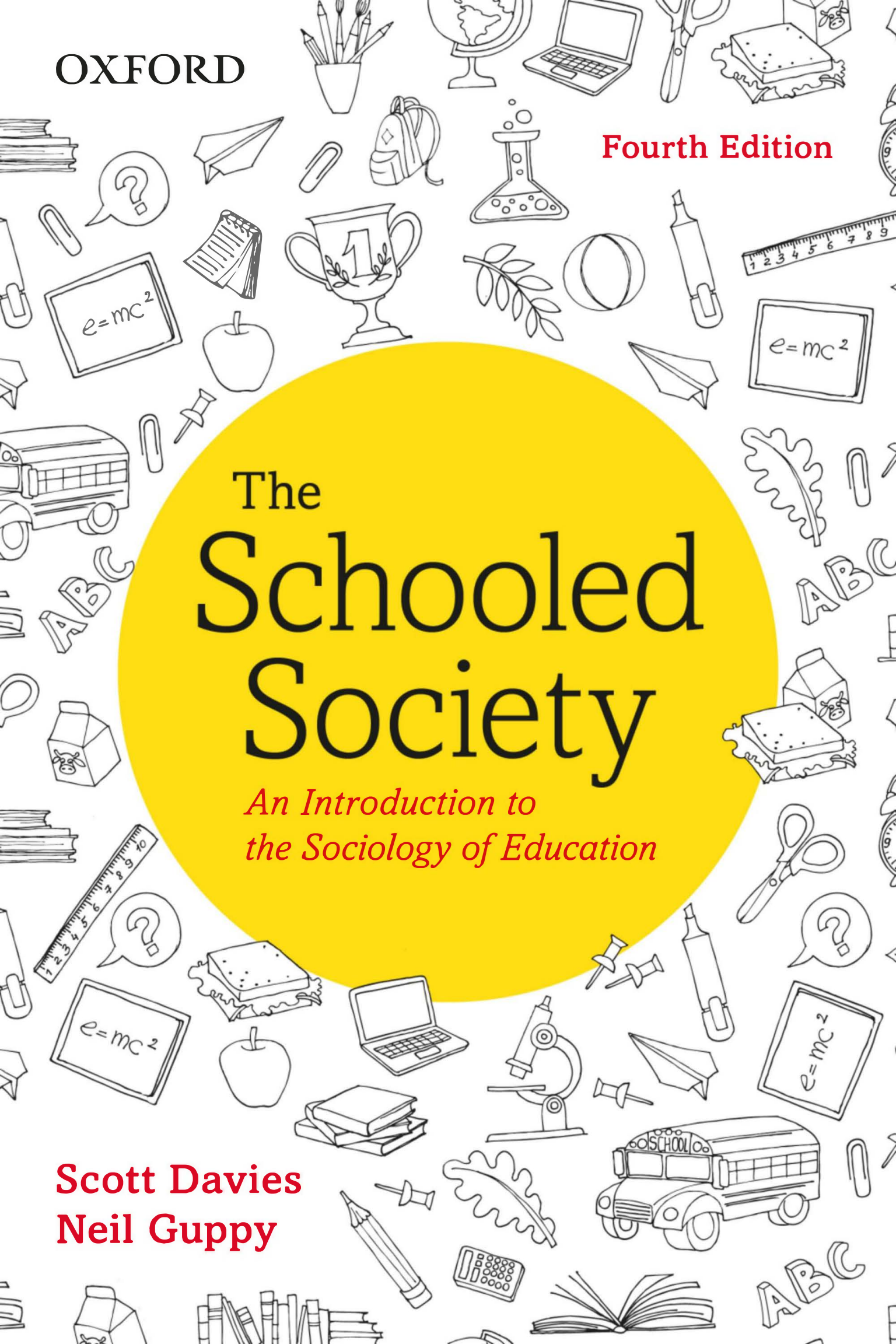

OXFORD

Fourth Edition

The Schooled Society

An Introduction to the Sociology of Education

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

This edition builds on previous editions of *The Schooled Society* with a bolstered discussion of educational inequalities and an expanded coverage of a range of topics and theories. First and foremost, we have added a series of case studies that showcase qualitative studies, which we use to animate key concepts in the book. One particular emphasis among these case studies is to examine several different issues involved with Indigenous education. This edition has also updated many references, data sources, and policy controversies. Our book remains one of the most current sources of information on education in Canada.

The Approach of this Book

Over 40 years ago, Ivan Illich composed his famous treatise, *Deschooling Society* (1971). It was a literary phenomenon, selling hundreds of thousands of copies and capturing the attention of a variety of educational stakeholders. A harsh critic of modern education, his tone was decidedly *anti-school*. Illich faulted schooling for being a wasteful and self-serving institution that disempowered its students and stifled more authentic forms of learning.

How times have changed. Who, today, calls for deschooling? Over the ensuing decades education has become one of our society's "motherhood" icons. While virtually all aspects of schooling are criticized today, almost no one questions the general need for formal education. School reformers abound, but schooling is now starting at ever-earlier ages, and may never end, as emerging ideologies of "lifelong learning" and "universal" post-secondary participation take hold. Most people have much lengthier school careers than their forebears. Every family pins the hopes for their children on educational success. The salvation for social problems such as drugs, violence, and immorality is often seen to lie in the classroom. More and more people clamour for school credentials. Illich's worst nightmare has come true.

This book expresses our fascination in the grand institutional extension of formal education. Nations spend billions of dollars on schooling, and individuals spend thousands of days in schools. Politicians tout education to make us globally competitive and prepared for knowledge-based economies. But "school" is also seeping into other realms of life. School forms are continuously expanding, from academic preschools to larger post-secondary institutions. From infants to seniors, more people are becoming "students" in a variety of forms of schooling. There are schools for corporate executives, prisoners, felons, and athletes, to name but a few.

We strive to survey the entire field, but this is a thematic book. We are captivated by the spreading reach of school, defined broadly, in the ongoing history of modernity. Though it focuses on contemporary Canada, our title *The Schooled Society* is meant to convey a historical and comparative sensibility, evoking a not-too-distant past in which schooling was less prized than it is today and not so entrenched within society as a central institution. The book details a mutual process whereby schooling intrudes into more

realms of social life while being simultaneously affected by an array of societal trends beyond the classroom. We link schooling to massive economic shifts, from agricultural to industrial to post-industrial, including globalization and the "knowledge-based economy," and to such demographic shifts as immigration and societal aging, traditional political cleavages of left and right, and the evolution of mass culture. Unlike many other texts, we cover all three tiers of schooling—elementary, secondary, and post-secondary.

The book's sociological framework integrates theory with major research traditions in the sociology of education. Theoretically, ours is an eclectic approach, mixing classical and contemporary traditions, and micro, macro, and middle-range concepts, particularly those regularly used in empirical research. We use a diverse range of theoretical tools from across the social sciences (including sociology, education, women's studies, and economics). Further, many of these theoretical perspectives are evaluated using the latest research evidence. Students will be exposed to a set of conceptual tools designed to enrich curiosity and provoke debate.

This book is suitable for sociology of education courses in sociology departments, as well as for social foundations courses in education faculties. It can be used in both one- and two-semester courses, and can be supplemented by edited collections of readings or custom course-packs. Both of us teach sociology of education courses at our respective universities, and colleagues at several other Canadian universities generously offered their feedback on earlier versions of the book. The book includes numerous figures, tables, boxes, suggestions for additional reading, and questions for critical discussion within each chapter, as well as chapter learning objectives, a glossary, and an extensive bibliography.

Organization of the Book

To organize the sprawling literature in the sociology of education, the book is split into three central sections, each representing a core role of modern schooling: selection, social organization, and socialization. Our intent is to provide a lucid framework accessible to undergraduates.

The section on selection covers the bread and butter of the sociology of education: research on inequalities among students by class, gender, race, sexuality, and other student categories. As schooling expands, it becomes a more integral component of stratification systems. To understand how individuals navigate through those systems, we describe the major contours of school systems and how families activate various forms of "capital." The book compares forms of educational inequalities that are entrenched and that are changing.

The section on social organization is unique for a Canadian education book. Here we draw on the sociology of organizations, and in particular, new institutional theory. We ask readers to think of the historic bureaucratization of education, as well as emerging pressures to subject schools to market forces. Governments are insisting that schools should be more entrepreneurial while simultaneously more firmly regulated, often in the name of accountability schemes that are borrowed from business. In this context, we discuss organizational alternatives to regular

public schooling, such as alternative schools, free schools, home-schooling, preschools, new private schools, and online learning providers.

This section also includes chapters on the curriculum and the teaching profession, discussing concepts like the "hidden curriculum" and drawing on histories of curriculum, theories of pedagogy, and new challenges from feminism and multiculturalism. The section on socialization examines how schools shape and mould their students, beyond their socio-economic role. Our emphasis is on how socialization is changing, both as a result of internal shifts in teaching styles and classroom conduct over the past few decades, and as a result of broader societal forces. We note controversies around the politicization of the school curriculum and the emergence of new educational ideologies in which many (especially upper-middle-class) families see themselves as sophisticated consumers of schooling, and who are cultivating tastes for tailored forms of education. Following on this theme, we devote a chapter to the competing influences on youth and we inspect those social forces beyond the classroom that affect the workings of education today. Examining student peer groups and youth culture, we describe how selection systems continue to sometimes generate oppositional student cultures. We conclude the book with an eye to the future of Canadian schooling. While certainly mindful of the perils of prediction in the social sciences, it is a fitting finale to urge students to think about emerging trends and to ponder the likely impact of a variety of societal forces. Students can decide for themselves whether they indeed share Illich's strident misgivings.

