their own race or themselves. This has come to be known as **internalized colonization**.

To learn more about colonization and internalized colonization, we need to turn to Frantz Fanon. Fanon was a psychiatrist and a postcolonial philosopher who wrote about the impact of colonization on the oppressed. Fanon was 36 years old when he died from leukemia in 1961. Fanon's (1965) four-phase colonial model can help us understand internalized colonization.

The first phase is forced entry of a foreign power into a territory. Why? Mostly to exploit natural resources and the people living in that territory through slavery or cheap labour. The second phase is when colonizers impose their culture. To do that, the colonizer labels the culture of colonized people as inferior, breaks it down, and recreates it based on

their own supposedly superior values. This is the start of the third phase where the colonized are portrayed as uncivilized and wild, and the colonizer now takes on the role of the saviour who can monitor, tame, and civilize them. The message of the third phase is that domination and even oppression are necessary in order for the colonized to become civilized. In the fourth and final phase, we have a society where political, social, and economic institutions are set up in a way that benefits the colonizer and helps maintain their superiority while keeping the colonized "in check."

Fanon believed that internalized colonization is the major psychological effect of colonialism. When colonized people are treated as inferiors for a long time, they often experience self-doubt and identity confusion. Year after year, decade after decade, and century after century, many of those who were colonized internalize the message of inferiority and negative stereotypes.

colonization: Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.
internalized colonization: What happens when the colonized come to believe the message of inferiority and negative stereotypes that have been imposed by the colonizer. According to Frantz Fanon, internalized colonization is the major psychological effect of colonialism.

The Jamaican-British sociologist and cultural critic Stuart Hall wrote about how his mother's attitude towards dark-skinned men had a devastating impact on his family:

> I've written about my sister's life before and I don't find it easy to elaborate further on a painful experience. Pat, five years my senior, began a relationship with a black student from another Caribbean island studying medicine at the University College of the West Indies. He was from a highly respectable black background which later far out-distanced my family in public achievement and social position. But my parents, or my mother, objected to his colour and to his origins. And my mother simply put a stop to it. A few months later Pat had a serious mental breakdown from which, in truth, over the many intervening years she has made only a tentative recovery. (Hall, 2017, p. 53)





GO DEEPER

Did you know that the global skin-lightening industry is expected to double from 2017 to 2027 to be worth $8.9 billion (Khan, 2018)? A World Health Organization (WHO) study found that around 40% of Chinese women and half of the population in Malaysia, Korea, and the Philippines use skin-lightening products. These numbers are much higher in Nigeria (77%) and India (61%) (WHO, 2013).

In 2020, a petition was signed by thousands of people requesting that the skin-whitening cream Fair & Lovely be held accountable for selling the image that women with dark skin colours can gain self-worth and be less insecure if they have lighter skin.

Read two statements from the petition, then consider the following questions below.

1. “This product has built upon, perpetuated and benefited from internalized racism and promotes anti-blackness sentiments amongst all its consumers” (Chandani, Hashmi, & Ahmed, 2020).
2. “Colourism, discrimination based on the colour of your skin, is a direct by-product of racism affecting millions of people today, that fairness creams such as Fair & Lovely continue to advance” (Chandani, Hashmi, & Ahmed, 2020).

Questions:

- What is the connection between the popularity of skin-lightening products and internalized colonization?
- How does Fair & Lovely promote racial inequity?
- Do you think the ideology of neoliberalism supports the growth of this industry?



"Fair and Lovely – Billboard for Skin-Whitening Cream – Chittagong – Bangladesh" by Adam Jones, Ph.D. – Global Photo Archive is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

More Sources

Listen to this podcast that explores the impact of colonization among Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Source: Oleman, 2020). *Teachings in the Air* is an Indigenous health and wellness podcast hosted by Elder Gerry Oleman.

https://www.teachingsintheair.ca/podcasts/season-2/the-impacts-of-colonization

https://www.teachingsintheair.ca/home

Summary

Throughout this module, we have looked at the difference between equity and equality. We explored concepts such as neoliberalism and deficit thinking in relation to equity. The issue of race was analyzed from a historical and social perspective. Examples were provided about how colonization impacted different populations, and we also discussed internalized colonization from the lens offered by Frantz Fanon.



KEY CONCEPTS

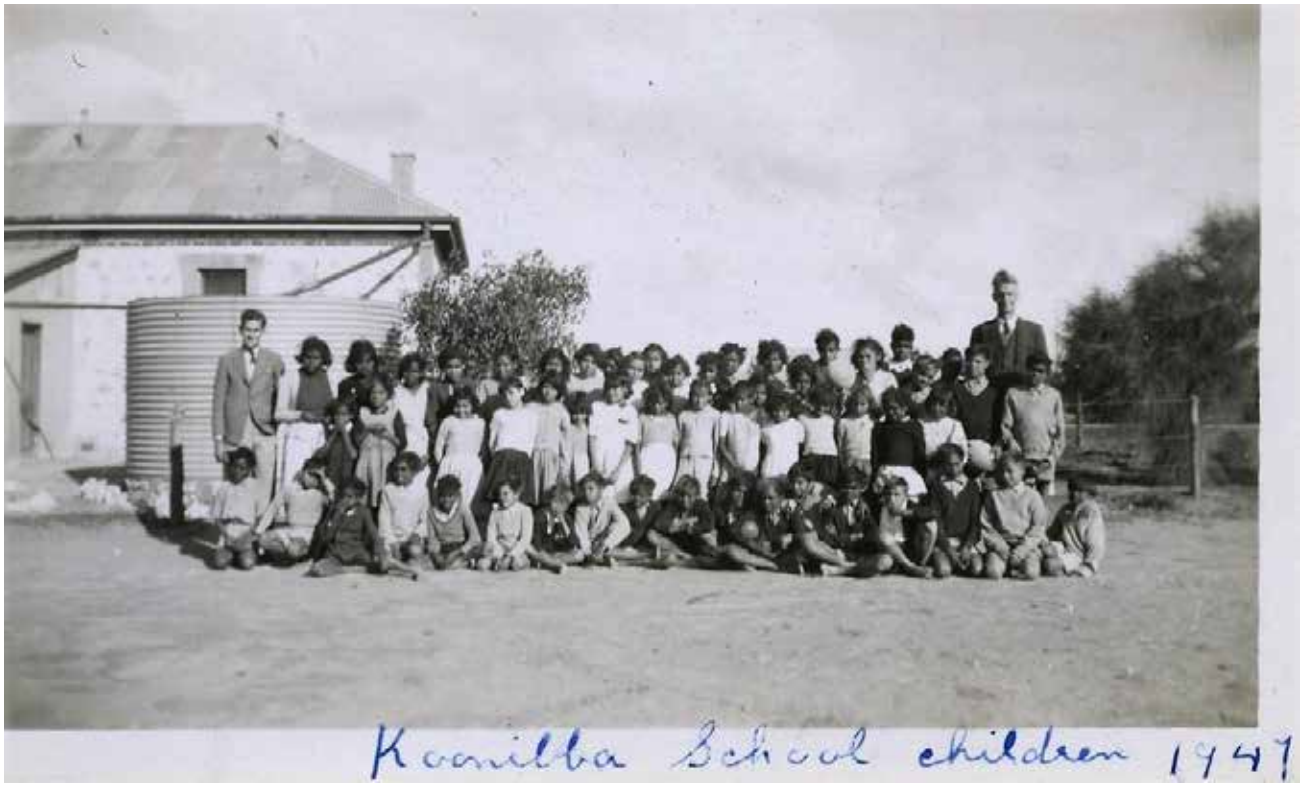
collective historical amnesia	Collective historical amnesia happens when members of a society conveniently forget their active role in exploitation and oppression of different groups of people.
colonization	Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.
colour blindness	The belief that racial categories should not be considered when examining everyday social relations (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).
deficit thinking	[in education] When students who fall behind are blamed for their failures. These students' poor performance in school is linked to personal problems or deficiencies, or those of their family, or social or racial group.
Equality	Can be understood in terms of "sameness." Equality is when all people, regardless of circumstance or characteristics, are treated in exactly the same way.
equity	Can be understood in terms of "justice" and "fairness." Equity recognizes that treating everyone the same can still be unfair. Equity focuses on the needs of society's most under-resourced, oppressed, and disadvantaged people.
ideology	A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.

internalized colonization	What happens when the colonized come to believe the message of inferiority and negative stereotypes that have been imposed by the colonizer. According to Frantz Fanon, internalized colonization is the major psychological effect of colonialism.
meritocracy	A social order where people are ranked and rewarded based on their abilities with no consideration of contextual factors that may affect their performance (DeSario, 2003, p. 485).
neoliberalism	"A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2).
restorative justice	An Indigenous-based healing and peacemaking process that tries to bring together victims, offenders, and the community in order to get to the bottom of a problem and restore balance and harmony for everyone involved and impacted.
tokenism	The "practice of including one or a small number of members of a minority group to create the appearance of representation, inclusion, and non-discrimination, without ever giving these members access to power" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015).
white privilege	Taken-for-granted power and a system of benefits, advantages, and opportunities experienced by white persons simply because of the colour of their skin.
white supremacy	The social ideology used to justify colonization. Positions white people as superior to non-white people.

Global Indigenous Example

One of the first steps to becoming a more equitable society is seeing and understanding how our current society is inequitable. For example, Indigenous Peoples in Canada, as well as those in other settler colonies like Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States, have spoken out about how the nations we live in tried to "dismantl[e] and eras[e] Indigenous society and culture, and replac[e] it through religious, political, and economic conversion" (DeMuth, 2012, p. 102).

The reality is that Indigenous peoples suffered in untold number of ways at the hands of the settler colonizers around the world. The stolen generation narratives are stories about the removal of "mixed descent" children from Aboriginal families and communities in Australia (Attwood & Magowan, 2001). One of the many young girls taken from their families was Margaret Tucker. Margaret was 13 years old when she was forcibly removed from her mother on a New South Wales Aboriginal reserve.



"School children – 1947 – KOONIBBA ABORIGINAL LUTHERAN MISSION" by Aussie~mobs is marked with CC PDM 1.0

This happened in 1917 under the Aborigines Protection Board Act. This is how Margaret remembers the day she was taken from her mother:

> The people at Cummeroogunga [a nearby reserve] lived in constant fear of their children being sent away from them by the Board, and being placed in homes. Wholesale kidnapping (it was nothing less) occurred on the Mission only a few years ago [1919]. The Manager sent the aboriginal men away on a rabbiting expedition. No sooner had they left the station than carloads of police (who had been waiting) dashed in and seized all the children they could get their hands on. These children were bundled into the cars and taken away for the Board to dispose of. Many of them never saw their parents again. (Attwood & Magowan, 2001, p. 184)

Margaret's mother, Theresa Clements, also gives a painful account of the incident. She would find out years later that after three months in Cootamundra (Aboriginal Girls Home), her daughter would be sent to work as a servant girl for a wealthy family in Sydney.

> One day some men came from the [New South Wales] Aborigines' Protection Board. They said they wanted to take my children away. I said, 'My children are well cared for'. They were said to be taking all the clever children to educate them. It was the most terrible thing that ever happened to me when they took my two daughters. They rounded up some of the girls from Cummera at the same time . . . I heard that a policeman at Cummeragunja resigned after the incident. He said that if taking children away from crying mothers was a policeman's job, he didn't want it. (Attwood & Magowan, 2001, p. 185)



"West Australian aborigines – very early 1900s" by Aussie~mobs is marked with CC PDM 1.0

Consider these questions:

1. What do you think was the effect of governments removing Indigenous or Aboriginal children from their families? On the children? On the families? On communities?
2. In Canada, some have called what happened to Indigenous Peoples at the hands of white colonizers "cultural genocide." In other words, the government set out to destroy Indigenous cultures. How do you think removing children from their homes and communities might have contributed to this?



GO DEEPER

Watch this documentary entitled *Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands, Strong Hearts*, which looks at the history of colonial expansion and its impact on Indigenous populations. (Source: The Anglican Church of Canada, 2019)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQwkB1hn5E8&feature=emb_logo

Read the Indigenous Ally Toolkit to learn about ways you can be an ally to Indigenous Peoples. (Source: Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, 2019)

http://reseaumtlnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Ally_March.pdf

Global Citizenship Example

The following resources will help you see how understanding equity can make you a better global citizen.

The Problem with that Equity Vs. Equality Graphic You're Using (Source: Kuttner, 2016)
https://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/

What Does It Mean to Be a Citizen of the World?|Hugh Evans (Source: TED, 2016)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODLg_00f9BE

Social Analysis Example

The Triangle Model of Social Analysis: Individual

The triangle model of social analysis has three dimensions (individual, structure, ideology). We use these dimensions to dissect structures of inequality and oppression in order to gain a deeper understanding of social problems. A social problem may be difficult to recognize, especially if you are not affected by it personally. You may become aware of a social problem by identifying individual behaviours, comments, feelings, and actions that send a particular message about an issue. For instance, if a visible minority is told, "You speak such good English" or "You speak without an accent," the statement may be packaged as a compliment, but the hidden implications say otherwise. Such statements are invalidating and insulting because they imply that the recipient, who is a racial or ethnic minority, is alien in their own country (DeVos & Banaji, 2005). To better analyze problematic situations, we need to look at examples of people who have dealt with a social problem and decided to do something about it.

