

# Case Study

## Chapter 15

Trina is a twenty-year-old Canadian who likes to shop and drive her car around the city. She fills up her car weekly and goes to the mall several times a week, often purchasing several items. She still lives at home and works full-time, so she has a lot of discretionary income. She could take transit to work but she likes the convenience and status of driving her car.

She hears a lot on the news about climate change. She's heard about movies and books regarding this topic, and politicians like to talk about it too. Her friends and family rarely discuss it.

She lives in an upper-class neighbourhood, and a lot of people she knows work in the oil and gas industry. Some even own oil and gas companies. Several of them don't believe in climate change, stating that it's a hoax or over-exaggerated. Trina doesn't know what to think, and she doesn't spend much time thinking about it. The issue is very confusing and doesn't impact her day-to-day life, so she thinks she doesn't have to worry about it.

- 1. How does Trina contribute to climate change?**
- 2. Why do you think Trina doesn't want to think about climate change?**
- 3. Why do some people believe that climate change is not real?**
- 4. What could Trina do differently in light of environmental issues impacting our planet?**
- 5. Are you concerned about climate change? Why or why not? Does it impact your life? The lives of others? Why would sociologists be concerned about the environment?**

### Sample Answers:

1. Trina, as someone living in a western country such as Canada, is a consumer, consuming much more energy and buying many more things than those living in other parts of the world. She also consumes fossil fuels when driving her car instead of using public transportation. She doesn't need to worry about energy consumption because she feels like she has the financial means to spend and consume as she sees fit. Trina is not alone in her attitude. A lot of people who live in high-income countries feel the same way.
2. Climate change is scary and at some point, perhaps very soon, will become irreversible, creating even more damage to the planet, perhaps even making it inhospitable to human life. A lot of people would rather live in denial than face the issue and acknowledge its urgency.
3. Most people agree with the scientists who have studied climate change that it is a real and increasingly more serious phenomenon. Those who don't believe climate change exists may have been influenced by messaging from powerful groups funded by fossil fuel companies who do not want restrictions on production nor emissions.
4. Trina could try to minimize her carbon footprint through buying less and using less fossil fuels. It's easy to be cynical and believe that individuals can't make a difference. In fact, individuals can make a huge impact. The less we buy and the less fossil fuels we consume, the less demand and the less production. But more than our individual behaviours, we can have an even bigger influence not as consumers but also as voters and advocates, by voting for politicians and parties that advocate for environmental protection, and making our desire for environmental policy known to our representatives.

5. Answers will vary. Students may discuss the increase in natural disasters (ie. flood, forest fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes) in their area and/or around the world as one sign of climate change. They should acknowledge that people in less wealthy areas of the world are impacted by climate change in more severe and sudden ways. They may also refer to the text's discussion regarding population increase and environmental degradation, and that an increased population is not sustainable if we continue on our current path. Sociologists are concerned about the environment because as the text states, they agree that "rapid population growth is a social as well as environmental problem, because it produces social upheaval and poverty."