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Part I

Introduction

1 The Context for the Schooled Society

Learning Objectives

- To understand what is meant by a "schooled society"
- To identify three broad links between schooling and society
- To recognize key elements of the context for modern schooling

Introduction: What Is a "Schooled Society?"

Schooling matters. Education shapes our lives. The central premise of this book is that education plays a more prominent role in our lives now than ever before. Canada is now a "**schooled society**." By this we mean that formal education has moved to the centre stage of social life over the past century.

Start with the basic organization of our biographies. Schooling is increasingly central to our life histories. School attendance is one of the rare things mandatory in life. Few Canadians *do not* spend most of their teenage years in schools. Most of us attend a post-secondary institution. Just five decades ago most youth did not finish high school. Now lifelong learning is prolonging the hold of education. Schooling grips our lives more tightly now and that grip is more multi-faceted.

Why? The growing demand for formal education partly stems from its rising power to shape lives. More jobs and career paths require educational certification. Not surprisingly, families are increasingly pinning hopes for their children's success on education. With this, schooling has become the major route for **social mobility**. Groups formerly under-represented in positions of power, such as working-class people, women, and some racial minorities, are now encouraged to use schooling as a lever of upward mobility and social change. For them, schooling has been both touted and doubted for its capacity to be a "great equalizer" that can boost opportunities. But in any event, Canadian schools are now *the* institution that is expected to deliver on core values of equity, progress, and technical sophistication that are intrinsic to modern society.

Education not only shapes our future biographies, it also shapes society. Countries spend billions of dollars on education so it can play a pivotal role in modern nation-building and citizenship. Governments and corporations increasingly turn to universities to generate innovative research to fuel wealth creation.

Schools, especially post-secondary institutions, have become more tightly connected to labour markets. More than ever, schooling classifies and regulates who works where, both creating and rationing access to specialized roles, such as "economist," "welder," or "computer programmer."

Working in the other direction, commerce increasingly intrudes on the school. Business schools have been *the* growth field of study in universities and colleges over the past several decades. Large corporations have established their own on-the-job training and certificate programs; some have created their own universities, including McDonald's "Hamburger University," General Motors University, and Dunkin' Donuts University. The institutional boundaries between schools and corporations have blurred recently, a trend some hail and others lament.

Beyond the economy, more and more social problems are seen to have educational solutions. Schools are called on to tackle an incredible variety of social ills, ranging from drug use to racism to violence prevention to health promotion. Whatever the social issue—sexism, climate change, welfare dependence—an educational solution has been devised. Even in the criminal justice system, schooling is increasingly used as an alternative to incarceration. "John schools," for instance, allow people found hiring sex workers to have their charges dropped in exchange for learning about legal, health, and equity issues surrounding the sex trade.

Formal and structured learning is ubiquitous. Schools are designated as the places to learn new knowledge and upgrade skills needed to engage fully with all that life has to offer, whether in the workplace, at leisure, or in your home. As a result, more and more realms of life are being "schooled." Early childhood is increasingly shaped by preschools. Similarly, jobs that in previous eras had little connection to formal schooling now require official certificates. Think of local community college programs that did not exist just 35 years ago, such as security, bartending, and even bra-fitting. Likewise, preventive health care is increasingly organized through school forms such as prenatal classes. As these examples attest, schools now take many different forms—from home-schooling to schools for cooking to the International Space University. There is a school for almost everything.

How Schools Relate to Society: Three Roles

Sociological thinking generates many questions about schooling. Who succeeds at school, and why? Why are schools organized as they are? What impact do schools have on students? These kinds of questions animate the sociology of education.

A useful place to start our analysis is to pose a most fundamental sociological question: what do schools do? Sociologists answer this question from different angles, but commonly look to relate schools to the wider society, examining roles that schools play in society. To answer that broad question, our book is organized into three main sections: "socialization," "selection," and "organization."

First, schools *socialize*. As obvious as this may seem, schools help prepare the next generation, not only passing along know-how, but also deciding what

knowledge and values to transmit, and how to teach that material. Because this socialization role is schooling's central mandate, it can be extremely contentious.

Consider how changes in schools reflect changes in society at large. One hundred years ago, Canada was a far more Christian, rural, and working-class society, and so schools focused more heavily on older-style values and virtues, often casting civic responsibilities and moral codes in religious terms. But recent decades have brought a shift. Today, many policy-makers want schools to emphasize the teaching of technical knowledge and skills. Others contest this focus on several fronts. Many worry that our culture already is overly individualistic, and urge schools to revitalize their community orientation. Advocates of the traditional arts also criticize the current emphasis on technical education, noting that any greater exposure of students to the intricacies of polynomial equations and subatomic particles will make for less time for music, languages, and art. A common result is that the humanizing aspect of education is taking a back seat, as evidenced by cutbacks to music and arts programs. Others see schools as not socializing everyone fairly or equally, perhaps celebrating some cultural traditions at the expense of others, and more or less deliberately nurturing some students for positions of advantage and others for a lifetime of subordination.

The work of Émile Durkheim, a classical theorist discussed in Chapter 2, can be used to examine schools' socializing role. Concerned with the waning force of religion and the smaller sizes of families, Durkheim saw public schooling as a tool to combat the rising culture of **individualism** in modern society. His work can be used to frame a series of questions. Just what culture do schools socialize students into? What values and norms are they learning, and are they doing so by questioning and critiquing or by respecting and obeying? It also implies causal questions such as "what impact are schools having on students, just how successful are schools at socializing students, and do they have as great an impact as they intend?" Finally, it also raises questions about social processes: "just *how do* students learn cultures and moral codes?" Sociologists influenced by Durkheim also examine how other institutions compete for the attention of students. You have surely heard the old lament that children watch too much television, or the newer lament that they spend too much time online. Do mass media and popular culture limit the impact of schools on student's lives?

In a second role, schools *select*. They award "badges of ability" by sorting, differentially rewarding, and certifying graduates of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. Think of the endless appraising, assessing, evaluating, examining, grading, judging, marking, quizzing, and testing in schools. Again, this activity may seem self-evident. But a sociological approach looks to the big picture: at a higher level, schooling shapes and is shaped by larger patterns of social inequality and **stratification**. Indeed, obtaining credentials is now more consequential for people's income, occupational success, and other life chances than ever before. To get prized credentials you need good grades, and those with the best marks become the selected winners. As schools have professed to have become increasingly inclusive in some ways, they have become more selective in others. And schooled individuals are entering an occupational structure that in recent decades has created growing disparities in wealth and income in society.

Sociological approaches to inequality prompt a series of questions. While education is obviously advantageous for individuals, are those advantages distributed equally among all participants by class, gender, or race? *Who* gets selected for *what*, and *why?* Why is family background related to school success? What social processes translate family disadvantage into educational disadvantage? Do all school systems have similar ways of selecting students, or are there variations?

These kinds of questions can be traced back to foundational ideas in the writings of Karl Marx, another classical sociological theorist to be discussed in Chapter 2. His legacy is to have brought to the forefront of modern sociological analysis those issues pertaining to how economic structures create patterns of inequality. While Marx wrote little on schooling per se, his twentieth-century followers examined how schooling reinforces economic forces and patterns of inequality. Indeed, the sociology of education has for several decades addressed a profound and enduring debate: is equality of educational opportunity a myth or a reality? Pressures to tighten schooling links with the economy can clash with democratic aspirations to make schooling accessible to all. With more policy-makers expecting schools to help further Canada's position in the global economy, schools are being pressured to be more competitive, but this competition can constrain schools' ability to guarantee equal opportunity, or to be a local cornerstone of democracy.

In a third role, schools *organize and legitimate.* Schools affect how we learn, whether formally or informally, by rote and routine, or by curiosity and inquiry. Education helps create professions and professionals by institutionalizing an elaborate classification system. It shapes how people become, for example, certified welders or economists, by codifying the knowledge requirements for certain occupations, while also assessing and certifying the standards one must meet to enter an occupation. Schooling also legitimates knowledge claims and only teaches what is considered official knowledge (a disputed term as revealed by debates between evolutionists versus creationism, or the appropriateness of sex curricula for children). Another classical theorist, Max Weber, was interested in how modern institutions *rationalize* the world. Schooling, he wrote, organizes the teaching of knowledge in ways that are bureaucratic, proliferating credentials that create formal pathways between schools and labour markets.

Weber's followers over the past few decades have seen **rationalization** as a core social mechanism that creates change in education. They have used his ideas to raise new questions. Why do employers seek employees with school credentials? Is it simply a matter of hiring those with the most skills, or are there other reasons? Some of Weber's contemporary followers see only loose connections between school content and what is demanded in most jobs, and interpret schooling as mainly a legitimating tool used to ration access to good jobs. They challenge the conventional wisdom that schools simply teach skills and employers hire the most skilled. In contrast, they offer different reasons for the widespread use of school credentials. These sociologists question why we trust school credentials and whether that trust can be maintained as more and more people graduate from higher education.

The Schooled Society and Indigenous Peoples

In a schooled society, schooling is frequently touted as the salve for all ills. For example, in seeking to better the lives of women in Canada, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women argued that "education opens the door to almost every life goal. Wherever women are denied equal access to education, they cannot be said to have equality (1970: 161)." Likewise, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada implores all levels of government to use schooling as a means to improve drastically the lives of Indigenous peoples. The lenses of socialization, selection, and legitimation/organization shed powerful light on how challenging this task is, yet how centrally important it is.