In relation to the social problem you are analyzing, you should first ask yourself, what important issue is everyone ignoring? Other critical questions you can ask are:

- How might personal bias prevent one from seeing other perspectives?
- How do our social identities (race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, etc.) impact the way we look at a social problem?
- What do you know about the social problem you are trying to analyze? How did you come to know about the problem?
- What can individuals do to challenge oppression and inequality, and promote equity?
- What do you think are your blind spots regarding a particular social problem?
- How can you ensure that marginalized voices and perspectives are included in your social analysis?
- Have you ever caught yourself trying to rationalize a social problem by saying things like "it's human nature" or "it's common sense" or "that's not something we can really change"?
- What are your privileges in relation to the social problem you are analyzing?
- How can we turn individual efforts into meaningful social action?
- Do you know any *alternative social movements* that zoom in on a particular issue and try to bring about change at the individual level? An example of an alternative social movement is Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) (Conley, 2013).
- Do you know of any *redemptive social movements* related to the social problem you are analyzing? Redemptive social movements are individual-based and interested in more radical lifestyle changes. An example of a redemptive social movement is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which is a support group that brings together individuals who want to stop drinking and change their life (Conley, 2013). Note: Social movements will be discussed at length in the social action module.

Sources

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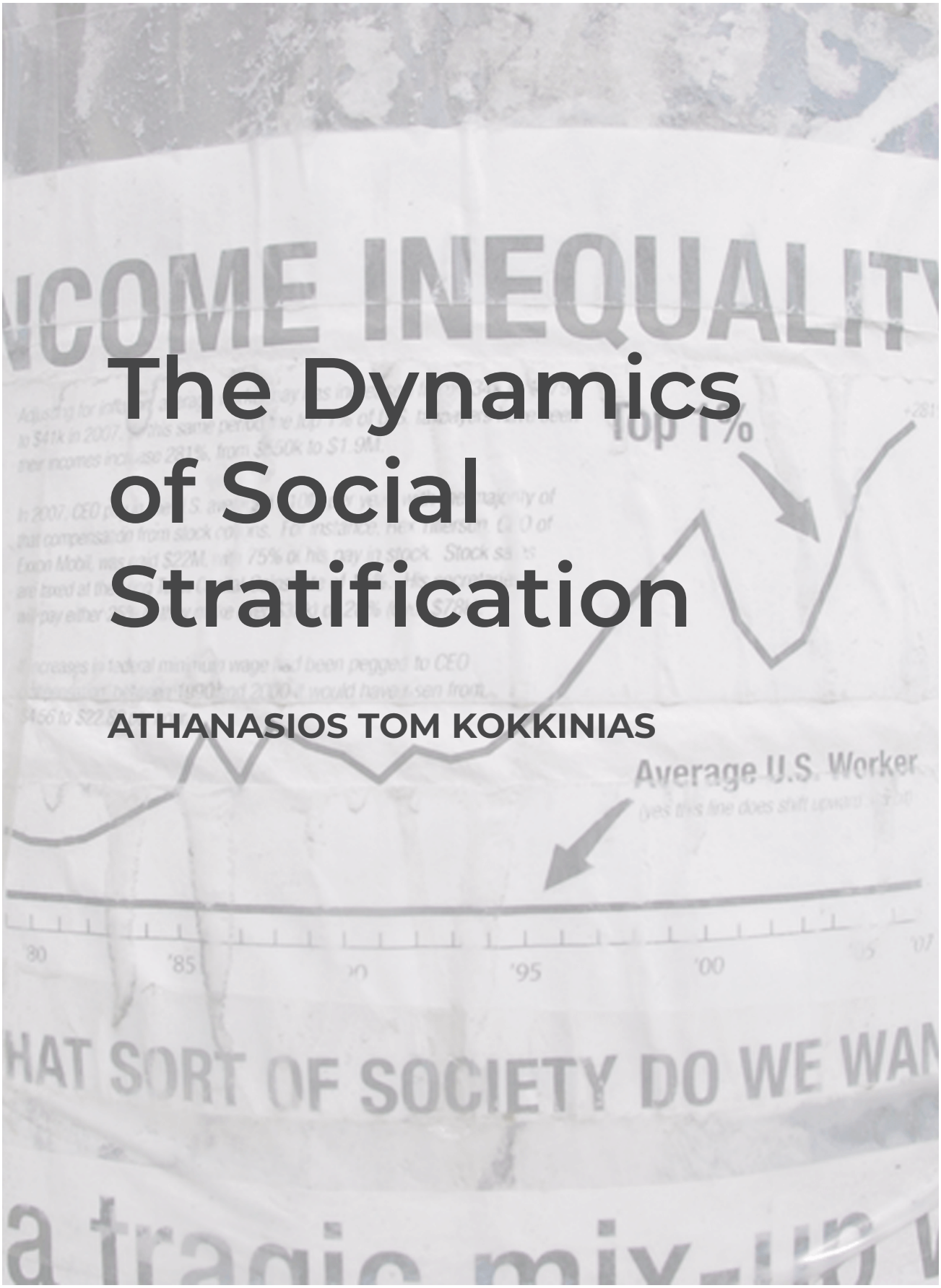
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The Dynamics of Social Stratification

ATHANASIOS TOM KOKKINIAS

Lessons from History

> *The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*
>
> *– Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto*

> *All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.*
>
> *– George Orwell, Animal Farm*

The famous quotes above can help frame our discussion on the topic of social stratification.

Karl Marx believed that capitalism's inequalities arise from the deeply rooted class divisions between the bourgeoisie haves (the rich) and proletarian have-nots (the poor). He laid the blueprint for a different type of society: a communist utopia. This would be a classless society, where equality and justice would be the rule, rather than the exception.

Sadly, as Orwell shows us in his famous book *Animal Farm*, countries that tried to establish this sort of communist utopia found that inequality continued. For example, Stalin's Soviet Union was founded on Marxist principles, including political and economic equality for everyone. However, even though the country ended capitalist class divisions, other similarly damaging divisions took their place. These were political and bureaucratic class divisions that made some members of Soviet society (i.e. the ruling political class) like the pigs in *Animal Farm*—"more equal" than others!

The moral of the story is that as global citizens, we must bear these lessons from history in mind. These cautionary tales remind us to be careful not to repeat the same mistakes while we strive to address the inequalities (economic, political, social, and many more) that are inherent in all societies that are socially stratified.

Social Stratification

Consider the images below. For each of the two pairs of images, compare the left with the right, and think about these questions.

- What do you think about when you view these images?
- Thinking broadly, do you see yourself (and others like you, including family, friends, classmates, etc.) identifying more with one or another of the images in each pair? Which ones? Why?



"Toronto: College Street" by The City of Toronto is licensed under CC BY 2.0



"Super Cars" by chooyutshing is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Image by Marcus Lenk on Unsplash



Image by Walter Sturn on Unsplash

On reflection, most people would agree that these pairs of images contrast two very different realities. The images on the left represent the reality for most of us: affordable ways to get around and affordable homes. On the right side, we see 1) a car that is worth as much as a decent-sized home, and 2) a mansion that is probably worth more than a dozen decent-sized homes put together!

Collectively, these images attest to the fact that in all societies today, people have (often vastly) different access to resources, such as cars and houses, and other vital things, like access to decent healthcare, education, jobs, etc. Of course, this list, besides being incomplete, is missing many other kinds of things that we don't normally think of as "resources" but are needed by everyone to support decent, meaningful lives.

Such "resources" include freedom from oppression (e.g. police brutality against minoritized people of colour); freedom from racial and other forms of discrimination; and the same rights and privileges regardless of your identity or social status. In many cases, purely arbitrary factors such as where and to whom someone is born will go a long way to determining what resources they will have access to.

In other words, in every society, different social groups are not all treated equally. Like layers (another word for layers is *strata*) that make up an onion, or a tasty cake, societies are structured in levels. Sociologists and other theorists call this phenomenon **social stratification**.

Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc. Usually, when we talk about social stratification, we are talking about **class**, but social stratification also includes how class intersects with other statuses such as gender, race, sexuality, and disability.

As mentioned above, the randomness (accident) of birth more often than not determines someone's subsequent (mis)fortunes in life. But other crucial dimensions of identity also determine one's life outcomes, including their gender, the colour of their skin, their ethnic background, sexual orientation, language, and religion. The list goes on.

social stratification: The hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc.

class: The concept of class refers to the relative location of a person or group within a given society based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued markers of one's position (status) within a social hierarchy. Class determines one's access to rewards, resources, and opportunities, which, in turn, influence one's level of education, income, occupation, housing, healthcare, and life expectancy. Traditionally, class has been divided into five categories: upper class; middle class; working class; working poor; and underclass.

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and opportunities, which, in turn, influence one's level of education, income, occupation, housing, healthcare, and life expectancy. Traditionally, class has been divided into five categories: upper class; middle class; working class; working poor; and underclass.

Please note that while theoretical approaches to the study of class are varied, and often quite complex (see Go Deeper), we will limit our discussion to the above classification as it is most often used by social scientists and laypeople alike when discussing the concepts of class and social stratification.

In Canada most of us think of ourselves as middle class. But what does this mean? How accurate is this as a descriptor of our relative positions within Canadian society? Are we comfortably middle class, or are we instead struggling to pay off our various debts (i.e. credit cards, student loans, mortgage)?



GO DEEPER

For an extended theoretical overview of social stratification (including analyses of functionalist, conflict [i.e. Marxist], and symbolic interactionist theories), see "Chapter 9: Social Stratification in Canada," in William Little's Introduction to Sociology: 2nd Canadian Edition. (Source: Little, 2016)

https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/

Social Stratification and Wealth Distribution in Canada

Think for a moment about how Canada's overall wealth is distributed among the various members of Canadian society. Do you think that most people in our society have a roughly equal share of this total wealth? If not, how unequal do you think the distribution is?



Activity: Reflection on Canadian Wealth Distribution

If it were up to you, how would you ideally distribute the total wealth in Canada? Imagine dividing the total population into deciles (i.e. into 10 segments, each one representing 10% of the total population, from poorest to wealthiest). Would you redistribute the total wealth so each 10% of the population receives an equal share? If not, how much would the poor segments get in relation to the middle ones and to the richer ones?

Following up on your ideal wealth distribution, how do you think wealth is distributed in Canada? For example, what percentage of total wealth do you think the richest 20% of the population hold? What percentage do the poorest 20% have? What about the middle 20%?

Next, view the video Wealth Inequality in Canada, and compare your perspective to the one presented in the video (Source: Broadbent Institute, 2014). You might be surprised at the results!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBkBiv5ZD7s

The video's narrator, Ed Broadbent, informs us that as of 2012, the richest 20% of Canadians owned nearly 70% of the total wealth! In contrast, the poorest 20% of the Canadian population owns less than 1% of Canada's wealth. As if this isn't shocking enough, we learn that the bottom 50% of Canadians own less than 6% of the country's total wealth!

The video also reveals another important cause of wealth disparity. At the three-minute mark, the narrator tells us that the average Canadian chief executive officer (CEO) makes 200 times the wage of the average Canadian worker. Why do you think this might be? Can you think of some reasons that CEOs (who hold the top role in their organizations) make so much more?

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Please note that the data from the video on wealth inequality in Canada is from 2012. In fact, the latest data released in a report by Canada's Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicates that the numbers are even worse today than they were back in 2012. Most recently, in a report dated June 2020 and titled: Estimating the Top Tail of the Family Wealth Distribution in Canada, we find that the bottom 40% of Canadians only own 1.2% of total wealth in the country. In contrast, the middle class (i.e., approximately the middle 40% of the population) own fully 25% of the total wealth, while the top 20% own a whopping almost 75% of total wealth! As if these disparities in the numbers are not extreme enough, we also learn that the top 1% of Canadian super-rich elites own a staggering 25.6% of Canada's total wealth!

View the report: Estimating the Top Tail of the Family Wealth Distribution in Canada.

https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/RP-2021-007-S/RP-2021-007-S_en.pdf



CASE STUDY #1: THE CASE FOR/AGAINST CEO PAY IN CANADA

There are several common arguments made to explain the phenomenally differential levels of pay between CEOs and the average Canadian worker. Note here that the "average" Canadian worker means the average full-time worker who is usually white, middle class, male, etc. In other words, this classification misses the ever-increasing numbers of precarious workers who are stuck in part-time or temp/gig economy work. These workers are, more often than not, members of minoritized groups, including people of colour, First Nations, recent immigrants, women, and youth, among others.

One argument that is often made is that CEOs deserve to make much more than the average worker because they work harder than anyone else in the company.

Thinking critically: Is it even physically or logically possible for anyone, including CEOs, to work more than *200 times harder* than other company employees? What do you think?

