Auguste Comte and Positivism

This idea of applying the scientific method to the social world, known as positivism, apparently was first proposed by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). With the philosophical upheaval of the French Revolution still fresh in his mind, Comte left the small, conservative town in which he had grown up and moved to Paris. The changes he experienced in this move, combined with those France underwent in the revolution, led Comte to become interested in what holds society together. What creates social order, he wondered, instead of anarchy or chaos? And then, once society does become set on a particular course, what causes it to change?

As Comte considered these questions, he concluded that the right way to answer them was to apply the scientific method to social life. Just as this method had revealed the law of gravity, so, too, it would uncover the laws that underlie society. Comte called this new science sociology—“the study of society” (from the Greek logos, “study of,” and the Latin socius, “companion,” or “being with others”). Comte stressed that this new science not only would discover social principles but also would apply them to social reform. Sociologists would reform the entire society, making it a better place to live.

To Comte, however, applying the scientific method to social life meant practicing what we might call “armchair philosophy”—drawing conclusions from informal observations of social life. He did not do what today’s sociologists would call research, and his conclusions have been abandoned. Nevertheless, Comte’s insistence that we must observe and classify human activities to uncover society’s fundamental laws is well taken. Because he developed this idea and coined the term sociology, Comte often is credited with being the founder of sociology.

Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who grew up in England, is sometimes called the second founder of sociology. Spencer disagreed profoundly with Comte that sociology should guide social reform. Spencer thought that societies evolve from lower (“barbarian”) to higher (“civilized”) forms. As generations pass, the most capable and intelligent (“the fittest”) members of a society survive, while the less capable die out. Thus, over time, societies improve. If you help the lower classes, you interfere with this natural process. The fittest members will produce a more advanced society—unless misguided do-gooders get in the way and help the less fit survive.

Spencer called this principle “the survival of the fittest.” Although Spencer coined this phrase, it usually is attributed to his contemporary, Charles Darwin, who proposed that organisms evolve over time as they adapt to their environment. Because they are so similar to Darwin’s ideas, Spencer’s views of the evolution of societies became known as social Darwinism.

Spencer’s ideas that charity and helping the poor were wrong offended many. The wealthy industrialists of the time, however, liked these ideas: They saw themselves as “the fittest”—and therefore superior. Not coincidentally, Spencer’s views helped them avoid feelings of guilt for living like royalty while people around them went hungry.

Like Comte, Spencer was more of a social philosopher than a sociologist. Also like Comte, Spencer did not conduct scientific studies. He simply developed ideas about society. Spencer gained a wide following in England and the United States, where he was sought after as a speaker, but eventually social Darwinism was discredited.
Functions can be either manifest or latent. If an action is intended to help some part of a system, it is a manifest function. For example, suppose that government officials become concerned about our low rate of childbirth. Congress offers a $10,000 bonus for every child born to a married couple. The intention, or manifest function, of the bonus is to increase childbirth. Merton pointed out that people's actions can also have latent functions; they can have unintended consequences that help a system adjust. Let's suppose that the bonus works and the birth rate jumps. As a result, the sale of diapers and baby furniture booms. Because the benefits to these businesses were not the intended consequences, they are latent functions of the bonus.

Of course, human actions can also hurt a system. Because such consequences usually are unintended, Merton called them latent dysfunctions. Let's assume that the government has failed to specify a "stopping point" with regard to its bonus system. To collect the bonus, some people keep on having children. The more children they have, however, the more they need the next bonus to survive. Large families become common, and poverty increases. Welfare is reinstated, taxes jump, and the nation erupts in protest. Because these results were not intended and because they harmed the social system, they represent latent dysfunctions of the bonus program.

**IN SUM** From the perspective of functional analysis, then, society (or a group within it) is a functioning unit, with each part related to the whole. Whenever we examine a smaller part, we need to look for its functions and dysfunctions to see how it is related to the larger unit. This basic approach can be applied to any social group, whether an entire society, a college, or even a group as small as a family.

**Applying Functional Analysis** Now let's apply functional analysis to the U.S. divorce rate. Functionalists stress that industrialization and urbanization undermined the traditional functions of the family. Let's see how each of the basic functions of the family has changed.

1. **Economic production.** Prior to industrialization, the family was an economic team. At that time, it was difficult to obtain the basic necessities of life, and to survive, family members had to work together to produce what they needed. When industrialization moved production from home to factory, it disrupted this family team. This weakened the bonds that tied family members to one another. Especially significant was the transfer of the husband-father to the factory, for this isolated him from the family's daily routine. In addition, the wife-mother and children now contributed less to the family's economic survival.

2. **Socialization of children.** As these sweeping changes took place, the government was growing larger and more powerful. As it expanded, it took over many family functions. To give just one example, schools took away from the family the education of children. In so doing, they assumed much of the responsibility for socializing children. To make certain that families went along with this change, states passed laws requiring school attendance and threatened parents with jail if they did not send their children to school.