Take socialization. Historically schooling was used by Western nations to forge a new national identity. In Canada that involved transitioning from a rural resource economy to a modern nation-state. But for First Nations peoples that transition became something much more coercive: schooling was used to solve "the Indian problem" and acculturate First Nations children into Western ways. Residential schools played a central role in this attempted assimilation, removing many First Nations children from their communities, often forcing them to speak only English or French, wear European clothing, and adopt Christian beliefs. Simultaneously, other Canadian schoolchildren learned mixed images of First Nations from their textbooks. Sometimes they saw respectful depictions of noble warriors allying with British troops against American incursions, or inventive peoples surviving in unforgiving landscapes and climates. But sometimes they also saw images of cultural backwardness, savagery, ungodliness, and indolence (see McDiarmid and Pratt, 1971). Ridding those legacies is easy in words but far more difficult in practice.

This coercive socialization then shaped many processes of selection. Poverty made it difficult for Indigenous children to succeed in schooling for all the reasons that are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Competitions that prize individual success ahead of communal well-being were alien in many First Nations. Generations of First Nations peoples were traumatized by residential schools, causing them to disengage from public education, seeing it as irrelevant at best and as oppressive at worst. Public schools lacked supports, curriculum, and pedagogy that were tailored to Indigenous students. Too many teachers and peers saw those students as different and backwards. As a result of all of these factors, First Nations peoples have long struggled to succeed in mainstream educational institutions, and continue to do so.

Finally, what about the organization and legitimation of schooling? Because Canadian governments saw First Nations largely as impediments to their project of creating a modern, globalizing society, Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and ways of life have had little legitimacy in mainstream public education, at least until very recently. How, then, can schools be organized to "re-legitimate" Indigenous cultures while simultaneously preparing young people for the challenges of contemporary life? How can schools right many historical wrongs while creating new opportunities for First Nations children? We dig into many of these crucial issues throughout this book.

Setting the Context

To set the context for the study of schooling, we next highlight major social transformations that have altered the social world over the modern era. We begin with dramatic changes in the economy.

Economic Transformations

In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Daniel Bell (1973) linked major societal changes to massive shifts or "revolutions" in people's work. Momentous changes in farming created the Agricultural Revolution, and then massive changes in manufacturing sparked the Industrial Revolution. By the late twentieth century, Bell foresaw the beginnings of a third great revolution—the advent of post-industrial society or the Service Revolution. This revolution was built on human and professional *services*, such as communications, finance, and sales. In the late 1800s only about one-third of Canadians worked in the service sector. By 2015 this proportion had grown to nearly nine out of every 10 jobs. Now only about 1 per cent of Canadians work in agriculture, with less than 15 per cent in manufacturing. Table 1.1 demonstrates this transformation. Whether measured by the production of goods and services or by jobs, in just over a century and a quarter, economic activity has shifted dramatically from agriculture to services.

Importantly, Bell predicted that this transition would impact not only the location of people's work, but also the quality of their work. He reasoned that theoretical knowledge would be more central to jobs. Just as the plough and the steam engine were central to change in earlier eras, he anticipated that the computer would emerge as the driving force in the contemporary period. Indeed, since the 1970s information and communication technology (ICT) has rapidly transformed our way of life, from the Internet to cell phones through to smart cars and bioinformatics.

Inspired by Bell's image of a "post-industrial society," others have since coined terms like "information society" and "knowledge society." Research and development, frequently done within universities, plays a decisive role in modern

Table 1.1 Percentage Distribution of Canadian Economic Activity by Sector and Period

	Production		Employment	
Economic Sector	Late 1800s	Circa 2020	Late 1800s	Circa 2020
Agricultural	44	2	49	1
Industrial	19	29	15	12
Service	38	69	36	87

Sources: Estimated from K.A.H. Buckley and M.C. Urquhart, 1965, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan); Statistics Canada, *The Labour Force*, Cat. no. 15–001–XIE; Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table 282–0008.

economies. The examples are legion and include insulin (University of Toronto), BlackBerry (University of Waterloo), and WebCT (University of British Columbia). More fundamentally, modern innovations depend increasingly on the pure research of university scholars. Especially with increasing global competition, policy-makers have been quick to point to education—as a producer and disseminator of knowledge—as critical to national success.

Has Bell's prediction about jobs been borne out? Yes, at least in some ways. The number of knowledge-driven jobs has risen rapidly in the last century. Many new professional and scientific jobs require greater levels of education (Clement and Myles, 1994: 72). More and more jobs require autonomy, cognitive complexity, and mental dexterity. Indeed, subsequent to the financial crisis of 2008, "high-knowledge" jobs provided the main source of job creation, a growth trend that most see continuing (Dept. of Finance, 2014). Increasingly, workers must be able to recognize when, where, and how to apply relevant knowledge. And, as a key consequence, a person's level of education increasingly shapes their economic rewards: more educated individuals increasingly earn greater incomes (Baer, 2004).

The maturing of industrialism and the advent of post-industrialism was accompanied by other institutional shifts in nations like Canada during the period 1950–1980. An array of government-provided services grew markedly, including welfare, unemployment insurance, health care, and of course, education. Public sector and private sector unions grew and raised wages for millions of workers. These co-expanding institutions were supported by progressive taxation in a thriving economy that generated not only an unprecedented amount of wealth, but also distributed that wealth more equally than in previous generations.

But over the past 40 years, two key shifts have occurred in Western economies that were not anticipated by Bell. The first is the movement of jobs and money out of traditional sectors that produce industrial goods and social services and into financial organizations like banks, investment firms, and insurance companies. These enterprises generate their profits not by making tangible products, but by channelling money through financial institutions that have become increasingly complex and labyrinth-like. Recent decades have seen the rise of increasingly arcane and opaque financial ventures like hedge funds, stock options, insurance schemes, and derivatives, many of which operate in hidden ways. This process of "financialization" began in the 1970s and intensified when some financial institutions were deregulated in the 1990s and 2000s (Tomaskovic-Devey and Lin, 2011). This financialization is a prime cause of the deep recession that originated on Wall Street in 2008 and then spread around the globe, its long tail continuing to slow economic progress.

The second shift is rising income inequality. Since 1980, the incomes of Canadians in the bottom and middle ranges have largely stagnated, while those of the top 20 per cent, and especially the top 1 per cent, rose substantially

(Fortin et al., 2012). This trend has several causes. One is a reduction in the proportion of Canadians in unions, and some reductions in government-provided social programs. At the same time, politicians have repeatedly called for lower taxes, particularly for those in upper income categories. A barometer of these twin shifts was the "Occupy movement," that in 2011 imported the "Occupy Wall Street" protests to several Canadian cities. Polls showed that Canadians were generally sympathetic to the protests because they drew attention to these trends. This broad economic shift since 1980—the financialization and deregulation of financial firms, rising income inequality, calls to further reduce taxes, and the weakening of unions and many social programs—has been dubbed the neo-liberal era (e.g., Hall and Lamont, 2012). Neo-liberalism has in many respects reshaped our economic and political institutions, and in turn altered the context for contemporary schooling.

Cultural and Demographic Shifts

These economic changes have been accompanied by great cultural and demographic shifts. One such shift has been the continual decline of religious authority in Western societies. The earliest European missionaries—the Recollects and the Jesuits—were quick to establish schools to educate everyone, including of course First Nations peoples, in the godly ways of the world. As well, many of the earliest university charters were awarded to institutions with strong religious ties (i.e., Dalhousie, McMaster, and Queen's). The Church was instrumental in the formation of public schools in all provinces, and was especially authoritative in Quebec and Newfoundland.

However, the erosion of religious authority has continued to this day in most developed industrial countries, including Canada. Not only are fewer people active in organized religion, but even among those who participate, the influence of religion is now more delimited, more privately spiritual, and less world-orienting (Bibby, 2011). Whereas Sunday schools once provided many Canadian children with their moral compass, religion now plays a far lesser role in socializing most young Canadians.

This decline in religion has altered the cultural underpinnings of modern life. Culture is about people's taken-for-granted social conventions—the principles of action, the habits of speech and gesture, and the recipes or scenarios about how to act. Sociologists think of culture as social "tool kit" or set of implicit guidelines and rules that range from turn-taking in conversations, queuing, or dressing, to deeper social mores.

Picking up on Durkheim and Weber, some suggest that the continual erosion of religion has given rise to a new set of values, one marked by rising individualism and less deferential attitudes. Ronald Inglehart (1995) argues that as newer generations are exposed to economic prosperity and higher levels of education, they undergo a "value shift" that puts greater emphasis on self-development and

personal identity. For liberals, this individualism is a good thing, strengthening values of liberty and equality. Notions of individual rights underpin much progress over the past century, including the near-abolishment of slavery and the success of the women's movement. Ideas of human rights and entitlements (e.g., to vote or to own property) are being extended to children, who are increasingly seen to be entitled to their own happiness and freedoms. But among many thinkers, these same things are often deemed to have gone too far. Some conservatives see them as eroding traditional values of authority, respect, and honesty, and condemn schools for not shoring up those values. Many leftists see individualism as promoting too much consumerism and competitiveness, and blame schools for being insufficiently progressive.

Regardless of one's view of the merits of individualism, sociologists cannot help but be struck by how this cultural shift has affected lifestyles. Individualism has spawned self-help, self-actualization, and self-realization movements. Professional counselling and therapy, individual lifestyle choices, and personal coaches (e.g., fitness trainers, financial planners, and education tutors) further underscore this rise of individualism.

