

## Answer Key for In-Text Questions

### Chapter 6

**Title:** Chapter 6 Questions for Review

**Question/Prompt:** 1. What is social stratification?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Social stratification is a hierarchical system of inequality that is based on class, socioeconomic status, and power combined with other forms of differentiation, such as gender and ethnicity.

**Question/Prompt:** 2. Differentiate between how conflict theory, functionalism, and symbolic interactionism approach class inequality.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Conflict theory argues that social inequality only serves the dominant group in society, and it may even be harmful to the survival of society as a whole. This builds on the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who outlined a fundamental conflict between the interests of the bourgeoisie or capitalists, who own the means of production, and the proletariat or workers, whose only option is to sell their labour.
- Functionalism notes that social inequality exists in all societies and plays an important role in recruiting and motivating individuals to take on specific positions and social roles. To motivate people to pursue such demanding occupations, such as doctor, society has established a reward system that pays the highest rewards to positions that are hardest to fill.
- Symbolic interactionism investigates how people give meaning to social stratification and what symbols are associated with various social groups. Following Thorstein Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption, social interactionists today study how different social classes use "status symbols" to distinguish themselves.

**Question/Prompt:** 3. How do class inequality and gender intersect?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

The feminist perspective provides unique insights into the intersection of class inequality and gender. In Canada, there continues to be a gender-based wage gap between men and women. Taking into account the fact that women in Canada have on average greater educational attainment than men, have diversified their fields of study at educational institutions, and have increased their representation in higher-status occupations, the continued gender-based wage gap raises important questions around gender equality in compensation.

The gender wage gap in Canada has a disproportionate effect on vulnerable social groups that include low-income women, racialized minorities, and Indigenous women. One report says that Canada needs to do more to guarantee that women, particularly racialized minority and Indigenous women, receive equal pay and equal treatment for their work.

**Question/Prompt:** 4. Describe social mobility within Canada.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Social mobility describes the process of moving from one class or occupational status to another.
- In comparison to other countries, Canada has a high level of upward social mobility. However, recent studies show social mobility has been decreasing in every province in Canada. Most important, there are substantial differences across provinces. For example, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador have high mobility, whereas Saskatchewan and Manitoba have low mobility.
- In Canada, education is a critical influence on upward mobility. With good educational credentials, such as a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree, people are more likely to be upwardly mobile and less likely to be downwardly mobile.

**Question/Prompt:** 5. What are strengths and weaknesses of the LICO, MBM, and LIM?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The low income cut-off (LICO), market basket measure (MBM), and the low income measure (LIM) are used to measure low income and establish poverty thresholds or cut-off points.
- LICO measures the income thresholds below which a family will spend a larger proportion of its income on essential necessities than other comparable families with higher incomes.
- MBM calculates how much income a household requires to meet its needs, including subsistence needs (such as basic food and shelter) and the needs that satisfy community norms.
- LIM calculates the low income threshold of a household as one-half of the median income of same-sized households in communities of a similar size.
- To establish who falls below the average income, the LICO, MBM, and LIM all provide slightly different answers. Depending on the type of measurement used, statistics about who lives in poverty may vary; one Canadian might be considered living in poverty by one measure but not by another.

**Question/Prompt:** 6. How do a person's social circumstances affect their health?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The social determinants of health (SDOH) are the numerous social factors that affect a person's health and well-being. These factors are often interrelated and affect health and well-being in direct and indirect ways.
- SDOH include income and income distribution, education, employment and job security, working conditions, early childhood development, food security, housing, social exclusion, social safety net, health services, Indigenous status, gender, racialization, immigration, and abilities.
- For example, the more educated people are, the healthier they are likely to be: their income is likely to be higher, and they are more likely to have access to information at home or through work about how to maintain and improve their health through workshops, expert reviews, and websites.

**Question/Prompt:** 7. Choose one safety net in Canada and describe how it affects class inequality.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The most common forms of safety net services are social assistance, universal health care, homeless shelters, and food banks.
- One important safety net in Canada is social assistance, which are payments to low-income earners and vulnerable social groups so they can meet their basic needs. The underlying idea of social assistance is that some members of society are unable to work, either temporarily or permanently; therefore, it is necessary that people who work share part of their income with those who need it.
- Social assistance, however, often fails the people who receive it. First, social assistance often fails to cover basic living costs, including food expenses, clothing, and transportation. Second, social assistance programs perpetuate a spiral of inequality. Often, people living on social assistance cannot give their children the same opportunities as can people with larger and more secure incomes. Finally, the goal of social assistance is to help those who can work to seek stable employment and end their dependence on governmental assistance, but some people may not be helped in this way.