3. **Care of the sick and elderly.** As medical training and technology improved, institutionalized medicine became a powerful force. Care of the sick gradually shifted from the family to outside medical specialists. As government agencies multiplied, care of the aged changed from being a family concern to a government obligation.
SEXISM IN EARLY SOCIOLOGY  

Jane Addams, 1860–1935, a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace, worked on behalf of poor immigrants. With Ellen G. Starr, she founded Hull-House, a center to help immigrants in Chicago. She was also a leader in women’s rights (women suffrage), as well as the peace movement of World War I.

CHAPTER 1  THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

W(illiam) E(dward) B(urghardt) Du Bois (1868–1963) spent his lifetime studying relations between African Americans and whites. Like many early North American sociologists, Du Bois combined the role of academic sociologist with that of social reformer. He was also the editor of Crisis, an influential journal of the time.

In the 1940s, when this photo was taken, racial segregation was a taken-for-granted fact of life. Although many changes have occurred since then—and since W. E. B. Du Bois analyzed race relations—race–ethnicity remains a significant factor in the lives of Americans.

SOCIOLOGY IN NORTH AMERICA  Down-to-Earth Sociology

Early Sociology in North America: Du Bois and Race Relations

THE WRITINGS OF W. E. B. Du Bois, who expressed sociological thought more like an accomplished novelist than a social scientist, have been neglected in sociology. To help remedy this omission, I reprint the following excerpts from pages 66–68 of Du Bois’s Souls of Black Folk (1903). In this book, Du Bois analyzes changes that occurred in the social and economic conditions of African Americans during the thirty years following the Civil War.

For two summers, while he was a student at Fisk, Du Bois taught in a segregated school housed in a log hut “way back in the hills” of rural Tennessee. The following excerpts help us understand conditions at that time.

It was a hot morning late in July when the school opened. I trembled when I heard the patter of little feet down the dusty road, and saw the growing row of dark solemn faces and bright eager eyes facing me. . . . There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches, their faces shading from a pale cream to deep brown, the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster’s blue-black spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvelous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill. . . .

On Friday nights I often went home with some of the children,—sometimes to Doc Burke’s farm. He was a great, loud, thin Black, ever working, and trying to buy these seventy-five acres of hill and dale where he lived; but people said that he would surely fail and the “white folks would get it all.” His wife was a magnificent Amazon, with saffron face and shiny hair, uncorseted and barefooted, and the children were strong and barefooted. They lived in a one-and-a-half-room cabin in the hollow of the farm near the spring. . . .

Often, to keep the peace, I must go where life was less lovely; for instance, ‘Tildy’s mother was incorrigibly dirty, Reuben’s larder was limited seriously, and herds of untamed insects wandered over the Eddingses’ beds. Best of all I loved to go to Josie’s, and sit on the porch, eating peaches, while the mother bustled and talked: how Josie
And how short everyone was! The Arab women looked to be, on average, 5 feet, and the men only about three or four inches taller. As the only blue-eyed, blonde, 6-foot-plus person around, and the only one who was wearing jeans and a pullover shirt, in a world of white-robed short people I stood out like a creature from another planet. Everyone stared. No matter where I went, they stared. Wherever I looked, I found brown eyes watching me intently. Even staring back at those many dark brown eyes had no effect. It was so different from home, where, if you caught someone staring at you, that person would immediately look embarrassed and glance away.

And lines? The concept apparently didn’t even exist. Buying a ticket for a bus or train meant pushing and shoving toward the ticket man (always a man—no women were visible in any public position), who took the money from whichever outstretched hand he decided on.

And germs? That notion didn’t seem to exist here either. Flies swarmed over the food in the restaurants and the unwrapped loaves of bread in the stores. Shopkeepers would considerately shoo off the flies before handing me a loaf. They also offered home delivery. I still remember watching a bread vendor deliver a loaf to a woman who stood on a second-floor balcony. She first threw her money to the bread vendor, and he then threw the unwrapped bread up to her. Only, his throw was off. The bread bounced off the wrought-iron balcony railing and landed in the street, which was filled with wandering dogs, and the ever-present, defecating burros. The vendor simply picked up the unwrapped loaf and threw it again. This certainly wasn’t his day, for he missed again. But he made it on his third attempt. The woman smiled as she turned back into her apartment, apparently to prepare the noon meal for her family.

Now, standing in the oppressive heat on the Moroccan-Algerian border, the crowd once again became unruly. Another fight had broken out. And once again, the little man in uniform appeared, shouting and knocking people aside as he forced his way to a little wooden box nailed to the floor. Climbing onto this makeshift platform, he shouted at the crowd, his arms flailing about him. The people fell silent. But just as soon as the man left, the shouting and shoving began again.

The situation had become unbearable. His body pressed against mine, the man behind me decided that this was a good time to take a nap. Determining that I made a good support, he placed his arm against my back and leaned his head against his arm. Sweat streamed down my back at the point where his arm and head touched me.

Finally, I realized that I had to abandon U.S. customs. So I pushed my way forward, forcing my frame into every square inch of vacant space that I could create. At the counter, I shouted in English. The official looked up at the sound of this strange tongue, and I thrust my long arms over the heads of three people, shoving my passport into his hand.
What Is Culture?