Another argument often put forward to justify the unequal level of pay for CEOs is that they have more education and experience in the field they work in. Therefore, they should be compensated accordingly. No one doubts CEOs are, on average, well-educated and well-equipped to do their jobs, but again, is it humanly (or even logically) possible to be 200 times more educated or more experienced than the average worker?

A related argument is that CEOs possess very valuable, complex knowledge that can only be attained through years of experience in their field. This justifies their compensation. Upon critical reflection, this argument too fails to convince. One could counter argue that brain surgeons, astronauts, and nuclear physicists also possess very complex and intricate knowledge, as well as hands-on experience that cannot easily be replicated by anyone else (who is not also a brain surgeon, astronaut, or physicist). Yet, these highly specialized professions make on average much less than most corporate CEOs.

It is instructive to try and think of other arguments (and counterarguments!) to this example of inequality. Can you think of a convincing case to support paying CEOs more than 200 times the average worker? Conversely, can you think of a convincing case against the extreme inequality in pay between CEOs and average full-time Canadian workers?

"Case Study #1: The For/Against CEO Pay in Canada" by Athanasios Tom Kokkinias, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Global Stratification and Poverty

Social stratification doesn't just "happen." It is the result of a system that is designed to allow certain individuals to accumulate vast amounts of wealth while others face the pressures of low wages, precarious work, and decreased government investments in social welfare. The following video looks at the causes of global stratification and the links to poverty.



Activity: Global Stratification and Poverty

Watch this video on global stratification and poverty (Source: CrashCourse, 2017).

https://youtu.be/6rts_PWIVTU

As you watch, think about what some of the causes of social stratification are at the global level. How are these related to poverty?

After watching, make a short list of 2–3 of the causes of stratification and poverty discussed in the video. Were you surprised to learn about some of the causes? How did the causes discussed relate to the issue of economic inequality discussed in this module?

Global Wealth Inequality

We've considered the unequal distribution of wealth in Canada, but what about economic inequality at the global level? As global citizens, we need to critically think about this issue as it has far-reaching implications for social justice and equity at the global level.

This video, titled *Global Wealth Inequality*, covers similar ground to the video on wealth inequality in Canada, but its focus is on the level of wealth inequality globally (Source: TheRulesOrg, 2013).

https://youtu.be/uWSxzjyMNpU



Activity: Reflection on Global Wealth Distribution

After you view the video, reflect on how wealth inequality between the richest and the poorest people of the world compares with that experienced by the richest and poorest people in Canada.

Are they the same? Or is wealth inequality at the global level greater or lesser (i.e. in the percent of wealth owned by the different sectors/strata) than it is in Canada? What are some of the reasons for this?

Within most nations, wealth inequality has been growing at an alarming pace, triggering concerns that the middle class is disappearing. More people are struggling to maintain employment and thus secure even a modest standard of living, while a relative tiny minority (i.e. CEOs and other corporate executives) are seeing their wealth grow at unprecedented rates.

Reports on Wealth Inequality

Oxfam is a group of independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It coordinates efforts by its member organizations to reduce poverty internationally. Oxfam International released a report in January 2016 titled *An Economy for the 1%: How Privilege and Power in the Economy Drive Extreme Inequality and How This Can Be Stopped*.

In the report summary, Oxfam lists several remarkable statistics that are good indicators of the extreme inequality of power and privilege between the world's richest 1% and the rest (i.e. the 99%). While the following statistics are directly quoted from the summary of the report, the full data and examples provided in the body of the report are numerous, and make for a sobering read.

Oxfam has calculated that:

1. In 2015, just 62 individuals had the same wealth as 3.6 billion people—the bottom half of humanity. This figure is down from 388 individuals as recently as 2010.
2. The wealth of the richest 62 people has risen by 45% in the five years since 2010—that's an increase of more than half a trillion dollars ($542bn), to $1.76 trillion.
3. Meanwhile, the wealth of the bottom half fell by just over a trillion dollars in the same period – a drop of 38%.
4. Since the turn of the century, the poorest half of the world's population has received just 1% of the total increase in global wealth, while half of that increase has gone to the top 1%.
5. The average annual income of the poorest 10% of people in the world has risen by less than $3 each year in almost a quarter of a century. Their daily income has risen by less than a single cent every year. (Oxfam International, 2016)

Here in Canada, the situation is not much better. The Broadbent Institute's report, published in 2014, titled *Haves and Have-nots: Deep and Persistent Wealth Inequality in Canada* provides summary statistics (quoted below) that are no less shocking than the above numbers from Oxfam.

The report found:

1. The top 10% of Canadians accounted for almost half (47.9%) of all wealth in 2012.
2. In 2012, the bottom 30% of Canadians accounted for less than 1% of all wealth; the bottom 50% combined controlled less than 6%.
3. The median net worth of the top 10% was $2,103,200 in 2012. It rose by $620,600 (41.9%) since 2005. In contrast, the median net worth of the bottom 10% was negative $5,100 in 2012, dropping more than 150% from negative $2,000 in 2005.
4. The top 10% held almost $6 in every $10 (59.6%) of financial assets, excluding pensions – more than the bottom 90% combined. The bottom half of the population held less than 6% of financial assets and the bottom 70% of the population only 16%. (Broadbent Institute, 2014)

Power and Privilege: The Haves vs. the Have-Nots



"Economic Global Food" by Anna Zabashta is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Social stratification is created and maintained through **power and privilege**. In a stratified society, dominant group members have the greatest degree of power, meaning they can make decisions, influence outcomes, and establish dominant ideologies.

They can also use their position of power to develop laws and policies that benefit them and sway public opinion to maintain the status quo, which is overwhelmingly skewed in their favour.

Privilege allows dominant groups to maintain and pass on this control to others like them. Privilege is gained through unearned power that gives dominant group members economic, social, and political advantage. Those who are privileged therefore have opportunities, resources, rights, choices, and freedoms that are denied to others. Social stratification reflects the deep inequalities that are "baked in" to social, economic, and political structures and institutions at the global level.

Another crucial consideration is how economic inequality is linked to racial and gender inequality. Social stratification is an intersectional phenomenon.

Different types of privilege cut across race, gender, class, sexuality, age and (dis)ability. For example, this video, titled *Gender Inequality and Violence*, shows that men can afford to worry less about the threat of sexual harassment and violence than women (Source: Against IPV, 2013).

https://youtu.be/XZFUeWiDQgk

Privilege is also experienced in the workplace. The videos, titled *Oprah Talks about Equal Pay for Women* and *A Short Story about the Gender Pay Gap*, tell us that:

1. women are often paid less than their male counterparts for doing the same job; and
2. work that is traditionally identified as women's work is often less valued than men's work. (Sources: SuperCareerWomen, 2013; EU Justice and Consumers, 2012)

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsot5-d-i8Q

   https://youtu.be/hoAWOlL2RIo

power and privilege: Social stratification is created and maintained through power and privilege. In a stratified society, dominant group members have the greatest degree of power, meaning they can make decisions, influence outcomes, and establish dominant ideologies. They can also use their position of power to develop laws and policies that benefit them and sway public opinion to maintain the status quo, which is overwhelmingly skewed in their favour. Privilege allows dominant groups to maintain and pass on this control to others like them. Privilege is gained through unearned power that gives dominant group members economic, social, and political advantage. Those who are privileged therefore have opportunities, resources, rights, choices, and freedoms that are denied to others.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), a leading Canadian not-for-profit progressive think tank, publishes an annual report as part of their "Growing Gap" research area concerning the growing economic inequality in Canada. Their latest report's title is: "The Golden Cushion: CEO compensation in Canada"

The report compares the average pay of the top 100 highest paid Canadian CEOs and the pay of the average Canadian worker. The results are striking. For instance, the report points out that many CEOs make in one day what it takes the average Canadian worker a full year to make! Furthermore, 2019 represents the third year on record when CEOs made over 200 times the average Canadian income.



Activity: Canada's Top-Paid CEOs and the Rest of Us: Race and Gender vs. the 1%

Access the report here (Source: Macdonald, 2021).

https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2021/01/Golden%20cushion.pdf

Then do the following:

1. Refer to page 4 of the report. Indicate the average pay for the top 100 CEOs vs. the average individual income in Canada.
2. Refer to "Table 1: Canada's highest paid 100 CEOs, 2019" (the table starts on page 18) listing the top 100 CEOs and answer the following questions:

a. How many of the CEOs are men, and how many are women?

b. Looking over the entire list (on pp. 18–21), what do you notice about the racial/ethnic background of most people on the list? Is the number of white Anglo-Canadian names larger than that of visible minorities? How large (i.e., out of the hundred names on the list) is the disparity?

c. Look at the companies listed for the top 25 of the 100 CEOs and indicate primarily what industries these companies reflect (e.g., energy, banking/finance, media, etc.) Considering what you learned in the units on media and social analysis, as well as in this unit, do you find the industries represented to be a surprise?

d. Based on the above findings, what can you say about power and privilege in connection with this report's listing of the highest paid 100 CEOs? How is power and privilege distributed among the elite in Canada? What does the severe lack of representation by women and racial and ethnic minorities tell you about who really has power and privilege in our country?

Power, Privilege, and Intersecting Inequality

So far, we have seen how we live in societies rooted in inequality and rigid forms of stratification. We have said, however, that this inequality does not just happen. It is the result of the calculated decisions made by people with power to maximize their advantages and to pass on those advantages to people like them. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) offered one way to understand how this works. He wrote that there are three forms of **capital**. These forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—work together to confer power and privilege on those who are lucky enough to have access to them.

capital: French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) wrote that there are three forms of capital. These forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—work together to confer power and privilege on those who are lucky enough to have access to them. Economic capital is about having access to economic resources like income and wealth. Cultural and social capital, on the other hand, refer to having access to group memberships, relationships, networks, and cultural "knowledge" that produce and sustain privilege. Social capital is simply the people you know and their ability to offer you access to opportunities. Cultural capital is the type of cultural knowledge that allows you to comfortably "fit in" with people in positions of power and privilege that can offer you access to opportunities.

We have already discussed economic capital, which is about having access to economic resources like income and wealth.

Cultural and social capital, on the other hand, refer to having access to group memberships, relationships, networks, and cultural "knowledge" that produce and sustain privilege. Social capital is simply the people you know and their ability to offer you access to opportunities. Cultural capital is the type of cultural knowledge that allows you to comfortably "fit in" with people in positions of power and privilege that can offer you access to opportunities.

In this video titled *Training the Elite: Shamus Khan, Dr. Khan* discusses how these forms of capital work together in the context of elite private schools in the US (Source: Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2016). These schools perpetuate the cycle of power and privilege for the wealthy few (mostly—there are some exceptions) who can afford to attend them.

https://youtu.be/6ehzUdL8hCw

As you watch the video, identify instances in which Dr. Khan talks about economic, cultural, and social capital. What distinguishes these three forms? How do they work together to provide unearned advantages and opportunities for certain groups?



Summary

In this module, we discussed the factors that contribute to social stratification. It is very important to note that social stratification and *power and privilege* go hand in hand—that is, they work together to support one another. In other words, each is necessary for the existence of the other, and they exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship.



KEY CONCEPTS

class	The concept of class refers to the relative location of a person or group within a given society based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued markers of one's position (status) within a social hierarchy. Class determines one's access to rewards, resources, and opportunities, which, in turn, influence one's level of education, income, occupation, housing, healthcare, and life expectancy. Traditionally, class has been divided into five categories: upper class; middle class; working class; working poor; and underclass.
social stratification	The hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc.
capital	French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) wrote that there are three forms of capital. These forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—work together to confer power and privilege on those who are lucky enough to have access to them. Economic capital is about having access to economic resources like income and wealth. Cultural and social capital, on the other hand, refer to having access to group memberships, relationships, networks, and cultural "knowledge" that produce and sustain privilege. Social capital is simply the people you know and their ability to offer you access to opportunities. Cultural capital is the type of cultural knowledge that allows you to comfortably "fit in" with people in positions of power and privilege that can offer you access to opportunities

Global Indigenous Example

It is said that you can judge a society by the way it treats its most vulnerable members. In the case of First Nations and Indigenous peoples around the world, it is clear that many societies, including Canada and Australia, do not treat them with any measure of equality, let alone equity.



"BONDI, SYDNEY: Drone photo of 2000 people spelling out Stop Adani on Bondi Beach_credit Max Phillips" by #StopAdani is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Aboriginal communities on practically every continent are constantly having to struggle to keep their communities, lands, traditions, and ways of life alive. They are pitted against powerful private corporations with immense influence and resources. These corporations are in turn supported by local and state governments that depend on these companies' financial support to win elections and maintain the status quo.

In Australia, Aboriginal communities have been fighting for years against one of the world's most powerful mining corporations. This company wants access and control over these communities' ancestral lands and waterways, to extract coal resources to sell on the international market. Rather than protecting the rights of its Aboriginal communities, the Australian government has supported the company's efforts to gain control.