**Title:** Chapter 6 Questions for Critical Thought

**Question/Prompt:** 1. To what extent is Canada a classless society? Draw on evidence from Canadian studies on economic inequality and social stratification to support your point.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- In Canada, economic inequality and social stratification has increased over time.
- Canada has one of the highest percentages of millionaires worldwide. In addition, the richest group of Canadians have increased their share of the national income since the 1970s. For all other groups, their shares have decreased.
- In 2019, Canada had the eight-highest gender wage gap, ranking thirtieth out of 37 OECD countries examined. The gender wage gap has a disproportionate effect on vulnerable social groups that include low-income women, racialized minorities, and Indigenous women.
- Recent studies show that social mobility has been decreasing in Canada.
- Children who grow up in low-income households confront an intergenerational cycle of poverty and have limited opportunities of rising to the top. In addition, the opportunities to break the cycle of poverty and rise to the top vary by geographic region.
- Canadians have unequal opportunities to obtain an education. People whose parents have neither a high school diploma nor postsecondary credentials are less likely to go to university themselves.
- Women, immigrants, and racialized minorities are especially prone to downward social mobility. They often experience language barriers and lack work experience and certification required for employment. They often work in precarious, low-paying jobs for which they are overqualified.
- Indigenous populations are especially disadvantaged, resulting from a history of colonization and its many forms of oppression. Income-related inequalities, particularly food insecurity, can take a toll on mental health and lead to psychological distress and suicidal risks. Many chronic stressors are present in these communities, such as unemployment, lack of clean drinking water, racism, poverty, poor education, family instability, environmental degradation, and residential instability. The combination of stressors creates a strong barrier against social mobility.
- In recent decades, Canadian cities have experienced a housing crisis in line with exponential increases in real estate prices. This crisis has further intensified the lack of affordable housing in cities, creating an increase in homelessness.
- Food scarcity is a real issue in Canada and several factors have contributed to an unprecedented rise in the use of food banks. The main factor is the unstable economy, resulting in increased levels of unemployment in both mid- and low-income families. Another contributing factor is a spike in food prices.

**Question/Prompt:** 2. What factors make it difficult to define and measure poverty? Consider the limitations of statistical measures as an approach for measuring poverty. Discuss how various definitions of poverty can serve as political tools in making decisions around resource allocation in society.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The low income cut-off (LICO), market basket measure (MBM), and the low income measure (LIM) are used to measure low income and establish poverty thresholds or cut-off points. Debate continues about the best way to measure low income, as each method of measurement leads to different conclusions about poverty.
- To get at these nuanced aspects of poverty, two concepts become relevant. The first is absolute poverty: not having enough income to meet basic survival needs such as water, food, shelter, and access to critical health care. The second is relative poverty, which describes people or families with enough income to survive but not enough to afford an average standard of living.
- Various definitions of poverty can absolve political systems from allocating sufficient resources to address and combat poverty. In addition, governments can depoliticize poverty and pass the responsibility to charities and other organizations.

**Question/Prompt:** 3. Discuss the benefits for families and society at large of implementing universal child care services across Canada. Why is there such a reluctance to financially support such a program from public funds? How are universal child care services different from other public services such as elementary education or universal health care?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- There are several reasons why child care and early childhood education are important to reducing inequality. The early years of a child's life are crucial for learning and development. As a result, children who are exposed to a rich sensory learning environment will have numerous advantages in later life. In addition, there are long-term economic and cultural benefits Canada can enjoy if it were to implement universal child care.
- However, people with no children and high-income earners often oppose the use of taxpayers' money to fund public child care and early education.
- Universal child care services are not necessarily free, whereas public elementary education and universal health care are free.
- Universal child care directly benefits families with children, whereas universal health care benefits everyone.

**Question/Prompt:** 4. Why are food banks often described as a “Band-Aid solution” to the problem of poverty? Do you agree?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Food banks are described as a “Band-Aid solution” to the problem of poverty because they do not address the systemic and structural reasons for poverty.
- In Canada, there has been an unprecedented rise in the use of food banks, due to an unstable economy, increased levels of unemployment, and a spike in food prices. This has put huge pressure on food banks to meet the needs of local communities.
- The normalization of food banks gives people the impression that the hunger crisis is taken care of, when in reality the larger problems underlying the crises are not being properly addressed.
- The passing of responsibility from governments to charities has been referred to as the “depoliticization of hunger” and deflects public attention and outrage from their elected representatives. For this problem to be solved, food security must be reframed as a fundamental human right and thus available to all citizens. Food security is an absolute responsibility of government, not charities.

**Question/Prompt:** 5. What do you think are the most relevant social determinants of health (SDOH) affecting Indigenous people in Canada today? List the most relevant SDOH and explain how they affect Indigenous women and men differently. Take into account the key ideas underlying the theory of intersectionality.

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience worse health outcomes than other Canadians because of continuing income inequalities, inadequate housing and crowded living conditions, lower levels of education, and higher rates of unemployment.
- Other relevant social determinants of health (SDOH) include dangerous working conditions, lack of early childhood development, food insecurity, social exclusion, lack of a social safety net and access to health services, gender, and racialization.
- Intersectionality recognizes the interlocking nature of social identity categories (such as ethnicity, class, and gender) that creates more complex, interdependent systems of oppression and marginalization.
- Gender inequalities, like access to education, unequal job opportunities, and victimization, tend to make Indigenous women have poorer health outcomes than Indigenous men.
- In addition, Canada’s long history of colonialism has incurred and encouraged violence toward Indigenous women.

**Question/Prompt:** 6. Do you see social assistance as a long-term or short-term solution to inequality?

**Correct Answer Example(s):**

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Social safety nets, like social assistance, are important solutions to inequality. Social assistance provides payments to the lowest-earning individuals and members of vulnerable social groups to enable them to meet their basic needs.
- The underlying idea of social assistance is that some members of society are unable to work, either temporarily or permanently; therefore, it is necessary that people who work share part of their income with those who need it.
- In its current form, social assistance is a short-term solution to inequality that often fails the people who receive it. First, contrary to popular belief, social assistance often fails to cover basic living costs, including food expenses, clothing, and transportation. Second, social assistance programs perpetuate a spiral of inequality. Finally, the goal of social assistance is to help recipients end their dependence on governmental assistance, but some people may not be helped in this way.
- Universal Basic Income (UBI), a no-strings-attached monthly payment that would be guaranteed to each member of society, is a potential long-term solution to inequality. As a system that turns everyone into a beneficiary of the government, UBI could be an effective strategy in normalizing and universalizing social welfare.