What is culture? The concept is sometimes easier to grasp by description than by definition. For example, suppose you meet a young woman who has just arrived in the United States from India. That her culture is different from yours is immediately evident. You first see it in her clothing, jewelry, makeup, and hairstyle. Next you hear it in her speech. It then becomes apparent by her gestures. Later, you might hear her express unfamiliar beliefs about relationships or about what is valuable in life. All these characteristics are indicative of culture—the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next.

In northern Africa, I was surrounded by a culture quite alien to my own. It was evident in everything I saw and heard. The material culture—such things as jewelry, art, buildings, weapons, machines, and even eating utensils, hairstyles, and clothing—provided a sharp contrast to what I was used to seeing. There is nothing inherently “natural” about material culture. That is, it is no more natural (or unnatural) to wear gowns on the street than it is to wear jeans.

I also found myself immersed in a contrasting nonmaterial culture, that is, a group’s ways of thinking (its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and doing (its common patterns of behavior, including language, gestures, and other forms of interaction). North African assumptions about pushing others aside to buy a ticket and staring in public are examples of nonmaterial culture. So are U.S. assumptions about not doing either of these things. Like material culture, neither custom is “right.” People simply become comfortable with the customs they learn during childhood, and—as in the case of my visit to northern Africa—uncomfortable when their basic assumptions about life are challenged.

Culture and Taken-for-Granted Orientations to Life

To develop a sociological imagination, it is essential to understand how culture affects people. If we meet someone from a different culture, the encounter may make us aware of culture’s pervasive influence on that person. Attaining the same level of awareness regarding our own culture, however, is quite another matter. Our speech, our gestures, our beliefs, and our customs are usually taken for granted. We assume that they are “normal” or “natural,” and we almost always follow them without question. As anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936) said, “The last thing a fish would ever notice would be water.” So also with people: Except in unusual circumstances, our own culture remains imperceptible to us.

Yet culture’s significance is profound; it touches almost every aspect of who and what we are. We came into this life without a language; without values and morality; with no ideas about religion, war, money, love, use of space, and so on. We possessed none of these fundamental orientations that we take for granted and that are so essential in determining the type of people we become. Yet by this point in our lives, we all have acquired them. Sociologists call this culture within us. These learned and shared ways of believing and of doing (another definition of culture) penetrate our beings at an early age and quickly become part of our taken-for-granted assumptions about what normal behavior is. Culture becomes the lens through which we perceive and evaluate what is going on around us. Seldom do we question these assumptions, for, like water to a fish, the lens through which we view life remains largely beyond our perception.

The rare instances in which these assumptions are challenged, however, can be upsetting. Although as a sociologist I should be able to look at my own cultures “from the outside,” my trip to Africa quickly revealed how fully I had internalized my culture. My upbringing in Western society had given me strong assumptions about aspects of social
In the 1930s, two anthropologists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, became intrigued when they noted that the Hopi Indians of the southwestern United States had no words to distinguish among the past, the present, and the future. English, in contrast—as well as French, Spanish, Swahili, and other languages—distinguishes carefully among these three time frames. From this observation, Sapir and Whorf concluded that the commonsense idea that words are merely labels that people attach to things is wrong. Language, they concluded, has embedded within it ways of looking at the world. Language, they said, not only expresses our thoughts but also shapes the way we think. Language not only communicates what we perceive but also helps determine what we perceive. When we learn a language, we learn not only words but also ways of thinking and perceiving (Sapir 1949; Whorf 1956).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis reverses common sense: It indicates that rather than objects and events forcing themselves onto our consciousness, it is our language that determines our consciousness, and hence our perception of objects and events. Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (1991) gives a good example. Hebrew, his native language, does not have separate words for jam and jelly. Both go by the same term, and only when Zerubavel learned English could he “see” this difference, which is “obvious” to native English speakers. Similarly, if you learn to classify students as Jocks, Goths, Stoners, Skaters, and Preps, you will perceive students in an entirely different way from someone who does not know these classifications. Although Sapir and Whorf’s observation that the Hopi do not have tenses was wrong (Edgerton 1992:27), they stumbled onto a major truth about social life. Learning a language means not only learning words but also acquiring the perceptions embedded in that language (Zhang and Schmitt 1998). In other words, language both reflects and shapes cultural experiences. The race-ethnic terms that our culture provides, for example, influence how we see both ourselves and others—a point that is discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page.

Values, Norms, and Sanctions
To learn a culture is to learn people’s values, their ideas of what is desirable in life. When we uncover people’s values, we learn a great deal about them, for values are the standards by which people define what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly. Values underlie our preferences, guide our choices, and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life. Every group develops expectations concerning the right way to reflect its values. Sociologists use the term norms to describe those expectations (or rules of behavior) that develop out of a group’s values. The term sanctions refers to the reactions people receive for following or breaking norms. A positive sanction expresses approval for following a norm, while a negative sanction reflects disapproval for breaking a norm. Positive sanctions can be material, such as a prize, a trophy, or money, but in everyday life they usually consist of hugs, smiles, a pat on the back, or even handshakes and “high fives.” Negative sanctions can also be material—being fined in court is one example—but they, too, are more likely to be symbolic: harsh words, or gestures such as frowns, stares, clenched jaws, or raised fists. Getting a raise at work is a positive sanction, indicating that you have followed the norms clustering around work values. Getting fired, however, is a negative sanction, indicating that you have violated these norms. The North American finger gesture discussed earlier is, of course, a negative sanction.