The proposed mine is owned and operated by the Adani group of companies, headed by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani. Adani wants to develop the Carmichael open-cut thermal coal mine in central Queensland's Galilee Basin. The plan is to extract 10 million tons of coal per year (with approvals in place for future extraction of up to 50–60 million tons annually) for up to 60 years. This would make it Australia's largest mine. This coal will be sold primarily to India. There, it will be burned to generate electricity. This electricity would then be sold to neighbouring Bangladesh and other South Asian countries to satisfy those nations' rapidly increasing demand for coal-generated electrical power (Bravus Mining and Resources, 2021; see also: Environmental Law Australia, n.d.; Chandrasekhar, Williams, & Sengupta, 2019, para. 3).

The fight between local Aboriginal communities vs. Adani and the Australian and Queensland governments reads like the classic story of David and Goliath.

On one side are the Wangan and Jagalingou people. These communities have lived on their lands for thousands of years. Now the Australian government has granted these lands to Adani for exploitation. In the face of the immense power and privilege enjoyed by Adani, these Aboriginal communities are like David in the biblical story. The odds are against them.

On the other side is Adani. Like a veritable Goliath, it has spent huge sums of money to exert influence over local and federal politicians, and even local Aboriginal communities, in its quest to secure land title rights so it can proceed with this massive project (Robertson, 2017). The Carmichael mine would be the first of at least six mines to be constructed by Adani. Together, they would create a vast mining legacy in an environmentally sensitive area of Queensland. This area is home to myriad species of fauna and flora, and is the ancestral home to many Aboriginal groups (Moore, 2019).

The Wangan and Jagalingou Family Council represents two of the Aboriginal communities who oppose building the mine. On its web page, it describes the destructive impact the Adani Carmichael mine would have on their lands, waterways, communities, and cultures. The Council writes:

> Our traditional lands are an interconnected and living whole; a vital cultural landscape. It is central to us as a People, and to the maintenance of our identity, laws and consequent rights.
>
> If the Carmichael mine were to proceed it would tear the heart out of the land. The scale of this mine means it would have devastating impacts on our native title, ancestral lands and waters, our totemic plants and animals, and our environmental and cultural heritage. It would pollute and drain billions of litres of groundwater, and obliterate important springs systems. It would potentially wipe out threatened and endangered species. It would literally leave a huge black hole, monumental in proportions, where there were once our homelands. These effects are irreversible. Our land will be "disappeared".
>
> Nor would the direct impacts be limited to our lands – they would have cascading effects on the neighbouring lands and waters of other Traditional Owners and other landholders in the region. And the mine would cause damage to climate, with the burning of the coal unleashing a mass of carbon into the atmosphere and propelling dangerous global warming.
>
> We could not in all conscience consent to such wholesale destruction. Nor could we allow such a project to contribute to the dire unfolding effects of climate change that pose such great risks to all peoples. (Wangan & Jagalingou Family Council, n.d.)

Environmental activists and various Aboriginal and other stakeholder groups have fought Adani at every turn, trying to overturn the company's bid to begin mine operations. However, according to the *Brisbane Times*, after receiving approvals on a number of environmental assessment studies by the Australian government, the Adani mine is expected to begin operations in 2021 (Moore, 2020; see also: Babones, 2021).

Global Citizenship Example

Global citizenship means being mindful and acting as agents of positive change to help make our shared world more equal, fair, and just. To do this, we have to be willing to get involved in local, national, and global issues.

In the Global Indigenous Example, we discussed the proposed (and ongoing) development of the Carmichael mine. In particular, we explored the conflict between the Aboriginal people of Queensland and the multinational corporation Adani, as well as the Australian government. But these are not the only people/groups involved or interested in the outcome of this fight. Local residents, fellow citizens of Australia, and citizens of other countries have taken individual and collective action to help save the ancestral lands of the Wangan and Jagalingou people. In doing so, they embody what it means to be a global citizen. Their actions, and potentially your actions, can make a vital difference. But such struggles are not easy, nor do they always succeed.

The Galilee Blockade is a grassroots campaign that, in their own words, "aims to protect the Galilee basin from coal and gas extraction.... We are committed to taking action to keep Adani's Carmichael coal mine from destroying our climate" (Galilee Blockade: Together We Will Win, n.d.). On their website, they effectively describe what it means to act as a global citizen fighting against injustice: "Civil resistance is not easy. It directly challenges powerful people and institutions, but it shifts the political spectrum of what's possible" (Galilee Blockade: Together We Will Win, n.d.).
To illustrate why this issue is so important, it is necessary to be aware what is at stake. The well-organized grassroots campaign called #StopAdani is one of the "biggest people-powered campaigns in Australian history" (#StopAdani, n.d.-a). They provide a list of the calamities that will befall the Queensland areas presently under the control of Adani:

If built, Adani's Carmichael mine will:

- Destroy the ancestral lands, waters and cultures of Indigenous people without their consent.
- Allow 500 more coal ships to travel through the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area every year for 60 years.
- Get access to 270 billion litres of Queensland's precious groundwater for 60 years, for free.
- Risk damaging aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin.
- Add 4.6 billion tonnes of carbon pollution to our atmosphere.

> Critically, if allowed to go ahead, Adani's Carmichael coal mine will unlock the Galilee Basin – one of the world's largest untouched coal reserves – paving the way for at least eight more coal mines to be built. All at a time when scientists are warning we can't build any more fossil fuel infrastructure if we want to avoid catastrophic global heating. (#StopAdani, n.d.-b)

Adrian Burragubba is an Aboriginal member and council leader of the Wangan and Jagalingou people, as well as a musician and the voice of his people's fight against Adani.

The three videos below provide great examples of the activism of Burragubba, the Aboriginal communities, and Australian and international citizens against the mine. They also offer us a window into the history, culture, and community of the Wangan and Jagalingou people.

The first video is a remarkable short film about the struggles faced by Aboriginal communities as they try to stop the Carmichael mine. It offers insight into the multidimensional, intersecting issues involved. It was produced by the #StopAdani action campaign.

People Power Vs Adani – The Fight of Our Times (Source: Stop Adani, 2020b)

https://www.facebook.com/stopadani/videos/2693473950962822/

The second short video is narrated by Burragubba. As you watch, take note of his calls to action on behalf of his community, the people of Australia, and the international community. Here, we see firsthand one way that global citizenship often takes form. Dispossessed and marginalized people are forced to rise up and fight for justice and fairness. This is the only way they can survive and save their community members, homes, and ancestral lands from the destructive actions of powerful corporations and their government defenders.

Stop Adani Destroying Our Land and Culture (Source: Wangan & Jagalingou People, 2015)

https://youtu.be/ZB2JC6yKy_E

The third video, also produced by the #StopAdani grassroots organization, offers five concrete ways to keep up pressure on Adani and its various economic and political supporters.

5 Ways to #StopAdani (Source: Stop Adani, 2020a)

https://www.facebook.com/stopadani/videos/439446110298445/

These videos are examples of global citizenship, as well as social action in which Burragubba, his fellow community members, and the Australian and wider global communities continue their fight to bring a halt to the mine.

Social Analysis Example

One way to approach the Carmichael mine issue (described in the Global Indigenous Example and the Global Citizenship Example) is by asking critical thinking questions to analyze and assess the multiple dimensions of this ongoing struggle.

1. Who are the individuals directly affected by the actions of the Adani corporation as it seeks to establish and operate the Carmichael mine in Galilee Basin, Queensland, Australia?
2. Who are the key actors in this conflict? What are each actor's motivations? What are the stakes for each actor? Are they all motivated by the same concerns?

3. Besides the human participants in this conflict, what other members of the natural world are implicated? Can you name at least three natural elements/areas of concern that would be directly impacted by this mine?
4. What institutions and power structures inform and affect this conflict between the Wangan and Jagalingou people and the Adani corporation?
5. What is the role of government in this conflict? Do you think that government supports the plight of the Aboriginal groups trying to stop the opening of the mine, or are they instead enacting legislation to support Adani's efforts to establish the mine?
6. When you review the videos and other media created by grassroots organizations fighting to stop the mine, such as the #StopAdani campaign, do you think that social media is effective in this case in mobilizing support for the cause from the wider Australian and world communities?
7. What do you think is the dominant ideology that contributes to the constant push by the Adani corporation to open its Carmichael mine despite stiff opposition from local, national, and international groups and communities?

Sources

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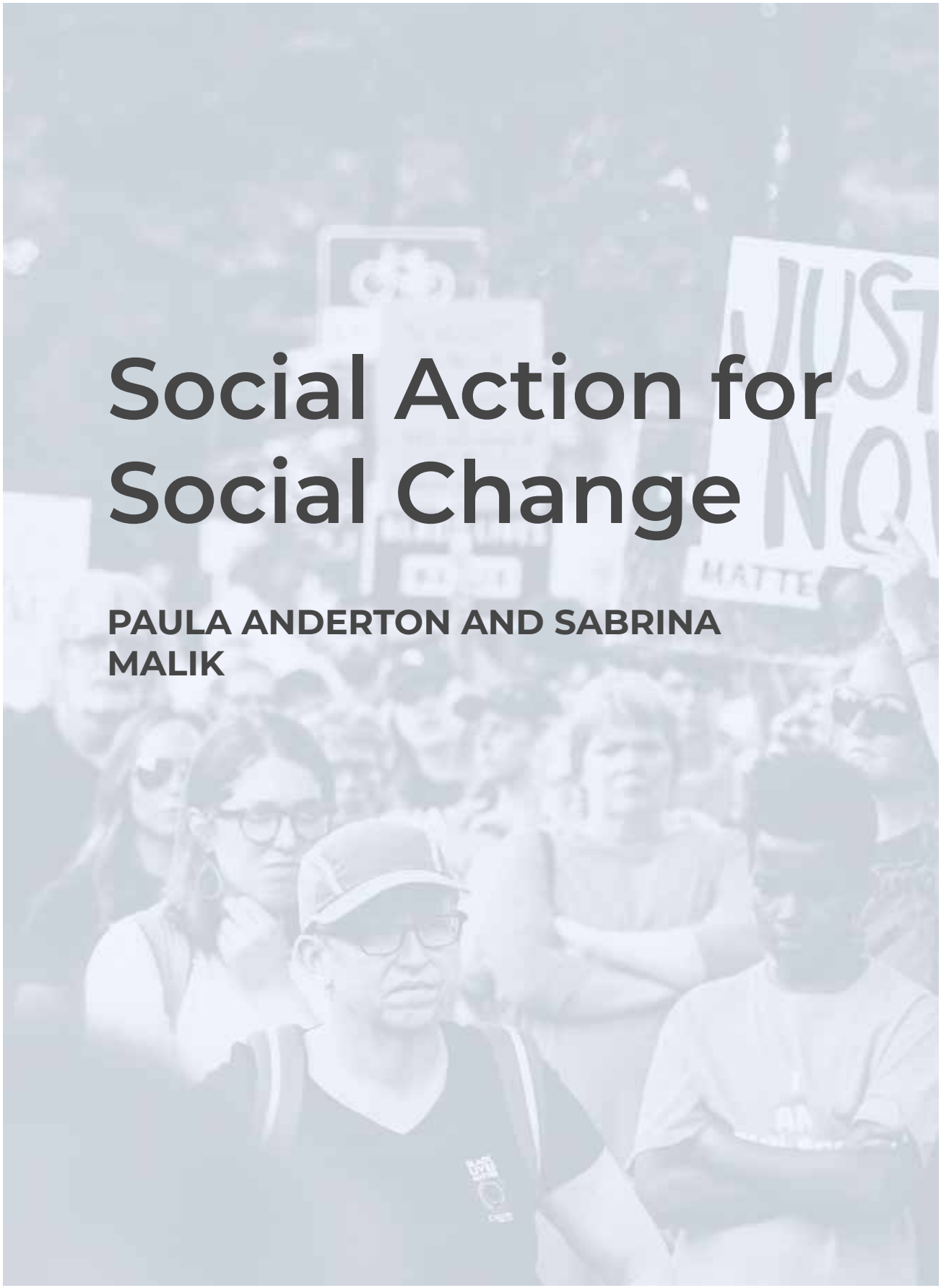
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Social Action for Social Change

PAULA ANDERTON AND SABRINA MALIK



What Would You Do?

Do you know where your clothes were made, and by whom? Or what the living and work conditions are for the farmers who grew and harvested the coffee beans in your morning coffee? What if you learned that your clothes are being made for very low wages in an unsafe work environment, or that the production of most coffee impacts the farmers and the environment in negative ways? What would you do?



Image by Danielle MacInness on Unsplash



GO DEEPER

One way to try to interrupt the process of labour exploitation and the negative environmental impact of the products that we purchase is to practice *conscious consumerism*: making purchases that have positive impacts on our society. However, it's important to consider how much of an impact is made when we try to challenge a system of exploitation from within the very structures that are creating these inequalities.

Read this article to learn more about conscious consumerism. (Source: Wong, 2019)

http://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/01/smarter-living/sustainable-shopping-conscious-consumer.html

What Is Social Action?

We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.