This cultural shift has particularly transformed parenting. Children have gradually come to be seen as family members requiring special expertise and nurturing (see Albanese, 2016). Intensive parenting is the new normal (Wall, 2010). As hard as it is for modern sensibilities to comprehend, until the nineteenth century both the abandonment of children and hard child labour were common. Children were, most importantly, economic appendages of families, effectively miniature adults. As a more educated workforce became essential for economic growth, childhood gradually emerged as a recognizable period of life. The prolongation of childhood has meant that the socializing of young children is increasingly supplemented, and sometimes primarily done, outside the family, principally through the education system, but also through the health-care system (pediatricians, child psychologists), social workers (youth workers), and daycare centres. Further, these changes have spawned a litany of experts to provide parents with scientific advice about how best to raise their children (from Emmett Holt's *Care and Feeding of Children* [1894] to Benjamin Spock's multi-edition *Baby and Child Care* [1946] through to Glenn and Janet Doman's *How to Multiply Your Baby's Intelligence* [2005]). Although pleas to leave childhood to children are often made, the cultural pressure grows to intervene and produce "super-babies." The implication for education is that expectations for children and their success continue to rise.

Similar changes in the last few decades involve adolescents, as seen in the rise of a consumer culture devoted to this market segment. The global marketing of clothing fashions from various brand-name jeans and running shoes, each signify the institutionalization of a culture targeted at youth (and adults who seek to remain young!). This accelerating popular culture exerts a far greater influence on the lives of young people than it did in the past, and by doing so, it has an impact on schooling. Increasingly, school material must compete with popular entertainment,

advertising, and clothing. Today's schools must somehow "fit into" young people's identities and lifestyles.

Families, another traditional pillar of socialization, have also changed continuously over the past half-century. In 1959 more babies (479,275) were born in Canada than in any year before or after. By comparison, in 2015 the number of births was 388,700 (a decline of 19 per cent). This shift from baby boom to baby bust was consequential for schooling: it first required a massive increase and then a sizeable decrease in the number of schools and teachers. Beyond the sheer number of children, family *forms* have also shifted. The traditional nuclear family—mom, dad, and the kids—continues its relative decline in Canada. While in 1961 married couples with children at home accounted for 62.3 per cent of all families, by 2011 this had declined to below 39 per cent. The proportion of families headed by a lone parent had risen to over 15 per cent and the proportion of childless couples (either married or common law) had increased to over 40 per cent by 2011. As well, children in more recent years have fewer siblings, if any.

The family has also changed in other ways. Common-law unions now represent about 15 per cent of all couples, and just under half of these couples have children living at home. Couples that do marry now tend to do so later, and they often delay having children. More and more children have 40- and 50-year-old parents. As well, the vast majority of school-aged children live in families where both partners have paid jobs. This leads to more frequent parental absences for significant portions of childhood and adolescence (see Hersch, 1998). Divorce is also now more prevalent. Now, every third marriage is likely to end in a divorce; among divorcing couples, over 50 per cent involve children. The result has been a significant rise both in lone-parent families and in children living in stepfamilies.

Regardless of how these changes are interpreted, they have stark implications for schooling. With more parents in paid employment, leading busy lives with multiple demands, their engagement with their child's school varies greatly. Some children have only one parental advocate, while others have multiple parents and guardians supporting them (although not always in unison).

Other population changes have also buffeted schools. Birth rates and immigration fuel population growth. Immigration has always been large scale in Canada and so schools have long been accustomed to teaching the children of recent immigrants. What has changed most recently is the composition of the immigrant groups. Fewer new Canadians have European roots, and more have ancestral homes in Asia. Refugee uptake has also increased.

These changes all bear on schools' relations with children. Grand religious traditions are being replaced by new, rapidly shifting ideals, forcing schools to compete for the hearts and minds of young people. Leaders now proclaim social diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance as core values to be promoted by schools. Modern teenagers can actively choose among a far greater diversity of lifestyles offered by industries that, in seeking their market share, make school a less central priority for many youth. The smaller modern family can place intense pressures on children to succeed because fewer siblings are available to shoulder the dreams of parents.

Plan for the Remainder of the Book

A few words are necessary to highlight what this book is *not*. We do not attempt to review all types of educational settings (due to lack of space) and thus restrict our focus to organized schooling designed mostly for younger people, as practised in the primary, secondary, and post-secondary systems. Also, we aim merely to understand schooling, not to offer proposals for reform. If you peruse the education section of any good bookstore you will find a wealth of books devoted either to decrying crises in schooling or to offering solutions. Far fewer books are devoted to understanding how schooling operates, with all its entanglements.

We hope to contribute a thorough understanding of schooling using a theoretically informed, evidenced-based approach. This entails not merely accepting what people *say* they are trying to accomplish, but probing what they *actually* accomplish. When studying schooling, this exercise can be contentious. Faith in schooling is strong. Expectations are both lofty *and* diverse. Not everyone agrees on what the priorities or core goals should be. Experiences range widely. Schooling can be a place where they work or study, where they did or didn't get "a leg up on others," or where they have fond memories or horrid experiences. Yet everyone has a lot at stake.

The next two chapters review prominent theories from classical and contemporary sociology in order to highlight questions, issues, and tools that help us to comprehend schools and schooling. Chapter 2 reviews core sociological principles that motivated the key sociological theorists, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. Chapter 3 turns to contemporary theory and illustrates new tools that have been developed in response to changing societal conditions over the past several decades. Each theoretical approach highlights different sociological insights about schooling, and connects schools to trends in economics, science, religion, politics, the family, and popular culture. We approach these theories as useful starting points for raising issues, posing questions, and conducting research. In later chapters we emphasize middle-range ideas and subsequent research findings, and then reflect back on theory.

Part II focuses on selection and highlights the changing ways that schools both offer opportunities and generate inequalities. Chapter 4 examines the great expansion of schooling over the past century. Chapter 5 examines how the very structure of schooling has changed and become itself more stratified. Chapters 6 and 7 turn to a more individual level to consider educational inequalities by class, gender, race, Indigeneity, sexuality, and mental health.

Part III turns to the organization of schooling and legitimizing of knowledge. Chapter 8 examines schools as organizations, placing them in the context of other types of bureaucratic enterprises and looking at their variety of organized forms. Chapter 9 examines the curriculum, investigating the content of schooling. Chapter 10 highlights the work of teachers and discusses teaching as a profession.

The final section focuses on socialization. Chapter 11 summarizes a broad body of research concerning the impact of school on students, focusing on changing

forms of morality, and research on various kinds of school effects. Chapter 12 looks at the limits of this socialization by highlighting competing influences on students. In the concluding chapter we draw together several of the book's themes to outline a prognosis for the future of schooling.

Conclusion

Canada has become a "schooled society." Formal education has moved to the centre of social life. Canadian education has evolved remarkably since its humble origins as a loosely coordinated collection of local schoolhouses. Today's educational systems are huge bureaucracies that are governed by a variety of professional, legal, and political bodies. More and more politicians are earmarking education systems as generators of wealth and skill. As schooling enters a wider variety of institutional realms (e.g., corporate universities), its relation to society grows more complex than ever. It gains an unprecedented institutional centrality. This is what we mean by a schooled society. We next turn to sociological theorizing about schooling's roles in societal selection, socialization, and organization/**legitimation**.

Questions for Critical Thought

1. There are diversion programs in the criminal justice system such as "john schools," remedial driver education, and anti-drug education. How do these programs, or others like them, exemplify our schooled society?
2. Are there any ways that contemporary Canada is *not* yet a schooled society? Explain.
3. Using the themes selection, socialization, and organization/legitimation, compare your schooling experience so far with that of one of your grandparents. Discuss whether today's schools might have a greater or smaller causal impact on students.

Suggested Readings

Baker, David. 2014. *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. This book broadly examines how mass education has dramatically altered the face of society and human life. Great title, too!

Mehta, Jal, and Scott Davies, eds. 2017. *Education in a New Society: Renewing the Sociology of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A series of authors examine how new sociological concepts can be used to comprehend change in education.

Walters, Pamela Barnhouse, Annette Lareau, and Sheri H. Ranis. 2009. *Education Research on Trial: Policy Reform and the Call for Scientific Rigor*. New York: Routledge. This volume debates the strengths and pitfalls of current educational research, and the value of approaches that are more or less scientific.

Web Links

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
www.cmec.ca
This website is maintained by the provincial ministers responsible for education and contains good resource material.

Canadian Teachers' Federation
www.ctf-fce.ca
This website is a national alliance representing nearly 200,000 elementary and secondary school teachers across Canada.

Canadian Education Association
www.cea-ace.ca/about-us
The Canadian Education Association website is a useful place to find discussion and research related to current issues in Canadian education.

2 Classical Sociological Approaches to Education

Learning Objectives

- To use classical sociological theories to understand schooling
- To see how Durkheim's thoughts provide foundational concepts for understanding micro-level social situations and reveal broad shifts in the role of schooling in societal socialization
- To discover how Marx illuminates the role of education in selection and inequality
- To understand how Weber's concept of rationalization reveals fundamental changes in the form and content of modern schooling

Introduction: Using Theory to Study Schools

Theories are conceptual tools that provide perspective or illumination. They help formulate intriguing questions and guide our search for interesting answers. Sociology does not possess a unified, grand theory that everyone shares, but instead offers competing perspectives, each having different emphases and starting points. Like lenses of different magnification, sociological theories can focus at different levels of abstraction.