Because people can find norms stifling, some cultures relieve the pressure through moral holidays, specified times when people are allowed to break norms. Moral holidays such as Mardi Gras often center on getting drunk and being rowdy. Some activities for
Technology in the Global Village

The New Technology

The gestures, language, values, folkways, and mores that we have discussed—all are part of symbolic or nonmaterial culture. Culture, as you recall, also has a material aspect: a group’s things, from its houses to its toys. Central to a group’s material culture is its technology. In its simplest sense, technology can be equated with tools. In a broader sense, technology also includes the skills or procedures necessary to make and use those tools.

We can use the term new technology to refer to an emerging technology that has a significant impact on social life. People develop minor technologies all the time. Most are slight modifications of existing technologies. Occasionally, however, they develop a technology that makes a major impact on human life. It is primarily to these that the term new technology refers. For people 500 years ago, the new technology was the printing press. For us, the new technology consists of computers, satellites, and the electronic media.

The sociological significance of technology goes far beyond the tool itself. Technology sets the framework for a group’s nonmaterial culture. If a group’s technology changes, so do people’s ways of thinking and how they relate to one another. An example is gender relations. Through the centuries and throughout the world, it has been the custom (the nonmaterial culture of a group) for men to dominate women. Today, with instantaneous communications (the material culture), this custom has become much more difficult to maintain. For example, when women from many nations gathered in Beijing for a U.N. conference in 1995, satellites instantly transmitted their grievances around the globe. Such communications both convey and create discontent, as well as a feeling of sisterhood, motivating women to agitate for social change.

In today’s world, the long-accepted idea that it is proper to withhold rights on the basis of someone’s sex can no longer hold. What is usually invisible in this revolutionary change is the role of the new technology, which joins the world’s nations into a global communications network.

Cultural Lag and Cultural Change

About three generations ago, sociologist William Ogburn (1922/1938), a functional analyst, coined the term cultural lag. By this, Ogburn meant that not all parts of a culture change at the same pace. When some part of a culture changes, other parts lag behind.

Ogburn pointed out that a group’s material culture usually changes first, with the nonmaterial culture lagging behind, playing a game of catch-up. For example, when we get sick, we could type our symptoms into a computer and get a printout of our diagnosis and a recommended course of treatment. For example, when we visit the doctor’s office.

Sometimes nonmaterial culture never catches up. Instead, we rigorously hold onto some outmoded form—one that once was needed, but that long ago was bypassed by new technology. A striking example is our nine-month school year. Have you ever wondered why it is nine months long, and why we take summers off? For most of us, this is “just the way it’s always been,” and we have never questioned it. But there is more to this custom than meets the eye, for it is an example of cultural lag.
WHAT IS CULTURE? Many Americans perceive bullfighting, which is illegal in the United States, as a cruel activity that should be abolished everywhere. To Spaniards and those who have inherited Spanish culture, however, bullfighting is a beautiful, artistic sport in which matador and bull blend into a unifying image of power, courage, and glory. Cultural relativism requires that we suspend our own perspectives in order to grasp the perspectives of others, something that is much easier described than attained.

Cultural Diversity around the World

You Are What You Eat? An Exploration in Cultural Relativity

HERE IS A CHANCE TO TEST your ethnocentrism and ability to practice cultural relativity. You probably know that the French like to eat snails and that in some Asian cultures, chubby dogs and cats are considered a delicacy (“Ah, lightly browned with a little doggy sauce!”). But did you know about this?

Marston Bates (1967), a zoologist, reports:

I remember once, in the llanos of Colombia, sharing a dish of toasted ants at a remote farmhouse. . . . My host and I fell into conversation about the general question of what people eat or do not eat, and I remarked that in my country people eat the legs of frogs. The very thought of this filled my ant-eating friends with horror; it was as though I had mentioned some repulsive sex habit.

And then there is the experience of the production coordinator of this text, Dusty Friedman, who told me:

When traveling in Sudan, I ate some interesting things that I wouldn’t likely eat now that I’m back in our society. Raw baby camel’s liver with chopped herbs was a delicacy. So was camel’s milk cheese patties that had been cured in dry camel’s dung.