– Howard Zinn



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This module will explore what global citizenship means in terms of social action, the point at which awareness is put into practice. When "this isn't fair" becomes "let's make it fair," the shift has been made from awareness to action. **Social action**, then, is any action of an individual or a group that seeks to promote social change on a small or large scale. Social action starts with an awareness of the root cause(s) of a social problem. We can understand why a social problem exists by applying critical social analysis to the issue. We can then use that analysis to take action and work towards fairness and equity.

Anyone can take social action at any level. Individual actions, such as writing an email or re-posting a link online, can start a conversation about problems in our society, and how we might begin making changes. We do not need to be considered an **activist** to engage in social action. There is more to social action, however, than just a willingness to get involved. Good intentions can sometimes do more harm than good. For example, some of the most vocal and committed individuals work for extremist groups willing to kill to promote their values. This module focuses on social action in the service of **social justice**—that is, social action that seeks to heal divisions in society, not hurt other people.

social action: Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.

activist: An individual who devotes time to work, either paid or unpaid, to bring about social change.

social justice: The full and equal participation of all groups in an egalitarian society, where people's needs are met, and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Social justice aims to address inequities by changing the structural and root cause(s) of social problems.

GO DEEPER

This article, although written with educators and teachers in mind, includes strategies for students, such as sharing your knowledge of social issues to educate others, and engaging in social action through public awareness campaigns, protests, and political advocacy. (Source: "10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism," n.d.)

http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

Why Take Social Action?

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

– Desmond Tutu



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We take social action because we believe that a social condition is unacceptable and requires change. We may think that there is not much we can do as individuals, but as we will see in this module, people can get involved on the individual level, with groups, and with large social movements. Individual actions, such as choosing to purchase **fair trade** products and boycotting companies that are exploitative, or reducing your carbon footprint by walking or taking public transit to work or school instead of driving, are good places to start. But when these actions are taken by many towards the same goal—when we engage in **collective action**—there is strength in numbers. Collective action refers to a group of individuals working together towards a greater cause.

Social action can start with the simplest idea and the willingness to implement it. To address injustices and inequities in our society, we can start by learning about and raising awareness of the structural and ideological foundations

that create and maintain social problems. It is important to also examine our own biases and beliefs, as well as the ideologies that inform our worldview when we consider taking action. Social action can often inspire resistance from groups that are benefiting from the status quo and do not wish to see society reorganized, as you'll see in the sub-topic on backlash.

fair trade: An ethical business model where producers and labourers are paid a living wage and work in safe and humane conditions, and products are made using environmentally sustainable methods.

collective action: Organized group action towards a common goal.



GO DEEPER

Consider how social change can begin on a small scale. Read this article to learn how researchers have identified that it only takes a small minority group of 25% to reach a "tipping point" for social change. (Source: Noonan, 2018)

http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-25-revolution-how-big-does-a-minority-have-to-be-to-reshape-society/

Challenging Norms—How Social Action Begins

Let's say you've been learning about the controversies over national holidays that are based on colonial history. These debates have got you thinking, and you want to talk about it. Thanksgiving is coming up—one of those holidays at the center of the debate—and you've been considering what this celebration represents. It's always good to discuss new ideas, right…? Read on.



Image by Julie Rothe on Pixabay



The First Thanksgiving, 1621, Painting Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Public Domain.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Your family is gathered around the table for your annual Thanksgiving dinner. Everyone is ready to dig into the feast, but you find yourself distracted. Doesn't this holiday celebrate the origins of colonialism and hundreds of years of violence and oppression? Should we really be mindlessly gorging ourselves on turkey when we are still living this history? What about the people who can't afford to eat this way, right now? And, oh yeah, who will be washing up when it's over?

Half an hour into the meal, your aunty notices you've been unusually quiet. "You haven't said much, dear, are you not feeling well?" she asks.

"I've been wondering about this Thanksgiving tradition," you say. "Doesn't it glorify colonialism and slavery, and the genocide of Indigenous peoples?" The table goes silent. Your uncle freezes with a forkful of food halfway to his mouth. Your mother glares at you in horror. Then it starts.

"It's just a celebration of the harvest," says your aunt, exasperated.

"I haven't oppressed anyone," your uncle snaps. "Don't blame me for history."

"This is not the time and place for politics," growls your father.

Your brother stares down at his phone. Your cousin points out the factory-farmed turkey on the table, but gets cut-short by your uncle with "don't you start now." Your mother pleads, "Can't we just have one day when we don't feel guilty about something?"

You silence yourself with a piece of turkey. "I guess I should have kept my mouth shut," you think.

You've just confronted the first challenge of being an activist—defensiveness. You asked hard questions, made people uncomfortable about their privilege and ran headlong into their unconscious biases. It seems you picked the wrong time and place to raise your concerns, but there is never a "right" time or place, because talking about social injustice always meets with resistance. You are faced with a choice—let it drop, live your life, and let someone else fix the world, or keep asking questions and going deeper, because if not you, then who?

"Thanksgiving Dinner" by Paula Anderton, Centennial College is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

Backlash to Social Action



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As the "turkey dinner" story illustrates, it is difficult to ask people to reconsider their perspective. People like comfort and certainty, and change can make them feel confused and insecure. It puts people on the defensive when the way they do things, or view things, is challenged. But no progress can be made to address injustice without discomfort.

Imagine that dinner-table defensiveness on a larger scale. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, for instance, has become an international effort to end the structural racism that causes Black lives to be valued less in our social institutions. This is big social action and it gets a big response, including fear and anger from thousands of people who have benefited from this unequal system and like it just the way it is. When dinner-table defensiveness is felt by thousands of people, it becomes **backlash**.

backlash: Fear, anger or resistance to a social ideology or actions intended to address social problems

Types of Backlash

> Politicians, the media and the police often label social action, which includes both activists and advocacy, as 'special interests'. But I don't see anything special about needing to – or at the very least wanting to and trying to, feed the hungry and house the homeless. Social action, at its root, is about fighting for and ensuring the most basic of human rights for all people. (Crowe, 2006)

Backlash can range from words and labels used to undermine social action, to organized violence. Labels like "special interests," for instance, make social action for change sound like "fringe movements" that only concern a few. The phrase "All lives matter" is commonly used to counter the BLM message, missing the point of the movement. Rioting in the streets and hate groups, like white supremacists, take backlash to the extreme.

Watch this video for an explanation of the backlash phrase "All lives matter" (Source: Peace House, 2016). While the video may be humorous, it makes a real point about how easy it is for people to dismiss an important issue like BLM when it becomes "inconvenient" for them.

https://youtu.be/NtAAeyswlHM

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

It is important to understand the difference between backlash and dissent. To disagree with an opinion, policy or objective is not the same thing as backlash. Backlash happens when the group in power believes that power is being threatened. Backlash is about maintaining privilege and keeping things the way they are—with dominant groups remaining dominant. People engaging in backlash resist change not because of well-reasoned arguments against that change, but because they may lose their advantage in society. Dissent, or disagreement, should always be permitted in a free and open society. In fact, most social movements are based on dissent against some aspect of the system that isn't fair—it's how social progress starts. Backlash, however, is an emotional response, often driven by anger or fear, which holds back progress on social problems.



GO DEEPER

Backlash in Canada

It's easy to critique social problems in the United States, where everything seems to happen on a bigger scale and in full view of a global audience. But when we turn the lens on ourselves, Canada is also seeing a disturbing trend of backlash to social action. Take a look at the examples that follow.

Wet'suwet'en pipeline-protest backlash (Source: Fine, 2020)

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/alberta/article-alberta-tables-bill-that-would-jail-pipeline-protesters-for-up-to-six/?_ga=2.251312902.1875510080.1601920519-100047178.1601920519

Alberta's Bill 1 (Source: CityNews Edmonton, 2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--ghwl5chKI

Islamophobia in Quebec (Source: "Why this photo of a politician with Malala is being criticized," 2019)

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48794502

Types of Social Action: Charity and Social Justice

Social action takes many different forms. **Social justice** and **charity** are both forms of social action, but their goals and impact are different.

Social justice usually involves collective public acts to promote social change in institutions and in society. The aim of social justice is to create an

social justice: The full and equal participation of all groups in an egalitarian society, where people's needs are met, and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Social justice aims to address inequities by changing the structural and root cause(s) of social problems.

charity: Aid given to those in need. This could be done on an individual basis or it could involve an institution or organization engaged in relief services.



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egalitarian society based on the principles of equality and solidarity. Such a society understands and values human rights and recognizes the dignity of every human being (Bell, 2007). Social justice is directed at the root causes rather than the symptoms of social problems.

Charity, on the other hand, addresses the symptoms of social problems, but it may not directly address the real long-term needs of people or communities. Charity can take several forms. It may involve acts by individuals or groups aimed at providing for the immediate needs of others through direct services such as serving food and providing shelter. Charitable organizations run services such as homeless shelters and food banks, and set up emergency aid campaigns to deal with specific issues, such as famine relief. All are attempts at responding to injustice and are usually not controversial.

Although such efforts are valuable to those in need, they are limited in scope. Charity does not fix the underlying, systemic problems that create suffering. It does not address structural or ideological issues. For this reason, relying on charity can be disempowering for those who are socially disadvantaged. Only permanent structural changes can eliminate the root causes of social inequalities—and remove the need for charity in the first place.

Social justice work is challenging. It means raising difficult questions about how society is arranged and thinking about the root causes of such problems as poverty, homelessness, or racism. To engage in social justice is to ask, for example, whether people who are wealthy owe something to those who are poor. Such questions are unsettling to those who believe that their good fortune is a product of their hard work and abilities rather than the result of unjust social structures.



GO DEEPER

This video offers a satirical look at aid projects to Africa. It uses humour to make a serious point about the shortcomings and stereotypes in the international aid system. (Source: SAIH Norway, 2013)

https://youtu.be/xbqA6o8_WC0

This TED Talk article discusses an interesting take on the function of charity. Philosopher Peter Singer has proposed a way to make charity into a social movement that makes a difference in the long term, which he calls "effective altruism." (Source: Ha, 2013)

https://blog.ted.com/effective-altruism-peter-singer-at-ted2013/

Grassroots Social Action

Grassroots social action occurs "on the ground" at a local level. It involves community-based activities and projects that improve conditions or change policies. This form of **collective action** turns awareness of root causes and structural reasons for social problems into direct action. It seeks to right wrongs, and support and engage with the people who are most affected by the issue. Grassroots social action typically begins with the people who are directly experiencing the effects of social inequalities.

grassroots: A bottom-up approach to social action, where community members at the local level are directly involved and encouraged to contribute to sustainable positive social change for their community.

collective action: Organized group action towards a common goal.

Advantages

The realistic scale, combined with solutions based on the needs, desires and identity of the community, make this kind of social action accessible and beneficial to participants.

Disadvantages

Grassroots movements must work for change within the system that created the original problem, which can block progress or limit results. They may also collapse due to competing interests or differences within the communities themselves.



Image (2013) by Cultural Survival, © All Rights Reserved. Used with permission

An example of a grassroots social action initiative is Idle No More (INM). INM was started in 2012 by four women in Saskatchewan to address First Nations treaty issues across Canada. This non-violent movement began as a response and resistance to Bill C-45, which was passed through the Senate in Canada in December of the same year. This bill included changes to land management on reservations, removed protections for hundreds of waterways, and weakened Canadian environmental protection laws. Beginning with email threads between the four women, INM gained international attention with a hunger strike by northern Ontario Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence that began in 2012 on International Human Rights Day. The Idle No More movement has spread globally both online and offline to provide a voice for Indigenous land rights, cultures, and sovereignty.



GO DEEPER

Watch this video for a brief history of the Idle No More movement in Canada. (Source: CBC News, 2017)

https://youtu.be/TYf75dKON6k

Other Sources

An Indigenous-led Social Movement (Source: “An Indigenous-led Social Movement,” 2020)

https://idlenomore.ca/about-the-movement/

Being Idle No More: The Women Behind the Movement (Source: Caven, 2013)

https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-idle-no-more-women-behind-movement

Social Justice Movements

When social action occurs on a broad scale and at the group level, we usually call it a **social movement**. Social movements vary and are sometimes hard to define, but they share certain characteristics. For one thing, social movements tend to bring together people who are interested in advocating for social change. Social movements often have a distinct collective identity and are structured around a particular goal. Their goals can be either specific or broadly aimed at bringing about social change at the structural level.

> **social movement:** A group of people with a common ideology who try to achieve common goals. Social movements can also be described as organized groups of people who may encourage or discourage social change.

Social justice movements take collective action to promote social change in institutions and society. They are focused on the root causes of social problems. This also means addressing the ideologies and institutions that work to oppress marginalized groups. Unlike charity, which provides a temporary "Band-Aid" solution to issues, social justice movements try to transform the political, social, and/or economic system. The changes they seek promote equity and equality, the basis of human rights.

Advantages

Social justice movements work to fix the structural issues that create and maintain social problems. They challenge the dominant values and beliefs of a society. This includes questioning the ideologies that rationalize those structures as well as the oppressive actions of individuals who participate in them. This level of action changes the way society operates. Movements such as women's rights, LGBTQ2S+ rights, and racial equality have fundamentally altered society, resulting in human rights laws and social protections.