"Macro" theories are pitched at the largest scale, attempting to understand vast horizons of social activity across entire societies and over long stretches of time, sometimes spanning entire continents and centuries. Macro sociologists approach schooling by linking it to broad modernizing forces that have transformed the world, such as the rise of science over the past three centuries.

Next are "middle-range" theories. These theories are more circumscribed, offering propositions that are geared to specific times and places, such as a particular nation in a particular time period. A middle-range theory might attempt to explain why the Canadian higher education system greatly expanded in the immediate post–Second World War era. Rather than examining grand forces of modernity, this middle-range approach might examine more proximate causes such as the growth of the welfare state, post-war economic prosperity, and the baby boom.

Finally, the most specific are "micro-level" theories. These theories are concerned with face-to-face interactions among people, with only a partial eye to broader social forces. A micro-level theorist might observe a teacher's classroom management tactics and other attempts to wield authority and maintain control. These three different levels of explanation—macro, middle range, and micro—allow sociologists to examine various facets of the social world.

Different sociological theories of education are also rooted in different topics. Some focus on socialization, others on school bureaucracies, others on links to the labour market, others in why some schools work better than others, and yet others on gauging the extent of educational opportunity in society today. Explaining these very different things requires different conceptual tools. No single explanatory framework could develop insights into, or answers for, these diverse questions.

Consider school bullying. Competing explanations can take different starting points. Micro-level researchers might focus on the social psychological mental states of individual bullies, or on how they interact with their victims and bystanders. Middle-range researchers, in contrast, might examine the organization of peer groups, trying to understand how such groups are formed and who is excluded from them, who is isolated and why. Finally, at the most macro level, a sociologist might engage in cross-national comparisons, or in long-term historical research, and examine how different cultures define bullying. Some cultures, for instance, may consider rough physical play to be normal, in contrast to our contemporary society that has evolved more expansive definitions of bullying, extending beyond physical intimidation to include social ostracism and demeaning words. A macro sociologist might compare how such cultural definitions vary across vast sweeps of space and time, and how they evolve.

In this book we begin with macro theories to set the societal context for education. In later chapters we work down to middle-range theories to explain particular aspects of schooling, and near the end we examine micro theories to explore the experiences of students and teachers. As we argued in Chapter 1, school activities form a trilogy: socialization, selection, and organization/legitimation. Focusing on these three issues, this chapter presents the major theoretical concepts that assist our understanding of schooling.

We begin with the work of founding theorists. Sociology was born out of revolutions—first, the Industrial Revolution (1760–1830s) and then two political democratic revolutions in America (1765–1783) and France (1789–1799). Understanding the transformations these revolutions unleashed called for new ideas and new models. Three scholars in particular had powerful insights that hold enduring significance for sociological research. Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Karl Marx (1818–83), and Max Weber (1864–1920) each contributed to the establishment of sociology. In the following pages we highlight some of their central ideas. Following this, in Chapter 3 we present a series of more recent theoretical perspectives that are especially illuminating for the sociology of education. In subsequent chapters we put all of these theories to work to understand modern schooling.

Durkheim and Socialization: The Micro Foundations of Social Interaction and the Cultural Shift to Individualism

In earlier societies, people's deference to tradition tended to make social life regular and predictable in a world that was otherwise turbulent, unforgiving, and

unpredictable. Religion prescribed what you did; custom and habit ruled. The revolutions in industry and politics were transformative precisely because they ushered in new social orders that broke radically with traditional societies. Rising *individualism* was central to this radical break. By "individualism" we refer to the gradual ascendance of an individual's personal goals and thoughts over their sense of obligation to other persons. The rise of capitalist markets and democratic procedures tended to promote individualism and undermine traditional, pre-modern notions of collective responsibility.

These changes motivated Émile Durkheim to pose both micro-level and macro-level questions. At the micro-level, the rising tide of individualism made him think about the very building-blocks of social interaction: what social encounters make people feel part of a group, and how do social situations vary in their intensity? These were questions about social solidarity, processes that bind people to an interconnected group, and questions of individuation, those that distinguish them from collectives. While Durkheim has been long criticized for under-emphasizing group conflict at the macro-level, his concepts are useful for understanding micro-level processes in smaller scale settings, such as classrooms and schools.

Durkheim got his ideas from studying religious groups. He observed that social experiences can intensify when people are gathered together and each focuses their attention on the same people or objects. Rituals are especially good at this: they gather people in near physical proximity, encourage them to speak, sing, sway, or dance in unison, and to revere a common object—a cross, statue, totem, flag, or text. Successful rituals boost group solidarity by renewing people's feeling of being part of a collectivity. Durkheim noticed that religious rituals could energize people and give them a common emotional state, what he called "collective effervescence." This effervescence peaked when everyone assembled became deeply attached to a common object, making it "sacred" to them. In fact, Durkheim argued, objects gain a sacred quality precisely because they symbolize the group. But he also noted that rituals have to be repeated to retain their power, and that sacred objects can sometimes lose their power to motivate individuals and bind groups together.

Rituals and symbols can be seen in schools. Some symbols represent the nation, such as a flag in the schoolyard, a portrait of a political leader on the classroom wall, or the singing of a national anthem in assemblies. Others represent a religious community, such as a Christian cross, a painting of a Pope, or the reciting of a prayer. But in an attempt to forge their own community spirit, schools have also created their own group symbols, such as school mascots, uniforms, songs, nicknames, and emblems. These symbols can become charged with emotion when used in collective gatherings, such as sports events or assemblies. That is one of the latent roles of school sports teams. Student athletes wearing the same uniform, adorned with school colours and recognizable school emblems, serve to symbolize the school community.

The gathering of large crowds of students and teachers, repeatedly chanting and cheering, can create an electrifying, ritual-like experience. The entire spectacle

can serve to recharge collective feelings of belonging to the school, just like plugging into a wall outlet can recharge a battery. School rallies and assemblies perform similar roles for large gatherings. School clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), also play comparable roles for smaller groups, binding their members together in a common cause, albeit in a calmer, toned-down, less kinetic manner. For a modern-day Durkheimian, each sport event, rally, assembly, or club meeting is a micro-level vehicle by which schools generate moral feelings and group solidarity among their members. But not all rituals and symbols equally bind all individuals together with equal force. Some successfully generate group cohesion; others fail outright, leaving many feeling apathetic, unattached, or excluded. Some generate a great deal of solidarity, but at the same time can also stratify people into leaders and followers, insiders and outsiders. In Chapter 3 we will examine more recent micro-level theories that emphasize *variations* in the capacity of schools to generate solidarity.

At the macro-level, Durkheim asked: with the transition from traditional to modern societies, what provides for the social regularity of modern life? For him, industrialization and democratic reforms had sparked greater individualism by making societies increasingly complex, and by giving more people a greater range of social experiences. Cites were growing. More people were geographically mobile, moving across countrysides, regions, even national borders. Fewer people worked in subsistence agriculture, and were instead moving to work in new jobs in an ever-elaborate division of labour. The expansion of mass immigration mixed more and more people of different nationalities and ancestries. This expanding range of social experience, in Durkheim's eyes, provided the experiential bedrock of modern individualism. These societal changes allowed new and central ideas to ascend, like the dignity and worth of human individuals. Both the French and American revolutions stressed the ideal that people should develop their individual talents and capacities to their fullest extent. In its day, this was revolutionary thinking.

As individualism flourished Durkheim wondered what was replacing the authoritative voice of religion which had traditionally supplied the norms that prescribed social behaviour and bolstered social cohesion. What kept individuals from acting only in their own selfish interest, from being uncooperative and self-centred? He offered a powerful sociological response. First, he argued against those who postulated that individual rationality and an implicit social contract were the building blocks of society. That rationality and contract, he reasoned, could only thrive if people trusted one another. Think about two people doing business with one another. For any two parties to agree to a contract, he reasoned, trust had to come first. Trust was fundamental, "pre-contractual." Only when you trust someone to not cheat you, will you ever agree to abide by a contract.

Second, Durkheim emphasized how our very individuality is itself a social product, something forged through social interaction. Our personal identity and sense of self is moulded, shaped, and reshaped through the ongoing reactions of others. We internalize the judgments of family and friends, and eventually those of relative strangers (e.g., new schoolmates), in forming a self-concept,

defining ourselves—funny, confident, anxious, good-looking—as we interpret how others respond to us. And in turn, we each contribute significantly to how others view themselves.

Durkheim recognized that historically, religion had dictated the individual's place within the collective. Separate personalities were virtually absent. By the late 1800s, however, people were beginning to form stronger personal identities. The power of people to develop their own individuality, nurtured by the reactions of significant others, was growing. Circles of interaction and chains of interdependence broadened this feedback network.

Third, as Durkheim argued, each of us speaks a language we did not invent. This has profound consequences on which we seldom reflect. Most plainly, we think with words created by others. Mutual understanding is possible only by using a common language, but we did not create that language. Language is, by analogy, a microcosm of society, one example of the social rules and resources that constitute society. Durkheim (1964: 13) argued that all of these rules and resources "exercised on the individual an external constraint." These rules and resources promoted social cohesion.

To summarize, Durkheim argued that social norms provided a moral framework—the basis of enduring trust—that underlay our participation in mutual agreements. Acts of mutual reciprocity (including contracts), presuppose and reinforce trust. The surrounding community provides a moral basis for social cohesion, enabling us to follow guidelines (ethics, etiquette), but also restricting the range of approved action (e.g., no cheating on sociology exams).