You might be able to see yourself eating frog legs, toasted ants, perhaps raw camel liver or even dogs and cats, but this custom may provide a better test of your ethnocentrism and cultural relativity (“Monkey Rescued . . .” 2004). Maxine Kingston (1975), an English professor whose parents grew up in China, wrote:

“Do you know what people in [the Nantou region of] China eat when they have the money?” my mother began. “They buy into a monkey feast. The eaters sit around a thick wood table with a hole in the middle. Boys bring in the monkey at the end of a pole. Its neck is in a collar at the end of the pole, and it is screaming. Its hands are tied behind it.
They clamp the monkey into the table; the whole table fits like another collar around its neck. Using a surgeon’s saw, the cooks cut a clean line in a circle at the top of its head. To loosen the bone, they tap with a tiny hammer and wedge here and there with a silver pick. Then an old woman reaches out her hand to the monkey’s face and up to its scalp, where she tufts some hairs and lifts off the lid of the skull. The eaters spoon out the brains.”

for your Consideration
1. -What is your opinion about eating toasted ants? About eating fried frog legs? About eating puppies and kittens? About eating raw monkey brains?
2. If you were reared in U.S. society, more than likely you think that eating frog legs is okay, eating ants is disgusting, and eating dogs, cats, and monkey brains is downright repugnant. How would you apply the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism to your perceptions of these customs?

Wild animals? Pets? Beasts of burden? For pleasure riding? For racing? All of these. But food? Not for many Americans—who became upset when the French, who are fond of horseburgers and horse steaks—bought these wild horses for food.

COMPONENTS OF SYMBOLIC CULTURE Standards of beauty vary so greatly from one culture to another that what one group finds attractive, another may not. Yet, in its ethnocentrism, each group thinks that its standards are the best—that the appearance reflects what beauty “really” is.

As indicated by these photos, around the world men and women aspire to their group’s norms of physical attractiveness. To make themselves appealing to others, they try to make their appearance reflect those standards.

Tibet

Cameroon

Thailand

Japan

New Guinea

India (Gypsy)

Peru
Almost anyone who has visited a casino recognizes that there is something different about the people who work there. Servers have developed their own norms—their acceptable practices for maximizing tips. Why would someone decorate themselves like this? Among the many reasons, one is to show their solidarity with the football subculture.

“Showing” dogs is a highly specialized subculture. To be a member in good standing, intricate rules must be followed.

Servers have developed their own norms—their acceptable practices for maximizing tips. Why would someone decorate themselves like this? Among the many reasons, one is to show their solidarity with the football subculture.

The motorcyclist clubs and groups that students and workers participate in on weekends are subcultures. Those that outlaw motorcyclists participate in are countercultures. Can you see why sociologists make this distinction?

Truckers participate in a huge subculture, one that recognizes its own values and language. Can you identify other subcultures that truckers are also likely to participate in?

The cabbies’ subculture, centering on their occupational activities and interests, is also broken into smaller subcultures that affect their experiences of race-ethnicity. Participants in the rodeo subculture advertise their membership by wearing special clothing. The clothing symbolizes a set of values that unites its members. Among those values is the awarding of hyper-masculine status through the conquest of animals.

**CHAPTER 2 CULTURE**

**mass Media in social life**

**Why Do Native Americans Like Westerns?**

U.S. audiences (and even German, French, and Japanese ones) devour Western movies. In the United States, it is easy to see why Anglos might like Westerns. It is they who are portrayed as heroes who tame the savage wilderness and defend themselves from the attacks of cruel, barbaric Indians who are intent on their destruction. But why would Indians like Westerns?
Her behavior toward strangers, especially men, was almost that of a wild animal, manifesting much fear and hostility. The old man was horrified when he found out. Life never had been good since his daughter lost her hearing when she was just 2 years old. She couldn’t even talk—just fluttered her hands around trying to tell him things. Over the years, he had gotten used to that. But now . . . he shuddered at the thought of her being pregnant. No one would be willing to marry her; he knew that. And the neighbors, their tongues would never stop wagging. Everywhere he went, he could hear people talking behind his back.
In 1970, California authorities found Genie, a 13-year-old girl who had been locked in a small room and tied to a chair since she was 20 months old. Apparently her father (70 years old when Genie was discovered) hated children, and probably had caused the death of two of Genie’s siblings. Her 50-year-old mother was partially blind and frightened of her husband. Genie could not speak, did not know how to chew, was unable to stand upright, and could not straighten her hands and legs. On intelligence tests, she scored at the level of a 1-year-old. After intensive training, Genie learned to walk and use simple sentences (although they were garbled). As she grew up, her language remained primitive, she took anyone’s property if it appealed to her, and she went to the bathroom wherever she wanted. At the age of 21, Genie went to live in a home for adults who cannot live alone. (Pines 1981)

IN SUM From Genie’s pathetic story and from reports of institutionalized children, we can conclude that the basic human traits of intelligence and the ability to establish close bonds with others depend on early interaction with other humans. In addition, apparently there is a period prior to age 13 in which children must develop language and human bonding if they are to develop high intelligence and the ability to be sociable and follow social norms.

Deprived Animals

Finally, let’s consider animals that have been deprived of normal interaction. In a series of experiments with rhesus monkeys, psychologists Harry and Margaret Harlow demonstrated the importance of early learning. The Harlows (1962) raised baby monkeys in isolation. They gave each monkey two artificial mothers, shown in the photo on this page. One “mother” was only a wire frame with a wooden head, but it did have a nipple from which the baby could nurse. The frame of the other “mother,” which had no bottle, was covered with soft terry cloth. To obtain food, the baby monkeys nursed at the wire frame.