Disadvantages

Social justice movements take time. They involve years of dedicated effort from committed reformers. They also require financial resources and access to media to rally support. In the meantime, social justice movements do not answer the immediate needs of those who suffer from marginalization and injustice. Finally, while changing ideologies and structures is the ultimate answer to human suffering, it requires confronting powerful forces resistant to such change. These forces make it difficult to achieve social justice aims.



Photo of Alicia Garza from The Movement Moment – panel at CitizenUCon16 by Citizen University is licensed under a CC BY 3.0 license



Photo of Patrisse Cullors from Taking on the Sheriff with Art and Activism: Patrisse Cullors and Kai Lumumba Barrow by The Laura Flanders Show is licensed under a CC BY 3.0 license



Photo of Opal Tometi from Police Violence & Reparations: Opal Tometi, Joey Mogul & Darrell Cannon by The Laura Flanders Show is licensed under a CC BY 3.0 license

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) social justice movement was started in 2013 by three women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. It began as an online platform, called #BlackLivesMatter, to mobilize and organize a response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer, George Zimmerman. Since then, the BLM movement has expanded globally to include more than 40 chapters. It seeks to protect Black people from the deadly violence they face from police and institutions. It also draws attention to and addresses systemic racial discrimination.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about the origin story and work that continues in the BLM movement. (Source: Herstory, 2019)

https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/

The Canadian chapter of Black Lives Matter seeks to dismantle anti-Black racism in Canada, with a call for solidarity within Black communities and with Indigenous groups. Read more about the Canadian chapter. (Source: Black Lives Matter – Canada, n.d.)

https://blacklivesmatter.ca/

Watch this interview with one of the founding members of the Black Lives Matter movement, Patrisse Cullors, to learn more about the history and future of BLM. (Source: Time, 2018)

https://youtu.be/nwFq_MnaGds

International Aid and Social Entrepreneurship

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

So far, we've been learning about social action that happens at the level of groups and communities, and that directly involves the people who are most affected by the issues. This social action tends to occur outside of the system and works to eradicate the systemic and structural causes of social problems. But we might ask: Can social justice be achieved from within existing structures and institutions? Is it possible to have meaningful social action within the very systems that create and contribute to social issues? When we consider these so-called "top-down" approaches to social action, two examples are useful to critique: international aid and social entrepreneurship. These approaches do not necessarily seek to change systems, and are not rooted in transformative ideologies. Instead, they operate using social structures and institutions that are already in place and are largely informed by dominant ideologies and values, such as neocolonialism and capitalism.

International aid is an example of top-down social action that crosses national borders. It is often called international development or foreign aid. International aid involves loaning money on a large scale to struggling countries. Most international aid is provided with an agenda. Countries that accept the aid are forced to adopt "Western" style industrial economics and join the global market economy.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are non-profit organizations that engage in grassroots projects and international aid. They are not run or funded by governments. A common critique of NGOs doing international aid work is that they do not consult or collaborate enough with the people they aim to help. This can produce "Westernized," patriarchal solutions that might not be a good fit with the values, traditions, and desires of the people receiving the aid. Watch the TED Talk "Want to Help Somebody? Shut Up and Listen!" to see how good intentions don't always get good results (Source: Sirolli, 2012).

https://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Social entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is a business model that aims to generate both profit for the company as well as social benefits for those in need. It is also known as social enterprise and corporate social responsibility. It involves large companies conducting business with social consciousness. This might include minimizing negative impacts like exploiting labour or damaging the environment. Businesses both large and small can also have charitable programs through which they donate a portion of their profits to social causes.

Advantages
Social entrepreneurship can work within the current economic system in a way that benefits workers, communities and the environment. This makes it practical and sustainable. Because it does not threaten existing power structures, it is less likely to face resistance (compared to, for example, grassroots movements).

Disadvantages
Critics claim that profit is still the priority. Ethical business practices are used as a marketing tool. Therefore, social entrepreneurship does not signal a shift in ideology. It does not create structural change but functions within the larger system of exploitation, so it is not a lasting solution.



GO DEEPER

Watch this video to learn more about entrepreneurs and businesses that are focused on addressing sustainable solutions to social problems. (Source: Latitude33, 2015)

https://youtu.be/8NNyYej0UJg

Online Activism



Image by Gerd Altmann on Pixabay

Activism—social justice work—has always involved committed people devoting time and effort to a cause. This often includes "boots on the ground" activities, like protesting, rallying, going door to door, attending public meetings and pressuring politicians, to name a few. But the internet and social media have changed the nature of social action. Now there are alternatives to the "direct action" of conventional activism. Online petitions and "awareness campaigns" about social justice issues require little more from us than a click of the mouse or a small donation. But is "awareness" social action? Does it have the power to actually change anything?

Clicktivism

Online social action or "**clicktivism**" uses the internet to rally support for causes. This might involve petitions, "favoriting," or re-posting content about social justice issues. Also known as "hashtag activism," these social media–driven "awareness" campaigns publicize social justice issues as a first step in promoting social action.

clicktivism: Online "awareness campaigns" that use the internet to rally support for causes with methods like petitions, "favoriting," or re-posting content about social justice issues.

virtue signalling: The action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue.

For most online campaigns, the commitment expected is minimal. Because of this, online activism has been critiqued as "slacktivism," not activism. Critics also point out that clicktivism is often used as **virtue signalling** on social media. In other words, people participate in order to appear committed or enlightened, not because they really care about the cause.

Advantages

Sharing social justice issues on the internet leverages the power of millions of online users to raise awareness and drive change. Petitions conducted through the internet have resulted in significant gains for social justice. Like-minded activists can find each other and organize quickly, while people who were unaware of social problems outside their communities are exposed to issues from around the world.

Disadvantages

Traditional activists dismiss clicktivism as an agent of social change because it poses no threat to the dominant power structure—which controls the very platforms where clicktivism happens. There is also the temptation to believe that one has fulfilled their social obligations to global citizenship by merely clicking petitions. This shallow level of engagement and commitment cannot entirely replace "on-the-ground" activism.

Watch this TED Talk by Zeynep Tufekci for a perspective on the benefits and limitations of internet-driven activism (Source: TED, 2015). She looks at various political and social justice movements from around the world and makes a strong case for using social media to rapidly mobilize real action, on the ground. She also points out that these quickly formed protests have a poor track record of actual results. Using the example of the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, she demonstrates that "slow and sustained" social movements, with dedicated, long-term participation, achieve political change. Politicians need to see that a movement is not going away before they take it seriously.

https://youtu.be/Mo2Ai7ESNL8



GO DEEPER

Here are some quick-viewing sources for more perspective on online activism:

Read this story about how an online petition successfully pressured a Florida school board to change the name of a school named after a well-known racist. (Source: Richmond, 2013)

https://www.change.org/p/duval-public-schools-no-more-kkk-high-school

Watch this video about the "Ice Bucket Challenge," a successful online campaign to fund research on the rare disease ALS. (Source: History NOW, 2017)

https://youtu.be/U9Ne88gIXME

Watch this video from Seeker to see how slacktivism can actually harm charities and movements by reducing participation. (Source: Seeker, 2013)

https://youtu.be/efVFiLigmbc

Watch this video from The Feed SBS (an Australian public broadcasting service) for a critique on why clicktivism is not a replacement for traditional activism. (Source: The Feed SBS, 2013)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUiF6uTjMWI

Activism, Allyship, and Advocacy

> *Expressing oneself is a part of being human. To be deprived of a voice is to be told you are not a participant in society; ultimately it is a denial of humanity.*
>
> *– Ai WeiWei*

The terms **activist**, **ally**, and **advocate** are sometimes used interchangeably, but there are differences. The differences can be found in the individual's level of engagement with social problems and marginalized communities.

An activist participates in social change work. Sometimes this is full-time, paid work; sometimes it is part-time and unpaid. What distinguishes an activist from someone who simply supports a cause is their level of engagement. Activists are willing to commit significant time and effort to a cause. In some parts of the world, they take considerable personal risk when their social action challenges those in power. An activist often fights against injustices from outside of the structural system (while an advocate may work from within). For example, an activist may rally supporters to organize a protest that will disrupt the daily commute on a major highway in order to capture the public's

attention for their cause. An activist may also engage in forms of creative communication such as creating visual art, performance, or music to spread a message for change (see the Go Deeper section).

> **activist:** An individual who devotes time to work, either paid or unpaid, to bring about social change.
>
> **ally:** An individual who may not belong to a marginalized group but supports their struggles for equality.
>
> **advocate**: An individual whose privileged position allows them to speak on behalf of others experiencing inequality, often through legal or institutional activity.

Advocacy may take the form of someone speaking on behalf of communities through legal activity, or speaking on behalf of an individual who requires support. An advocate is perhaps most effective when they can acknowledge and use their position of privilege to speak on behalf of others whose voices may not be heard. An advocate will sometimes have personal experiences with the communities and individuals they support, but not always.

An ally, on the other hand, may not specifically be associated with or belong to a marginalized group, but does support a group's struggles for equality and social justice. Allyship, for example, is sometimes associated with those who are in support of LGBTQ2S+ communities. Although allies may not be in a position to speak on behalf of this community, they are openly supportive of LGBTQ2S+ peoples' rights and freedoms. Activism may involve both allyship and advocacy, but activists generally have a direct relationship and lived experience with the communities on whose behalf they are acting for social change.



"News" by Sidia Atabales-Schnitzler is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

In this TED Talk, Kofi Hope, a Toronto-based social entrepreneur and activist, explores how an individual working with a community can create positive social change (Source: TEDx Talks, 2020). He talks about his work with Black youth in Toronto during 2005, the "year of the gun." Like today, Black communities at the time were coping with gun violence and racial profiling. He stresses that "hope lives in community" and that we must work together to resist power. "Getting into good trouble" means choosing a cause, finding a community, and starting with an easy and early win. Even small shifts in power can be the first step towards change.

https://youtu.be/F9VzYWMGA6o



GO DEEPER

In this article, activist and teacher Sharif El-Mekki argues that activism and advocacy cannot be separated. The author writes that his personal experiences with racialization have informed his activism and advocacy on behalf of racially marginalized students and communities. He states that advocacy is most impactful when it serves people directly and when it acts with, not just on behalf of, communities. (Source: El-Mekki, 2018)

https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/educational-justice-which-are-you-an-advocate-ally-or-activist/

"Artistic activism" uses art to create connections and evoke a response from an audience. When used to communicate a need for social change, artistic activism expresses values that are shared by communities. Read this article for nine reasons why art as activism can be highly effective. (Source: The Center for Artistic Activism, 2018)

https://c4aa.org/2018/04/why-artistic-activism

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

What does it really mean to be an "ally"? Some activists are critical of this word and prefer to think of allyship as involving fellow comrades, or even "co-conspirators." Others see allyship as a relatively easy way to say you agree with a cause and support the fight for equality. But perhaps it's too easy. People might think being an ally is enough—and take a pass on any meaningful, direct action. In contrast, perhaps if we saw ourselves as co-conspirators, we might start to show true solidarity—where we work through our feelings of guilt or shame about our privilege, and start taking responsibility for the power that we have to change conditions.

Take a moment to reflect on your level of commitment: Do you consider yourself an ally or perhaps a co-conspirator? What are you willing to risk, or what privileges might you be willing to give up for a cause?

Read the following articles if you would like to learn more about critiques of the term allyship.

Ally or Co-conspirator? What It Means to Act #InSolidarity. (Source: Move to End Violence, 2016)

https://movetoendviolence.org/blog/ally-co-conspirator-means-act-insolidarity/

White People Say They Want to Be an Ally to Black People. But Are They Ready for Sacrifice? (Source: Smoot, 2020)

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/29/white-people-ally-black-people-sacrifice

Global Citizenship and Social Action



Image by Michell Trommler on Pixabay

> *None of us are free if one of us are chained.*
>
> *– Solomon Burke, from the song "None of Us Are Free"*

This course has covered a lot of ideas. We've looked at big, important concepts for understanding why the world works the way it does—good and bad—and our place in this global community. Social action is the final section of this online textbook because this is where all those concepts connect to global citizenship. The information you've read about ideology, identity, power and privilege, media literacy, etc., is important to know to be well-informed and ready to face the world, but it's only a starting point.

We can be carried along through life hoping the forces of inequality, climate change and injustice don't affect us. We may think that a good job after graduation will shield us from needing the information in this text. But if you've learned anything in a course

called “Global Citizenship,” it’s that the forces shaping this world affect all of us, together. This is true on both an economic level, as explained in the module on globalization, and on a social level, where our destiny as a species will be determined by how well we can co-exist with one another.

Living with fairness, sustainability and compassion is not naïve, wishful thinking. These values are necessary for the survival of humanity and our planet. To stay aware of social problems and do something within our means to do is not asking too much of ourselves. Being a global citizen is no longer a choice—it’s an automatic by-product of our inter-connected world. We are all contributing to the globalized economy and watching each other on the World Wide Web. The question isn’t whether you will be a global citizen but what kind of global citizen you will be.