Durkheim's university appointment at the Sorbonne was in both pedagogy and sociology. He often lectured prospective schoolteachers on moral education, which he understood as "the means by which society perpetually recreates the conditions of its very existence" (Durkheim, 1956: 123). Fundamentally, he saw schooling to be about the "systematic socialization of the young generation" (ibid., 124). Durkheim (1964: 6) argued that "all education is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting at which [he or she] would not have arrived spontaneously."

At the core of Durkheim's lectures on moral education were three things. First, morals had an imperative quality, stipulating how one should act: "a system of rules of action that predetermine conduct" (Durkheim, 1961: 24). Second, acting morally entailed some appreciation for the well-being of others: "to act in the light of a collective interest" (ibid., 46). Third, acting morally meant taking personal responsibility, to "have as clear and complete an awareness as possible of the reasons for our conduct" (ibid., 120).

Taking each point in turn, Durkheim's moral education involved several nuances. It entailed that students learn a "system of rules" that should benefit society (the "collective interest"). But students must not follow rules blindly. They must understand why rules exist; they must accept responsibility for their actions. Socialization is thus a complex activity involving an important reciprocity

between the individual and society. For Durkheim, education was *the* institution that could fulfill this broad public mandate, this service to society. Schools were to teach students to be socially responsible, to internalize their obligation to the larger community.

Durkheim also urged that the curriculum needed to include training in scientific reasoning and knowledge; "it is science that elaborates the cardinal notions that govern our thought: notions of cause, of laws, of space, of number. . . . Before the sciences were constituted, religion filled the same office" (Durkheim, 1956: 76–7). This comparison between science and religion signals an important turning point in education. The Church stressed literary study and worked doggedly to restrict the teaching of scientific ideas. Durkheim was pushing new directions by stressing the centrality of science in education.

Before we consider problems with Durkheim's ideas, it is important to note those enduring issues that he correctly identified. First, he recognized the salience of socialization in formal education. He emphasized both virtues and values (for him, morality), and he stressed knowledge and competencies (through the importance of teaching science, both its findings and its methods). Second, he proposed an important view regarding the relations between individual and society, and despite its shortcomings (see below), this remains a powerful statement of education's role in the communal anchoring of social norms (morality).

Third, on balance, Durkheim stressed that education is more likely to reproduce society than to change it: "[education] is only the image and reflection of society . . . it does not create it" (Durkheim, 1951: 372). Education plays a fundamental role in promoting social order, in giving stability to society. Social reproduction, not social change, is the focus of both socialization and legitimation.

Durkheim's thinking stresses a conservative tendency within schools and schooling. Preparing children to take on adult roles implies preparing them for positions and responsibilities in an adult world similar to the existing society. Preparing children for some utopian or desired society would be irresponsible since this would be preparing them for a future that may never materialize. Nevertheless, Durkheim reminded future teachers to "guard against transmitting the moral gospel of our elders as a sort of closed book" (Durkheim, 1977: 13). He encouraged "responsible" social change, but he cautioned against assuming that education could or should be a powerful change agent in society.

Finally, Durkheim was concerned about education providing an equal opportunity for everyone. He was critical of education for being too "aristocratic," stressing that for the majority of people education should be a route to improving "their material condition" (ibid., 205–6). He clearly supported the ideals of the French Revolution, seeing education as a vehicle to foster the development of individual talents and capacities.

Critics of Durkheim, and there are many, typically point to two related issues. His view of society is too consensual. Society appears as one big happy family where everyone agrees. Conversely, conflict is relatively invisible. He implies that everyone

in society provides equal weight with respect to social norms, but critics are quick to note that the morality of powerful groups is often the official morality. Power plays a more fundamental role in the social order than Durkheim allows.

A second criticism is equally important. Durkheim tended to point to the moral order, or society, as all-powerful. Society was an "external constraint," it "commanded us," it "penetrated us," and it "formed part of us" (Durkheim, 1961: 98). Socialization took on the aura of pouring the contents of societies' moral rules into the child. A sophisticated treatment of the interplay between "individual" and "society" needs to be more dynamic, recognizing that people actively interpret social rules. Socialization is not like turning on a faucet and filling a vessel (i.e., pouring norms into a child). Children interpret and make sense of social rules in the light of other rules, and do so in their own everyday context, while interacting with others—who themselves are reacting to the same rules.

Finally, for Durkheim the "health" of society could be seen as the ultimate goal. His defining question was one of social cohesion or integration in the face of rising individualism. His lectures on moral education understood the school first and foremost as a socializing agent devoted to instilling in children society's core values and virtues. In contrast, many of the early education theorists in North America took the concept of individualism in a different direction, arguing that schools should aim to develop people's capacity to make the most of themselves. This understanding of individualism is central to John Dewey, a famous American educator and contemporary of Durkheim. Dewey and his followers placed more emphasis on nurturing individual talents, and emphasized active learning—learning by doing—and discouraged rote, disciplined teaching of societal rules.

Marx: Industrial Capitalism, Class Inequality, and the Spectre of Selection

For Karl Marx, the focus of any social analysis must be on the production and distribution of goods and services that are critical to the survival of society. He traced how the earliest economies were based on hunting and gathering. Over time, innovations in ploughing and planting allowed people to become more settled and live off the soil. This agricultural revolution occurred approximately 12,000 years ago as crop cultivation and animal domestication replaced foraging. In both hunter–gatherer societies and agricultural societies, learning was by custom and tradition—mother to daughter, father to son. Families passed along values and virtues, capabilities and skills; organized schooling was non-existent. Tradition ruled; custom was king.

Gradually, agricultural output increased. The capacity of farmers to support a non-agricultural population presaged the next great economic revolution, the rise of industry. In the mid-to-late 1700s, and located initially in England, the introduction of innovative machinery in factory settings accelerated productivity. With the rise of manufacturing came a population shift from the farm to the city, a growing

division of industrial labour, and the beginnings of a more globally integrated world. Formal schooling was introduced as something critical to economic well-being, both for the individual and the nation.

For Marx, an important aspect of industrialization was that it generates vast social differences in wealth. From the homeless and downtrodden to the rich and powerful, enormous gulfs divide us. This social inequality surrounds us—rich and poor, esteemed and pitied, advantaged and disadvantaged. Making sense of these differences, both their nature and extent, is a central focus of sociology. Marx has had a substantial impact on sociological explorations of inequality, remaining to this day one of the most read, cited, and criticized social thinkers in history. His key tenet was that **class struggle** was central to any understanding of society. Modern society, in Marx's view, is capitalist, divided between two main groups, those owning industries and businesses and those working as employees. Those owning factories, offices, and businesses are the most powerful because they control *capital*—productive investments. They dictate how economic production and distribution is organized.

The divide between owners and workers, Marx argues, is fundamentally exploitative. In agricultural societies this exploitation was easy to see—workers (peasants, serfs, slaves) were compelled to work for a lord or aristocratic master. In modern factories or offices exploitation is less obvious. Marx argued that workers receive a wage or salary, but that they have no claim on the profits *their own* work generates. Workers create more monetary value in the goods or services they produce than they are paid in wages. Owners claim this surplus amount as profit (after deducting other expenses, e.g., building costs, marketing costs). By reaping this "surplus value," in Marx's language, employment relationships are *exploitative*: one class generates a profit, while another confiscates that profit.

He and his long-time colleague, Friedrich Engels, argued that social power followed from economic exploitation: "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx and Engels, 1969: 125). The creation and diffusion of the dominant ideas in any society are driven by the ruling class, according to Marx. In capitalism this means that the specific interests of business owners and the captains of industry are the most dominant ideas.

Schools are all about ideas. For modern Marxists, mainstream classrooms, along with other institutions like the media and the legal system, unwittingly transmit the ruling ideas of capitalist society. Schooling is seen to play a particularly critical role in spreading the ruling ideas throughout society. Furthermore, Marxists presume that the sons and daughters of the ruling class will benefit most from mass institutions like schooling, being virtually guaranteed the best badges of ability and top academic honours.

But just how do schools disseminate ruling ideas and the dominant ideology of capitalism? Here, Marx was rather vague. He left for his followers, in very broad strokes, two possibilities. First, is an "education–workplace fit." Marxists claim

that schools mainly teach those skills and values that are essential for the smooth functioning of the capitalist workplace. Indeed, Marx (1967: 509) referred to schools as "teaching factories." He and Engels saw education, along with "Modern Industry," as transforming children into "simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour" (Marx and Engels, 1969: 124). Second, they argued that education reinforces ideas that sustain and legitimate inequalities in the surrounding society, and vowed to "rescue education from the influence of the ruling class" (ibid.). Both of these lines of argument have been taken up by scholars inspired by Marx (see Box 2.1).

Certainly controversial and decidedly wrong on specific issues, Marx's thinking nevertheless remains influential. His focus on the role of power and conflict in shaping societies is critical, particularly how its economic organization tends to create unequal social classes. No sociologist can properly understand education

Box 2.1 Paulo Freire: Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire (1921–97), a Brazilian educator, was a key proponent of "Critical Pedagogy." Most early forms of schooling emphasized rote teaching and memorization rather than critical thinking (see Chapters 6 and 8). Freire was especially caustic about the "banking" model of education that views students as passive, empty vessels into which teachers fill curriculum content. Echoing John Dewey, Freire considered that banking model of schooling to be dehumanizing. Moreover, Freire refused to reduce schooling to a utilitarian means for training or moulding workers—encouraging students to passively accept oppressive attitudes and practices. His central interest was in using education to empower the poor. As the Director of the Department of Education and Culture in Pernambuco during the Great Depression (1930s), he worked to educate the illiterate poor. Freire saw education as emancipating. Educating illiterate workers was a political act because in Pernambuco only the literate could vote. Literacy, he wrote, could push the poor to develop a fuller "critical" consciousness, one that connected their individual experiences with schooling to their larger social-economic context. Only then would schooling help people gain the power needed to transform reality and challenge their oppression.

His influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was first published in 1968 (1970 in English). Dedicated "to the oppressed, and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side," Freire debunked traditional teaching methods, believing them to promote inequalities between students and teachers. He advocated a reciprocal relationship in which students and teachers each teach, learn, and question one another. Freire's book resonated with North American and European professors and students in the wake of the 1960s, and they eventually formalized **Critical Pedagogy** as it is taught widely today in universities. Freire's work highlights the role of schooling in unequal social relationships, ranging from overt battles between the colonizer and the colonized in parts of the Third World, to tussles between employers and employees in the First World.

without being fully cognizant of the power of economic power, wielded by business associations, and to a much lesser extent, unions. In contrast to Durkheim, Marx's view that the "ruling ideas" benefit some segments of society more than others has inspired many followers.

In common with Durkheim, Marx stressed the importance of education in supporting or reproducing the current social order. Marx argued that employers want schools to socialize students into compliant and productive labourers. Today, some Marxist theorists point to similar pressures, such as when politicians use the rhetoric of the "knowledge society" and national competitiveness to call for tightened links between schools and workplaces. In contrast, Marx envisioned socialist societies as having education systems that would truly nurture the development of the whole person.

As noted above, Durkheim emphasized equality of opportunity, the idea that everyone should benefit from schools and schooling. Marxist thinking refines these ideas, suggesting that societies ought to strive not just for equality of opportunity, but also equality of outcome. Both Durkheimians and Marxists note that those from richer and more prosperous families are surely more able to succeed, not because of their intrinsic abilities or efforts, but because of their many, and early, advantages. Because advantaged children are able to start running before the race even begins, and most often cross the finish line in first place, some question whether education ought to be organized as a race at all.

Critics of Marx have questioned whether the economy is always the driver of societal change, and whether class divisions readily reflect only two main groupings, capitalists and workers. These critics contend that economies and classes are not the ultimate determinant in every case of change. It is hard to see the recently won rights of women, which are fundamental to changes in modern society and schooling, as resulting solely from economic class struggles. The economy is critically important to how we live our lives and following the trail of money is often important for understanding how and why things are changing. But other factors influence social arrangements. For schooling especially, change is not necessarily driven only by the economy, even though schools do tend to reflect their local economies in some fundamental ways.

Weber: Organizing and Legitimizing Knowledge

Like Durkheim, Max Weber examined the transition from traditional religious societies to advanced industrial societies. His writing stressed two coincidental processes. First, he underlined the demise of religious enchantment in providing social cohesion. Second, he highlighted the rise of instrumental reason, also known as rationalization, as a principle logic animating modern societies. Let us elaborate.

As noted earlier, traditional societies were characterized by a binding religious narrative—an overarching story that legitimated and explained to all persons their

place in the social world. Religion provided the guiding ideals and the authoritative voices. In such traditional societies it was the long arm of history—soaked with religious custom, habit, and tradition—that constrained the present and the future. The Church was the supreme authority in the affairs of economics, education, law, marriage, and politics. But with the gradual erosion of religious authority what fascinated Weber was the influence of this shift on the cognitive frameworks that people used to think and act. Religious prophets and priests used sorcery, sacrifice, and enchantment to claim a transcendental religious or spiritual authority. But in modern societies that form of authority was clearly on the decline and was being replaced by something else.

During the Enlightenment the Church was science's main competitor for the hearts and minds of people. Galileo's condemnation by the Catholic Church typified that struggle between two idea systems. Science became a more pervasive world view only as the power of astrology, witchcraft, and especially religion waned. But science became powerful because of its rising economic utility. Science and engineering featured significantly in industry's rapid growth. Men of science (and they virtually all were men) invented the steam engine, the spinning jenny, and the ships made of iron plate.

Beyond these technical inventions, the rise of science also promoted a new way of thinking. Galileo's observations of the night sky and Newton's laws of motion were remarkable discoveries. Rather than searching for knowledge in the pages of religious texts, people began looking towards science as the authoritative voice demonstrating how the world worked. The sober procedures of science were in ascendance—the formulation of hypotheses, the analysis of evidence, and the public scrutiny and critical reception of new knowledge.

The scientific outlook introduced a new world view, a new way of seeing. Many mysteries of the universe were solved as science came to reveal that the earth was neither flat nor the centre of everything. But of course a new way of thinking needs to be taught. People did not acquire a new attitude to knowledge by osmosis. Organized schooling played a vital part in science becoming widely understood and applied. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Enlightenment thinkers worked to replace religious dogma with a more reasoned approach to life. For the new Age of Reason to mature, schools were essential.

For Weber, what was fundamental in modern society was that science emerged as a major cultural authority. As Drori et al. (2003: 10) argue, "the modern attribution of competence and responsibility to social actors—rather than, for example, [to] tradition or nature or god—would make no sense" without this scientific cultural authority. A scientific outlook is fundamental to the premise that we, as humans, can act rationally in the world, that we can intervene to change both ourselves and nature. Over the past 200 years, science has increasingly supplied the major cognitive models used by people in Western cultures. As a result, schools slowly became less religious and more scientifically rational. They began to teach, at least at their upper levels, basic science (e.g., chemistry) and scientific reasoning.

Importantly, scientific rationality became one of the prime modern rationales to justify the expansion of mass schooling.

Historically, religion has played a powerful role in society by "explaining" inequality, disaster, and calamity to believers as the will of the Deity. But in the age of scientific reason, purely religious explanations found fewer and fewer adherents. Schoolchildren now learn scientific explanations for plagues, hurricanes, and earthquakes. As the enveloping power of religious ideas eroded, instrumental reason and calculation (rationality) came to dominate. Weber describes this rise of rationality in terms of people's everyday lives. People gradually accepted that a "bus or an elevator, money, a court of law" were "in principle rational." Further, people gained confidence that "these phenomena function rationally" such that "one can reckon with them, calculate their effects, and base one's actions confidently on the expectations they arouse" (ibid.). Think of the clock as a metaphor for rationalization. Mechanical clocks (from the 1300s onwards) helped to usher in a world that was more orderly, precise, and predictable—in a word, rational.

Rationality gradually reduced the spheres of the everyday world in which mystery, uncertainty, and chance dominated. The growing rationality of modern life is all around us—in the economics of profit and loss, in logistical planning, in time management, and in the increasing complexity of legal codes. Predictability is a defining attribute of each example. It is, as George Ritzer (2000) graphically depicts it, the "McDonaldization" of modern society—fast, efficient, predictable processes.

With the diminishing of religious authority and rise of rationalization, Weber saw a new type of authority emerging: **legal-rational authority**. This new authoritative voice claimed legitimacy through careful planning and precise calculation. This was a new mindset where individuals gradually came to assert their power in the world. The world was increasingly demystified; people came more and more to understand that they could intervene to increase food production, reduce morbidity and mortality, manage time, and "see" the most fundamental particles of matter—quarks. Placating the gods and spirits was replaced by rational human intervention. And, of course, schools were prime vehicles for teaching this new world view. However, these very schools had to be rationally organized—or in Weber's language, bureaucratized.

Weber saw this new legal-rational authority as being crystallized in modern bureaucracies. For him, modern bureaucratic administration was both efficient and constraining. Consider the greater efficiency that comes with bureaucracy. As trade routes expanded, as money began to circulate across wider geographic regions, as national populations grew, and as the division of occupational labour accelerated, precise specialization and coordination became imperative. Specialists were needed everywhere, including in transportation, in accounting, in tax collecting, in standardizing time, in town planning, and in schooling. And all of this specialization demanded coordination. Whether in a ballet company, Canada's Institute for National Measurement Standards (INMS, our official timekeeper), or a high school, bureaucracy is the most efficient method we have of coordinating specialized organizational and administrative structures involving large numbers of people.

Such specialization and coordination also drive us crazy. Bureaucracies, according to Weber, are "iron cages" that constrain us from acting spontaneously and nimbly; instead, bureaucracies provide scripted, formulaic solutions for our diverse problems, often generating more "red tape" than inspiration. What is "red tape?" Well, it is the rules and regulations that made bureaucracies so efficient in the first place! Large-scale action requires careful planning and precise calculation, but it simply cannot take every contingency into account, especially as our world evolves. As George Ritzer (2000: 16) phrases it, "rational systems are often unreasonable." Weber recognized this, stressing how the efficiency of bureaucracy allowed it to spread incessantly, while recognizing at the same time that its rationality undermined individual freedom and creativity.

Even more fundamentally, Weber saw two crosscutting tendencies unfolding within society. One tendency was the rise of a world of stable calculations. But with this came, paradoxically, a more disordered world in which different systems of logic competed. Whereas religion had enveloped traditional society, now new and individualistic or competing persuasions of artistic/aesthetic, economic, political, and scientific logical systems began to emerge. These were distinct institutional spheres, each with its own internal, rational logic as, for example, the logical systems of economics and of science. At the same time a powerful logic of rationality was expanding, but coincidentally institutional spheres were differentiating and using the abstract principles of rationality for their own ends.

Only in the last few centuries, and most noticeably in advanced Western societies, could one point to the separate spheres of work and home, of government and religion, of school and health. No single authoritative voice provided overarching moral legitimacy. Each institution sought legitimacy. Whereas Marx saw in the logic of capitalism that the economic sphere was dominating all ideas, Weber saw a much broader set of competing values and interests: the rationality of the marketplace emphasized profit and loss; the world of science valued truth and logic; the world of democracy stressed voting and political parties; the world of art and design valued creativity. Each domain had its own rationality, each had its own logic of efficiency, but each also required its own organizational forms and legitimacy.