When the Harlows (1965) frightened the babies with a mechanical bear or dog, the babies did not run to the wire frame “mother.” Instead, they would cling pathetically to their terry cloth “mother.” The Harlows concluded that infant–mother bonding is not the result of feeding but, rather, to what they termed “intimate physical contact.” To most of us, this phrase means cuddling.

The monkeys raised in isolation were never able to adjust to monkey life. Placed with other monkeys when they were grown, they didn’t know how to participate in “monkey interaction”—to play and to engage in pretend fights—and the other monkeys rejected them. Neither did they know how to have sexual intercourse, despite futile attempts to do so. The experimenters designed a special device, which allowed some females to become pregnant. After giving birth, however, these monkeys were “ineffective, inadequate, and brutal mothers . . . [who] . . . struck their babies, kicked them, or crushed the babies against the cage floor.”

In one of their many experiments, the Harlows isolated baby monkeys for different lengths of time. They found that when monkeys were isolated for shorter periods (about three months), they were able to overcome the effects of their isolation. Those isolated for six months or more, however, were unable to adjust to normal monkey life. As mentioned, they could not play or engage in pretend fights, and the other monkeys rejected them. In other words, the longer the period of isolation, the more difficult its effects are to overcome. In addition, a critical learning stage may exist: If that stage is missed, it may be impossible to compensate for what has been lost. This may have been the case with Genie.
The Family

Around the world, the first group to have a major impact on us is our family. Our experiences in the family are so intense that they have a lifelong influence on us. They lay down our basic sense of self, establishing our initial motivations, values, and beliefs. The family gives us ideas about who we are and what we deserve out of life. It is in the family that we begin to think of ourselves as strong or weak, smart or dumb, good-looking or ugly—or somewhere in between. And as already noted, here we begin the lifelong process of defining ourselves as female or male.

Subtle Socialization To study this process, sociologists have observed parents and young children in public settings, where the act of observing does not interfere with the interaction. Researchers using this unobtrusive technique have noted what they call the *stroller effect* (Mitchell et al. 1992). When a child is in a stroller, the father is likely to be the one who pushes the stroller. If the child is out of the stroller, the mother is likely to push the empty stroller while the father carries the child. In this and countless ways, parents send their children subtle gender messages. Most of the ways that parents teach their children about expected differences between men and women involve nonverbal cues, not specific instruction.

The Family and Social Class One of the main findings of sociologists concerns the way socialization depends on a family’s social class. In a study of how working-class and middle-class parents rear their children, sociologist Melvin Kohn (1959, 1966, 1976, 1977; Kohn et al. 1986) found that working-class parents are mainly concerned that their children stay out of trouble. They also tend to use physical punishment. Middle-class parents, in contrast, focus more on developing their children’s curiosity, self-expression, and self-control. They are more likely to reason with their children than to use physical punishment.

These findings were a sociological puzzle. Just why would working-class and middle-class parents rear their children so differently? Kohn knew that life experiences of some sort held the key, and he found that key in the world of work. Bosses usually tell blue-collar workers exactly what to do. Since blue-collar parents expect their children’s lives to be like theirs, they stress obedience. At their work, in contrast, middle-class parents take more initiative. Expecting their children to work at similar jobs, middle-class parents socialize them into the qualities they have found valuable.

Kohn was still puzzled, for some working-class parents act more like middle-class parents, and vice versa. As Kohn probed this puzzle, the pieces fell into place. The key was the parents’ type of job. Middle-class office workers, for example, are closely supervised, and Kohn found that they follow the working-class pattern of child rearing, emphasizing conformity. And some blue-collar workers, such as those who do home repairs, have a good deal of freedom. These workers follow the middle-class model in rearing their children (Pearlin and Kohn 1966; Kohn and Schooler 1969).

Working-class and middle-class parents also have different views of how children develop, which has interesting consequences for children’s play (Lareau 2002). Working-class parents think of children as developing naturally, while middle-class parents think that children need a lot of guidance to develop correctly. As a result, working-class parents see their job as providing food, shelter, and comfort, with the child’s development taking care of itself. They set limits (“Don’t go near the railroad tracks”), and let their children play as they wish. Middle-class parents, in contrast, want their children’s play to develop knowledge and social skills. For example, they may want them to play baseball, not for the enjoyment of playing ball, but to help them learn how to be team players.
The Neighborhood

As all parents know, some neighborhoods are better for their children than others. Parents try to move to those neighborhoods—if they can afford them. Their commonsense evaluations are borne out by sociological research. Children from poor neighborhoods are more likely to get in trouble with the law, to become pregnant, to drop out of school, and even to have worse mental health in later life (Wilson 1987; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1997; Sampson et al. 2001; Wheaton and Clarke 2003). Sociologists have also documented that the residents of more affluent neighborhoods watch out for the children more than do the residents of poor neighborhoods (Sampson et al. 1999). This isn’t because the adults in poor neighborhoods care less about children. Rather, the more affluent neighborhoods have less transition, so the adults are more likely to know the local children and their parents. This better equips them to help keep the children safe and out of trouble.