“Peace to the World” by Zia Foley is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

There are young activists all over the world tackling social problems on every level. Most of them will never be covered in our media. It is important to acknowledge that even in the field of social action, we tend to be ethnocentric and ignore the work being done in other parts of the globe. For instance, while Greta Thunberg is a hero in the youth climate change movement, there are young climate change activists working in other parts of the world, many before we ever heard Greta’s name, and we don’t know about them.

GO DEEPER

Read this article from The Guardian for a perspective on global youth activism and the need to create true global citizenship by recognizing social action efforts around the world. This article asks us to consider our own privilege and ethnocentrism when we think about activism. (Source: Unigwe, 2019)

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/05/greta-thunberg-developing-world-activists

Read more about two of the global activists in this article by clicking their pictures, below.



Image of Kaluki Paul Mutuku by Charles Wundegba is licensed under CC BY-SA-4.0.



Image of Wangari Maathai by Isaac Mau is licensed under CC BY-2.0

Follow the links to see more activists from *The Guardian* article:

Meet India's Teen Climate Advocate: Ridhima Pandey (Source: Varagur, 2019)

https://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2019/0930/Meet-India-s-teen-climate-advocate-Ridhima-Pandey

In India, a Trio of Unlikely Heroes Wages War on Plastic (Source: Associated Press, 2018)

https://www.nationalobserver.com/2018/06/04/news/india-trio-unlikely-heroes-wages-war-plastic

Environmental and Indigenous Rights Activist to Receive WWF's Top Youth Conservation Award (Source: Naware, 2018)

https://wwf.panda.org/?327434

The Indigenous Teen Who Confronted Trudeau about Unsafe Water Took on the UN (Source: Nagle, 2019)

https://www.vice.com/en/article/8xwvx3/the-indigenous-teen-who-confronted-trudeau-about-unsafe-water-took-on-the-un

School Strike for Climate: A Day in the Life of Ugandan Student Striker Leah Namugerwa (Source: EDN Staff, 2019)

https://www.earthday.org/school-strike-for-climate-a-day-in-the-life-of-fridays-for-future-uganda-student-striker-leah-namugerwa/

Factbox: In Greta's Footsteps: 10 Young Climate Activists Fighting for Change (Source: Elks, 2019)

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-change-youth-factbox/factbox-in-gretas-footsteps-10-young-climate-activists-fighting-for-change-idUSKBN1WC1ZA

Summary

In this module, we defined social action for positive change and identified different approaches to taking social action. We explored charity and social justice movements, online activism, grassroots and top-down approaches, and how and why backlash to social action occurs.



KEY CONCEPTS

activist	An individual who devotes time to work, either paid or unpaid, to bring about social change.
advocate	An individual whose privileged position allows them to speak on behalf of others experiencing inequality, often through legal or institutional activity.
ally	An individual who may not belong to a marginalized group but supports their struggles for equality.
charity	Aid given to those in need. This could be done on an individual basis or it could involve an institution or organization engaged in relief services.
clicktivism/ hashtag activism	Online "awareness campaigns" that use the internet to rally support for causes with methods like petitions, "favoriting," or re-posting content about social justice issues.
collective action	Organized group action towards a common goal.
fair trade	An ethical business model where producers and labourers are paid a living wage and work in safe and humane conditions, and products are made using environmentally sustainable methods.
grassroots	A bottom-up approach to social action, where community members at the local level are directly involved and encouraged to contribute to sustainable positive social change for their community.
international aid	The transfer of resources such as money, goods, and/or expertise from a country or large organization to a recipient country in order to help them emerge from poverty. Also known as foreign aid or development.

social action	Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.
social entrepreneurship	A commerce model that combines the principles of business with the objectives of social action and charity
social justice	The full and equal participation of all groups in an egalitarian society, where people's needs are met, and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Social justice aims to address inequities by changing the structural and root cause(s) of social problems.
social movement	A group of people with a common ideology who try to achieve common goals. Social movements can also be described as organized groups of people who may encourage or discourage social change.
virtue signalling	The action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue.

Sources

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KEY CONCEPTS

accountable	To be responsible for actions and decisions and able to explain the reasons for them.
achieved	A social status that is a result of an individual's work, accomplishments, and/or abilities.
achieved status	A social status that is a result of an individual's work, accomplishments, and/or abilities.
activist	An individual who devotes time to work, either paid or unpaid, to bring about social change.
advocate	An individual whose privileged position allows them to speak on behalf of others experiencing inequality, often through legal or institutional activity.
agents of socialization	Groups or institutions that play role in the process of developing our identities and the roles we play.
ally	An individual who may not belong to a marginalized group but supports their struggles for equality.
ascribed	A social status assigned to an individual from birth. It is not chosen and cannot easily be changed.
ascribed status	A social status assigned to an individual from birth. It is not chosen and cannot easily be changed.
assimilation	"The process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation, or the state of being so adapted" ("Assimilation," n.d.).
audience	A group of people or a person to whom we perform our identities.
back-stage performance	The behaviour that we exhibit only when alone or around people we are close to and trust.

backlash	Fear, anger or resistance to a social ideology or actions intended to address social problems
Bechdel test	A simple test to determine the representation and inclusion of well-rounded female characters in films and TV.
big data	“Extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally [by computers] to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions” (“Big data,” n.d.).
big-picture thinking	to think about issues from a broader perspective, considering multiple views and resources.
capital	French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) wrote that there are three forms of capital. These forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—work together to confer power and privilege on those who are lucky enough to have access to them. Economic capital is about having access to economic resources like income and wealth. Cultural and social capital, on the other hand, refer to having access to group memberships, relationships, networks, and cultural “knowledge” that produce and sustain privilege. Social capital is simply the people you know and their ability to offer you access to opportunities. Cultural capital is the type of cultural knowledge that allows you to comfortably “fit in” with people in positions of power and privilege that can offer you access to opportunities
capitalism	A global economic system in which private people and companies own goods and property. The capitalists’ main aim is to produce goods to sell at a profit by keeping the cost of labour and resources low.
cartel	A cartel is formed when businesses agree to act together instead of competing with each other, all the while maintaining the illusion of competition. A cartel is a group of independent businesses whose concerted goal is to lessen or prevent competition” (Government of Canada, 2018).
charity	Aid given to those in need. This could be done on an individual basis or it could involve an institution or or-

	ganization engaged in relief services.
citizenship	Refers to social and political relations among people who are considered to be community members. It can also refer to borders, passports, and nationalities that divide membership communities from the rest of the world. In the latter form, citizenship labels some people as "national members and others as national outsiders and limits the entry of those outsiders into the national territory" (Bosniak, 2006, p. 2450).
class	The concept of class refers to the relative location of a person or group within a given society based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued markers of one's position (status) within a social hierarchy. Class determines one's access to rewards, resources, and opportunities, which, in turn, influence one's level of education, income, occupation, housing, healthcare, and life expectancy. Traditionally, class has been divided into five categories: upper class; middle class; working class; working poor; and underclass.
clickbait	A headline designed to grab the attention of viewers and entice them to follow the link to its source.
clicktivism	Online "awareness campaigns" that use the internet to rally support for causes with methods like petitions, "favoriting," or re-posting content about social justice issues.
clicktivism/ hashtag activism	Online "awareness campaigns" that use the internet to rally support for causes with methods like petitions, "favoriting," or re-posting content about social justice issues.
collective action	Organized group action towards a common goal.
collective historical amnesia	Collective historical amnesia happens when members of a society conveniently forget their active role in exploitation and oppression of different groups of people.
colonialism	The political, economic and cultural domination of one country over another group of people or nation. This can include taking land or resources.

colonization	Occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade.
colour blindness	The belief that racial categories should not be considered when examining everyday social relations (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).
competitive intelligence	"Competitive intelligence, sometimes referred to as corporate intelligence, refers to the ability to gather, analyze, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market factors that contribute to a business's competitive advantage" (Bloomenthal, 2020).
confirmation bias	The tendency to seek out perspectives that match our beliefs. We tend to favour facts that support our preconceived opinions and are less likely to believe facts that don't support our perspectives. Also referred to as belief bias.
conspiracy theory	"An attempt to explain harmful or tragic events as the result of the actions of a small, powerful group. Such explanations reject the accepted narrative surrounding those events; indeed, the official version may be seen as further proof of the conspiracy" (Reid, n.d.).
consumerism	An ideology that connects our happiness to the things we buy, own, and consume.
cosmopolitan	Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.
cosmopolitanism	Belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. To be free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments.
counter discourses	Discourses that question the "common-sense" ideas of dominant ideologies and dominant discourses. They draw attention to how dominant ideologies justify injustice and lead to inequality and discrimination.

counter ideologies	Alternative ideas to dominant ideologies about how society should be run and organized. Generally, counter ideologies, and the counter discourses associated with them, articulate an alternative set of values and assumptions that are more inclusive, equitable, just, and less harmful.
critical	Critical as used in this module does not mean negative. It means being mindful, aware, and analytical.
critical media literacy	The ability to analyze and evaluate how media messages influence our beliefs and behaviours. In this process, viewers are not just recipients of media messages. They actively critique media content.
deepfake	"A term for videos and presentations enhanced by artificial intelligence and other modern technology to present falsified results. One of the best examples of deepfakes involves the use of image processing to produce video of celebrities, politicians or others saying or doing things that they never actually said or did" ("Deepfake," n.d.).
deficit thinking	[in education] When students who fall behind are blamed for their failures. These students' poor performance in school is linked to personal problems or deficiencies, or those of their family, or social or racial group.
democracy	On a basic level, it is the ability of citizens to participate in fair and open elections to choose their representatives in government. Another perspective argues that democracy must function beyond elections by involving citizens in ongoing government decisions that affect them.
discourse	How we speak of something. See dominant discourses and counter discourses, for examples.
discrimination	The unjust or unfair treatment of different categories of people, especially based on their race, age, or sex.

disinformation	"Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country" (UNESCO, 2021).
dominant discourses	How the common-sense ideas, assumptions and values of dominant ideologies are communicated to us. Dominant discourses can be found in propaganda, cultural messages, and mass media.
dominant ideologies	Ideologies that are particularly influential in shaping our ideas, values, and beliefs because they are supported by powerful groups.
employment	Refers to work that is part-time and/or temporary. Precarious employment means job insecurity, unpredictability in terms of schedule and income, limited control or autonomy as an employee, and lack of regulatory protections, benefits, and entitlements such as paid sick leave, a minimum wage, and protection against unfair dismissal (Goldring & Joly, 2014; Cranford et al., 2003).
Equality	Can be understood in terms of "sameness." Equality is when all people, regardless of circumstance or characteristics, are treated in exactly the same way.
equity	Can be understood in terms of "justice" and "fairness." Equity recognizes that treating everyone the same can still be unfair. Equity focuses on the needs of society's most under-resourced, oppressed, and disadvantaged people.
essentialism	A perspective that assumes that aspects of our identities are innate. We are born with them, and they remain fundamentally unchanged throughout our lives.
European Union (EU)	The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade, which means goods can move between member countries with fewer restrictions or extra charges. The EU also allows free movement of people, to live and work in whichever EU member country they choose.

fair trade	An ethical business model where producers and labourers are paid a living wage and work in safe and humane conditions, and products are made using environmentally sustainable methods.
fake news	False stories, usually online, that seem like genuine news and can be used to sway the opinion of the viewer.
First Nations	Peoples indigenous to Canada who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. There are approximately 630 First Nations in Canada.
First Peoples	Peoples indigenous to Canada; includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis.
front-stage performance	The behaviour that we exhibit when in public or around less-familiar acquaintances.
full employment	For neoliberals and neoconservatives, full employment occurs when inflation (constant increase in the price of goods and services occurring with a steady decline in purchasing power) rises and employers can find enough workers for the types of available jobs. So, it does not mean that everyone has a job as would occur in socialist economies.
gender	"The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2012).
gender-fluid	A gender identity that is not fixed to masculine or feminine.
global citizenship	A concept based on social justice principles and practices that seeks to build global interconnectedness and shared economic, environmental, and social responsibility.
global village	The idea that the entire world is becoming more interconnected because of advances in technology. This makes it possible to deal with the world as if all areas of it were local.
globalization	The increasing integration of world economies, trade products, ideas, norms, and cultures in ways that affect all individuals as members of the global community