In using these conceptual tools to understand education Weber focused mainly on related themes in bureaucracy and inequality. Because bureaucracies required specialists, qualifying examinations were central to ensuring a meritocratic system (i.e., "no hiring of the senior administrator's relatives unless they are the best qualified"). For Weber (1946: 240–1), "special examinations and . . . trained expertness" are "indispensable for modern bureaucracy. . . . The modern development of full bureaucratization brings the system of rational, specialized, and expert examinations irresistibly to the fore."

A characteristic of the modern bureaucracy is that formal, impersonal rules govern staffing and that trained experts earn positions based on merit. As Weber (ibid.) argued, "special examinations mean or appear to mean a 'selection' of those who qualify from all social strata rather than a rule by notables." Bureaucratic authority gains legitimacy in people's eyes because it is staffed by merit, not by family ties or personal loyalties. Importantly, Weber notes that the process "appears to

mean" an openness to all. Appearances are critical to legitimacy because, in an oft-repeated sociological truism, "what people define to be real, is real in its consequences" (Thomas and Thomas, 1928: 52). Legitimation may exist only in people's heads, but so long as it exists there, it is a powerful force having real consequences.

Weber's ideas resonate both with Durkheim's emphasis on equality of opportunity and with Marx's caution regarding equality of condition. Examinations may give the appearance of fair selection but, as a sociologist, Weber wants to leave open the question of whether selection systems do actually produce fair and meritocratic selections (see "Talent versus Property" box). Noting that acquiring an advanced education is expensive for students in terms of time and money, credential requirements effectively create "a setback for talent in favor of property" (Weber, 1946: 242). In short, those with income and wealth typically do better in education systems using competitive examinations (although he is vague about the exact social mechanisms that work to reproduce this inequality).

Weber also notes that educational certificates have a certain "social prestige." They purportedly signal the possession of expert knowledge, but can also function as exclusionary devices. Occupational groups that demand higher levels of education prior to entering them may reflect a "desire for restricting the supply for these positions and their monopolization by the owners of educational certificates" (ibid., 241). Effectively, occupational groups (e.g., doctors) can use educational credentials as a way of regulating supply, selecting through examinations optimal numbers and excluding others.

Finally, Weber also comments on the content of schooling, although only in passing. He was himself encyclopedic in his range of expertise and interests, writing about religion, music, accounting, history, and on and on. He worried that the "ever-increasing expert and specialized knowledge" (ibid., 243) was drowning out an education that encouraged "ways of thought suitable to a cultured" person (ibid., 428). He pointed to both Greece and China as historical examples where education had not been narrowed to content that might be "useful" for a specialization (ibid., 243).

Significant lessons flow from Weber's insights. Most importantly, the process of rationalization has deeply affected schooling in many ways. Examinations are all about calculating and predicting. Bureaucracy is fundamental to school administration. Critics worry that school curricula have become dominated by knowledge thought to be "useful" for the economy, though Weber would argue that this perceived utility allows schools to retain their legitimacy in a highly rationalized world. Weber also stressed that in a pure and idealized model of bureaucracy, merit is a core principle for both hiring and promotion. But Weber worried about inequality and gaps between ideals of how bureaucracy ought to work and how it really worked in practice. He was concerned that "property" might distort the actual processes of meritocracy. He was also cynical about what educational certificates actually signalled (e.g., indicators of talent or measures of

Talent versus Property: A Case Study from India

There are now over 20 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), often lauded as institutions of world-class excellence that nurture the best and brightest young talent in India. IITs boast of being top-flight universities that are buoyed by the exceptional success of their graduates. The IITs are said to have produced more millionaires per capita than any other university in the world. Some IIT applicants see admission to top universities such as Harvard or Oxford as a safety net, an insurance placement of second choice. But while the IITs are among the world's elite education institutions, whether all talented Indians flourish there is a separate question.

In 2015, about 300,000 aspirants wrote the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), the sole criterion for admission. About 3,000 (1.0 per cent) gained admission. Successful students usually need to expend extraordinary efforts to prepare for the school's high-stakes admission test, sometimes taking a full year to cram, and sometimes even attending boarding schools that specialize in exam prep. Because admission to IITs is a crucial gatekeeper of upward mobility and class reproduction in India, governments have carefully monitored the demographics of IIT students. But a decade ago, researchers found few women, few from rural settings, few from the lower classes, and few from the lower castes (the so-called scheduled castes and tribes). So in 2007, officials asked the institutes to implement a series of quotas or "reservations" that would greatly boost the representations of students from those groups. Then in 2008, they asked for similar reservations for teachers and faculty. As Gupta (2015: 104) describes it, caste-ridden and hierarchical societies like India need to find ways to provide social justice and economic opportunities to all who are deprived by social and educational disadvantages. But Gupta also reports that IIT directors have voiced their "reservations about reservations," warning of dire consequences such as greatly diluting the quality of the student body and faculty. Some consider these concerns to be products of a deeply entrenched caste-based culture, while others see them as understandable worries over quality. In either event, sociologists can recognize that IIT graduates may be extremely talented, but also illustrate how "property" (using Weber's language for gender, caste, and class) paves the way for talent to show through.

perseverance) and how they were used to monopolize access to jobs, both themes we pursue in later chapters.

It is harder to criticize Weber than either Durkheim or Marx because many of his ideas are very specific to certain contexts, rather than expressed in general concepts. Weber was encyclopedic in his thinking but this very range brought with it a certain level of description. He said little about education as an organized activity, and when he did it was only about certain details. There is little conceptual sociology of education to be found in Weber's own work, although, as we will see, much of the ongoing debate about schooling makes use, often unknowingly, of his insights.

Conclusion: From Classical to Contemporary Theory

The classical theories of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber set the foundations for sociological theorizing. They offer a rich heritage that pushes us to think imaginatively and rigorously about schools. However, many key social and intellectual changes have occurred since those classic treatises were penned. The past half-century has brought profound societal shifts, changing intellectual priorities, and a corpus of empirical research, combining to give birth to more refined thinking about schools. The next chapter outlines more recent theories.

Questions for Critical Thought

1. What, if any, relevance do the ideas of these three dead white males have for contemporary schooling? What would you cite as their most informative idea, and why?
2. Can ideas from contemporary feminism make ideas from Durkheim, Marx, and Weber more useful for understanding today's schooled society? Are their ideas useful for understanding women's changing place in that society?
3. Durkheim provides interesting ideas about how schools can promote ritualistic, solidarity-generating experiences. Do one or both of the following: First, think back to your own high school experience and suggest why it might or might not have illustrated what Durkheim articulates. Second, think of a recent movie that might illustrate some of the school ritualism that Durkheim's idea can illuminate. Describe the scenes in the film that illustrate ritualism at work.

Suggested Readings

Collins, Randall, with Michael Makowsky. 2009. *The Discovery of Society*, 8th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill. This well-known American theory text is written with an emphasis on the classics.

Grabb, Edward G. 2007. *Theories of Social Inequality*, 5th edn. Toronto: Thomson Nelson. Grabb's book, now in its fifth edition, is the best-known Canadian textbook on sociological theories.

Prentice, Alison. 1977. *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. In *The School Promoters*, the author presents a popular history of Canadian education.

Web Links

Classical Sociological Theory: A Review of Themes, Concepts, and Perspectives
http://deflem.blogspot.com/1999/09/classical-sociological-theory-1999.html
Maintained by Dr. Mathieu Deflem at the University of South Carolina, this website outlines a thorough review of the major themes and concepts of classical sociological theory.

Module on Karl Marx
www.unc.edu/~nielsen/soci250/m3/soci250m3.pdf
Created by François Nielsen for his sociology course at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, this PowerPoint presentation presents a concise summary of the life and works of Karl Marx.

3 Contemporary Sociological Approaches to Schooling

Learning Objectives

- To recognize the limits of classical theories for understanding schooling today in light of important economic, demographic, and cultural changes
- To use contemporary sociological theories to understand educational selection, socialization, and organization
- To compare and contrast a series of theories with different assumptions about core social processes

Introduction

This chapter builds on the classical approaches outlined in Chapter 2 and reviews contemporary theories on the three themes of socialization, selection, and organization. We begin by examining Randall Collins' reworking of Durkheim's micro-level thought. We then shift to the macro-level, comparing structural functionalism's rather positive portrait of schools as passing on values of modern life to that of neo-Marxism, which largely inverted this image, and portrayed schools as inculcating a capitalist culture that benefits only a few. We then shift to the study of inequality, again comparing functionalists and Marxists. Next we examine what is known as "**cultural capital**" and approaches to differing experiences of students, particularly by gender and race. The chapter ends by comparing how sociologists and economists offer different accounts of schools' organizational processes and goals.

Socialization: Interaction Rituals and Hidden Curricula

Socialization is central to schooling. But with the waning of religious influence, contemporary theorists have pondered new, broader relations between schools and morality. Most approaches presume that contemporary socialization in schools is "hidden," that is, tacit or implicit, a concept that we develop below.

Chapter 2 described Durkheim's ideas about the capacity of rituals and symbols to generate social bonds and solidarity. Randall Collins (2004) has recently revised this thinking with his own theory of micro-level interaction. Collins begins by noting that social settings vary in their capacity to coax people to focus their attention on the same thing. Some settings encourage people to synchronize their