Religion

By influencing values, religion becomes a key component in people’s ideas of right and wrong. Religion is so important to Americans that 65 percent belong to a local congregation, and during a typical week, two of every five Americans attend a religious service (Statistical Abstract 2003:Table 80). Religion is significant even for people who are reared in nonreligious homes—religious ideas pervade U.S. society, providing basic ideas of morality for us all.

The influence of religion extends to many areas of our lives. For example, participation in religious services teaches us not only beliefs about the hereafter but also ideas about what kinds of dress, speech, and manners are appropriate for formal occasions. Religion is so significant that we shall examine its influence in a separate chapter (Chapter 18).

Day Care

It is rare for social science research to make national news, but occasionally it does. This is what happened when researchers who had followed 1,300 children in ten cities from infancy into kindergarten reported their findings. They had observed the children both at home and at day care. (Day care was defined as any care other than by the mother—including care by other relatives and the father.) The researchers had also videotaped and made detailed notes on the children’s interaction with their mothers (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 1999; Guensburg 2001). What caught the media’s attention? Children who spend more hours in day care have weaker bonds with their mothers. In addition, they are more likely to fight, to be cruel, and to be “mean.” In contrast, children who spend less time in day care are more cooperative and more affectionate to their mothers. This holds true regardless of the quality of the day care, the family’s social class, or whether the child is a girl or a boy.

This study was designed well, and its findings are without dispute. But how do we explain these findings? The cause could be time spent in day care. The researchers suggest that mothers who spend less time with their children are less responsive to their children’s emotional needs because they are less familiar with their children’s “signaling systems.” But maybe the cause isn’t day care. Perhaps mothers who put their children in day care for more hours are less sensitive to their children in the first place. Or perhaps employed mothers are less likely to meet their children’s emotional needs because they are more tired and stressed than mothers who stay at home. From this study, we can’t determine the cause of the weaker bonding and the behavioral problems.

These researchers also uncovered a positive side to day care. They found that children who spend more hours in day care score higher on language tests (Guensburg 2001). Other researchers have found similar improvement in language skills, especially for
A sociologist who reviewed this text said, “It seems that for women to be defined as equal, we have to become symbolic males—warriors with breasts.” Why is gender change mostly one-way—females adopting traditional male characteristics? To see why men get to keep their gender roles, these two questions should help: Who is moving into the traditional territory of the other? Do people prefer to imitate power or powerlessness?

Finally, consider just how far stereotypes have actually been left behind. The ultimate goal of the video game, after foes are vanquished, is to see Lara in a nightie.

The mass media not only reflect gender stereotypes but also they play a role in changing them. Sometimes they do both simultaneously. The images of Xena, Warrior Princess, and of Lara Croft not only reflect women’s changing role in society, but also, by exaggerating the change, they mold new stereotypes.

AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

This photo captures an extreme form of family socialization. The father seems to be more emotionally involved in the goal—and in more pain—than his daughter, as he pushes her toward the finish line in the Teen Tours of America Kid’s Triathlon.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIALIZATION

AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Caught Between Two Worlds

IT IS A STRUGGLE TO LEARN a new culture, for its behaviors and ways of thinking contrast with the ones already learned. This can lead to culture shock. One way to handle the conflict is to cut ties with your first culture. This, however, can create a sense of loss, perhaps one that is recognized only later in life.

Richard Rodriguez, a literature professor and essayist, was born to working-class Mexican immigrants. Wanting their son to be successful in their adopted land, his parents named him Richard instead of Ricardo. While his English-Spanish hybrid name indicates the parents’ aspirations for their son, it was also an omen of the conflict that Richard would experience.

Like other children of Mexican immigrants, Richard’s first language was Spanish—a rich mother tongue that introduced him to the world. Until the age of 5, when he began school, Richard knew only fifty words in English. He describes what happened when he began school:

The change came gradually but early. When I was beginning grade school, I noted to myself the fact that the classroom environment was so different in its styles and assumptions from my own family environment that survival would essentially entail a choice between both worlds. When I became a student, I was literally “remade”; neither I nor my teachers considered anything I had known before as relevant. I had to forget most of what my culture had provided, because to remember it was a disadvantage. The past and its cultural values became detachable, like a piece of clothing grown heavy on a warm day and finally put away.

As happened to millions of immigrants before him, whose parents spoke German, Polish, Italian, and so on, learning English eroded family and class ties and ate away at his ethnic roots. For him, language and education were not simply devices that eased the transition to the dominant culture. Instead, they slashed at the roots that had given him life.

To face conflicting cultures is to confront a fork in the road. Some turn one way and withdraw from the new culture—a clue that helps to explain why so many Latinos drop out of U.S. schools. Others go in the opposite direction. Cutting ties with their family and cultural roots, they wholeheartedly adopt the new culture.
I climbed off the bus and made my way to what turned out to be Dupont Circle. I took a seat on a sidewalk bench and began to observe what was going on around me. As the scene came into focus, I noted several streetcorner men drinking and joking with one another. One of the men broke from his companions and sat down next to me. As we talked, I mostly listened.