	(Albrow & King, 1990; Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006).
grassroots	A bottom-up approach to social action, where community members at the local level are directly involved and encouraged to contribute to sustainable positive social change for their community.
hegemonic tensions	Refers to the tensions that occur when activists, academics, and affected communities expose the oppressive and exploitative aspects of the social order.
hegemony	The process of building consent through social practices where the ruling classes present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole.
hierarchy	A system of increasing value that ranks people based on certain criteria.
"I" and the "me"	Two key aspects of the self that allow a person to reflect on their actions and behaviours.
ideological	Related to ideology, which is a defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people.
ideology	A defined set of beliefs and ideas shared by a group of people. Ideologies provide members of a group with an understanding and an explanation of their world.
Indigenous peoples	A catch-all term to describe the people who originally lived in an area. In Canada, this refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.
Individual problem	roblems typically experienced by few people; problems that can be linked to individual misfortune. Individual problems may be resolved by individuals.
inequality	Not equal or the same or even. Often used to note the unfair differences in people's circumstances.
inequity	Lacking equity; unfair and injust.
institutional problems	Social problems caused by institutions. Fixing the institution, it is believed, will resolve the problem.
interest groups	Associations whose members share similar concerns and try to influence public policy to benefit themselves or their cause. Their goal could be a policy that benefits

	group members or one part of society (e.g. government subsidies for farmers) or a policy that has a broader public purpose (e.g. improving air quality). They attempt to achieve their goals by lobbying—which means applying pressure to the people who make the policies. Other names for interest groups are special interest groups or pressure groups (Thomas, 2017).
internalized colonization	What happens when the colonized come to believe the message of inferiority and negative stereotypes that have been imposed by the colonizer. According to Frantz Fanon, internalized colonization is the major psychological effect of colonialism.
international aid	The transfer of resources such as money, goods, and/or expertise from a country or large organization to a recipient country in order to help them emerge from poverty. Also known as foreign aid or development.
intersectional	The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on different aspects of our identities.
intersectionality	The experience, or potential experience, of multiple forms of discrimination based on the intersection of different social statuses.
intersex	A term used to refer to people whose biological sex characteristics do not fit into the typical definitions of male or female.
looking-glass self	The theory that our ideas about our identity are formed through the way we imagine we are seen by others.
media	A social institution that involves channels of mass communication that reach a large audience.
media bias	The act of favouring one perspective over others by the creators of media messages.
media conglomerate	A media company that owns many other media companies.
media consolidation	The process by which the ownership of media is concentrated into the hands of a small number of large corporations.

media framing	How mainstream media minoritizes groups and communities, as well as how it portrays ideas or topics from a particular ideological perspective.
media messages	The main idea or moral of the story that is communicated by the content and type of media, such as in a television show, an advertisement, a news article, a song, etc.
media regulation	Government control of mass media through laws that may protect the public interest or promote competition among media outlets.
media representations	The way people, events, places, ideas, and stories are presented by the media. These presentations may reflect underlying ideologies and values.
media text	Refers not just to words but also images, sounds, video, taken as a whole message.
meritocracy	A social order where people are ranked and rewarded based on their abilities with no consideration of contextual factors that may affect their performance (DeSario, 2003, p. 485).
methodology	An approach or framework used to make sense of phenomena, issues, or problems.
minoritized	Experiencing discrimination and other disadvantages compared to members of the dominant group.
monetize	When applied to social media activity, to monetize is to generate revenue from web content, usually by attracting advertisers to the site.
multiculturalism	The "practice of creating harmonious relations between different cultural groups as an ideology and policy to promote cultural diversity" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015, p. 3).
national citizenship	Legal membership in a country typically due to birth or naturalization, which comes with certain responsibilities towards the state and country in question. In exchange the state fulfills certain social responsibilities (access to healthcare, education, etc.) towards its citizens.

nationalism	Refers to a set of shared values and myths of a nation or group. Nationalism can be political, cultural or racial. People who support a nationalist ideology believe their nation is superior to others. This can lead them to marginalizing those not belonging to the nation or group. They may even regard others as enemies and go to war or commit genocide under certain circumstances. Nationalists are inward looking and, therefore, opposed to internationalism or globalization unless it is favourable to their interests (Chet Singh, Centennial College).
naturalization	In Canada, naturalization happens when an immigrant attains citizenship status. The basic requirements to obtaining a Canadian citizenship include permanent residency status, knowledge of English or French, and basic knowledge of the history and sociopolitical makeup of Canada. Naturalized citizens have the same rights as Canadian-born citizens, which include the right to vote, hold public office, and serve on a jury (Canada Statistics, 2011).
neoliberalism	"A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2).
net neutrality	"The concept that all data on the internet should be treated equally by corporations, such as internet service providers [ISPs], and governments, regardless of content, user, platform, application or device" (Kenton, 2020).
norms	Social expectations about attitudes, values, and beliefs.
Occupy Wall Street	The name of the popular uprising after the banks that caused the financial crash of 2008 were bailed out with public money. It exposed the influence of the wealthy on government's economic, environmental, labour, and human rights policies.

oppression	Refers to institutional policies, procedures, practices, and norms that create and sustain inequality and injustice. It also involves attitudes and ideas such as stereotyping and prejudices; as well as actions and behaviours such as discrimination.
Orientalism	A term coined by Edward Said that refers how countries in the West define the people from the East without their input.
participatory media	Media platforms where the audience plays an active role in collecting, reporting and sharing information.
perceptual filters	Refers to the prejudices, stereotypes and biases that affect how you see the world.
policies	"A set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party" ("Policies," n.d.).
power	The ability to construct how ideas or groups are represented through the organization of meaning (e.g. whether one describes a particular armed person as a terrorist or a freedom fighter). In other words, having power means setting the terms and conditions within which people and groups are able to act in a particular context.
power and privilege	Social stratification is created and maintained through power and privilege. In a stratified society, dominant group members have the greatest degree of power, meaning they can make decisions, influence outcomes, and establish dominant ideologies. They can also use their position of power to develop laws and policies that benefit them and sway public opinion to maintain the status quo, which is overwhelmingly skewed in their favour. Privilege allows dominant groups to maintain and pass on this control to others like them. Privilege is gained through unearned power that gives dominant group members economic, social, and political advantage. Those who are privileged therefore have opportunities, resources, rights, choices, and freedoms that are denied to others.

precarious job market	The market for jobs that are contract, part-time, low wage, without benefits, security, or union protection. Increasingly common, these types of jobs are unable to meet the basic needs of workers, who are forced to rely on food banks and inadequate shelter, which affect their material and psychological well-being.
precarious jobs	Refers to work that is part-time and/or temporary. Precarious employment means job insecurity, unpredictability in terms of schedule and income, limited control or autonomy as an employee, and lack of regulatory protections, benefits, and entitlements such as paid sick leave, a minimum wage, and protection against unfair dismissal (Goldring & Joly, 2014; Cranford et al., 2003).
prejudice	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
prejudices	A "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience" ("Prejudice," n.d.).
prestige	A form of social honour, or respect, that is valued by society or particular groups, and placed on people based on their social status.
profiling	Online "profiling" is collecting information about internet users by tracking their online behaviour, including which sites they visit, comments they post and purchases they make. This reveals their interests, preferences, opinions and biases, information that is valuable to both advertisers and political interest groups—including those that produce fake news.
props	Items, such as pencils, books, and computers, which play a role in our performances to other people. Props help people understand who you are and the social status you hold.
public opinion	The opinion or attitude of the majority of people regarding a particular matter ("Public opinion," 2020).
race	Categorizing people based on identified or perceived characteristics such as the colour of skin. Race must be understood in the context of history, politics, and

	geography. It is not a biological category, and it is often used to group people, assign them social roles, and associate them with a specific social status.
racialized	The process of creating, preserving, and communicating a system of dominance based on race.
racism	Prejudice and discrimination based on race.
referendum	"A vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question" ("Referendum," n.d.).
representation	A portrayal or re-presentation of something. In other words, a depiction or description meant to "stand in the place of" and "stand for" the original, but not the original itself (Hall, 1997, p. 16).
residential school	"(in Canada) A government-supported boarding school for children from Inuit and other Indigenous communities" ("Residential school," n.d.).
residential schools	"(in Canada) A government-supported boarding school for children from Inuit and other Indigenous communities" ("Residential school," n.d.).
resistance	Refers to individual and/or collective acts to change inequality, oppression and injustice in society. It can be organized, spontaneous or symbolic.
restorative justice	An Indigenous-based healing and peacemaking process that tries to bring together victims, offenders, and the community in order to get to the bottom of a problem and restore balance and harmony for everyone involved and impacted.
right-wing/left-wing	Right-wing and left-wing represent contrasting approaches to political and social change. Left-wing views welcome change that will create more equitable conditions in society. They support a greater role for

	government and are collectivist—in other words, they give priority to the group over the individual. Social democrats and feminists would be considered to have left-wing ideologies. Right-wing thinking favours the individual over the group, and it sees equality as undesirable and unattainable. Right-wingers resist change and support the existing social order. They tend to believe in capitalism and that the government should not interfere in people's lives. Conservatism and neoconservatism are examples of right-wing thinking (Chet Singh, Centennial College).
role	The social and behavioural expectations assigned to different social statuses, or positions in society.
selection and omission	A process through which bias is expressed in the news, where editors may choose to share only some details of a story, while ignoring others.
self-analysis	A process by which you become aware of your blind spots and perceptual filters such as your ideologies, biases, stereotypes, and common-sense assumptions. It also requires understanding how your social identities potentially provide you with advantages or disadvantages.
sensationalism	The use in media of shocking or exciting headlines and content to attract readers, with little or no regard for facts or accuracy. News that is sensationalized is designed to trigger emotion. This will often generate more interest than fact-based news that appeals to reason.
setting	The physical environment and the location in which we act.
sex	A term "used to describe the biological and anatomical differences between male and female" (Murray et al., 2014, p. 336).
silo	To separate something or someone from other things or people.
social action	Action by an individual or group of people directed towards creating a better society. Social action often

	involves interactions with other individuals or groups, especially organized action with the goal of social reform.
social action strategies	Ways to bring about systemic change. Evolve from community and grassroots-based organizing and can involve: • Awareness-raising strategies such as education and research, teach-ins, organizing and collaborating with other groups. • Negotiation such as bargaining for changes in policies, practices and laws. • Non-cooperation such as strikes and boycotts. • Direct action/civil disobedience such as as disruption of services, protests, blockades, boycotts, riots, and confrontation. In rare historical moments it can also involve revolution.
social constructionism	A perspective that argues that our identities are the product of society and culture, and are always changing.
social constructions	Describes how our identities are the product of the interplay between individual, cultural, and social structures.
social entrepreneurship	A commerce model that combines the principles of business with the objectives of social action and charity
social institution	Established areas, organizations, or groups of organizations within a society that coordinate our actions and interactions with each other. Examples include: the economy, the political system, family, education, religion, mass media, and the law.
social justice	The full and equal participation of all groups in an egalitarian society, where people's needs are met, and members are physically and psychologically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Social justice aims to address inequities by changing the structural and root cause(s) of social problems.
social movement	A group of people with a common ideology who try to achieve common goals. Social movements can also

	be described as organized groups of people who may encourage or discourage social change.
social problems	Problems that affect groups of people and are caused by how society is structured and organized. Social problems are particular to specific societies and times. Solutions to these problems are beyond the reach of any single individual.
social status	The position or ranking a person has in relation to others within society.
social stratification	The hierarchical arrangement of social groups based on their control over basic resources, such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc.
social structure	The arrangement of social institutions into relatively stable patterns of social relations. The way a society is organized.
socialization	The process by which we come to understand different social statuses and their roles, or behavioural expectations, through interactions with others.
sociological imagination	An approach developed by C. Wright Mills that links everyday problems individuals experience to the greater context of social issues in order to understand the roots of those social issues.
standpoint	A perspective adopted by a person based on their specific individual experiences and circumstances.
stereotype	“A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person” or group (“Stereotype,” n.d.).
stereotype threat	The effect of negative stereotypes on an individual’s performance or behaviour.
synergy	When two or more media companies work together to produce and control one brand.
systemic	Systemic, as used in this course, describes something that is embedded within the structure of society or the larger economic capitalist system. Changing it requires changing the system.

systemic/ structural problems	Problems caused by how society is structured and organized. Understanding social problems as systemic/structural problems acknowledges that resolving them is incredibly difficult but creating change through social action (based on the principles of global citizenship) is meaningful and can be long-lasting.
think tanks	Organizations that produce research based on particular political principles. Think tanks have a variety of political views and so provide a variety of perspectives.
third part	In the world of online data, a third party is a company or organization that gathers or purchases information about online users, often without their knowledge or consent.
tokenism	The "practice of including one or a small number of members of a minority group to create the appearance of representation, inclusion, and non-discrimination, without ever giving these members access to power" (Anzovino & Boutilier, 2015).
two-spirit	An Indigenous term that describes the sexuality, gender and/or spiritual identity of people who identify as having both a masculine and feminine spirit (Re:-searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health, 2020).
unearned privileges	Advantages gained by virtue of one's social status.
vertical integration	The control of two or more stages of media production by one media company.
viral	"Spreading or becoming popular very quickly through communication from one person to another, especially on the internet" ("Viral," n.d.).
virtue signalling	The action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue.
visible minority	"The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' The visible minority population [in Canada] consists mainly

	of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese" (Statistics Canada, 2020).
white privilege	Taken-for-granted power and a system of benefits, advantages, and opportunities experienced by white persons simply because of the colour of their skin.
white supremacy	The social ideology used to justify colonization. Positions white people as superior to non-white people.
working poor	Refers to members of the workforce who work full-time, but don't make enough money for food and shelter. Consequently, they live below the poverty line and rely on food banks and other sources to survive.