As night fell, the men said that they wanted to get another bottle of wine. I contributed. They counted their money and asked if I wanted to go with them.

Although I felt my stomach churning—a combination of hesitation and fear—I heard a confident “Sure!” come out of my mouth. As we left the circle, the three men began to cut through an alley. “Oh, no,” I thought. “This isn’t what I had in mind.”

I had but a split second to make a decision. I found myself continuing to walk with the men, but holding back half a step so that none of the three was behind me. As we walked, they passed around the remnants of their bottle. When my turn came, I didn’t know what to do. I shuddered to think about the diseases lurking within that bottle. I made another quick decision. In the semidarkness I faked it, letting only my thumb and forefinger touch my lips and nothing enter my mouth.

When we returned to Dupont Circle, the men passed around their new bottle of Thunderbird. I couldn’t fake it in the light, so I passed, pointing at my stomach to indicate that I was having digestive problems.

Suddenly one of the men jumped up, smashed the emptied bottle against the sidewalk, and thrust the jagged neck outward in a menacing gesture. He glared straight ahead at another bench, where he had spotted someone with whom he had some sort of unfinished business. As the other men told him to cool it, I moved slightly to one side of the group—ready to flee, just in case.

Levels of Sociological Analysis

On this sociological adventure, I almost got myself in over my head. Fortunately, it turned out all right. The man’s “enemy” didn’t look our way, the broken bottle was set down next to the bench “just in case he needed it,” and my introduction to a life that up until then I had only read about continued until dawn. Sociologists Elliot Liebow (1967/1999), Mitchell Duneier (1999), and Elijah Anderson (1978, 1990, 2006) have written fascinating accounts about men like my companions from that evening. Although streetcorner men may appear to be disorganized—simply coming and going as they please and doing whatever feels good at the moment—sociologists have analyzed how, like us, these men are influenced by the norms and beliefs of our society. This will become more apparent as we examine the two levels of analysis that sociologists use.
know whether you went to a public high school or to an exclusive prep school. But I do know that you are in college. And this, alone, tells me a great deal about you. From this one piece of information, I can assume that the social structure of your college is now shaping what you do. For example, let’s suppose that today you felt euphoric over some great news. I can be fairly certain (not absolutely, mind you, but relatively certain) that when you entered the classroom, social structure overrode your mood. That is, instead of shouting at the top of your lungs and joyously throwing this book into the air, you entered the classroom in a fairly subdued manner and took your seat. The same social structure influences your instructor, even if he or she, on the one hand, is facing a divorce or has a child dying of cancer, or, on the other, has just been awarded a promotion or a million-dollar grant. The instructor may feel like either retreating into seclusion or celebrating wildly, but most likely he or she will conduct class in the usual manner. In short, social structure tends to override personal feelings and desires. Just as social structure influences you and your instructor, so it also establishes limits for street people. They, too, find themselves in a specific location in the U.S. social structure—although it is quite different from yours or your instructor’s. Consequently, they are affected differently. Nothing about their social location leads them to take notes or to lecture. Their behaviors, however, are as logical an outcome of where they find themselves in the social structure as are your own. In their position in the social structure, it is just as “natural” to drink wine all night as it is for you to stay up studying all night for a crucial examination. It is just as “natural” for you to nod and say, “Excuse me,” when you enter a crowded classroom late and have to claim a desk on which someone has already placed books as it is for them to break off the head of a wine bottle and glare at an enemy. In short, people learn their behaviors and attitudes because of their location in the social structure (whether they be privileged, deprived, or in between), and they act accordingly. This is equally true of street people and ourselves. The differences in behavior and attitudes are due not to biology (race, sex, or any other supposed genetic factors), but to people’s location in the social structure. Switch places with street people and watch your behaviors and attitudes change!

To better understand social structure, read the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on football below.

Because social structure so crucially affects who we are and what we are like, let’s look more closely at its major components: culture, social class, social status, roles, groups, and social institutions.

**Culture**

In Chapter 2, we considered culture’s far-reaching effects on our lives. At this point, let’s simply summarize its main impact. Sociologists use the term *culture* to refer to a group’s language, beliefs, values, behaviors, and even gestures. Culture also includes the material objects that a group uses. Culture is the broadest framework that determines what kind of people we become. If we are reared in Chinese, Arab, Russian, or U.S. culture, we will grow up to be like most Chinese, Arabs, Russians, or Americans. On the outside, we will look and act like them; and on the inside, we will think and feel like them.
Social Institutions

At first glance, the term social institution may seem to have little relevance to your personal life. The term seems so cold and abstract. In fact, however, social institutions—the ways that each society develops to meet its basic needs—vitaly affect your life. By weaving the fabric of society, social institutions shape our behavior. They even color our thoughts. How can this be? Look at what social institutions are: the family, religion, education, economics, medicine, politics, law, science, the military, and the mass media.

In industrialized societies, social institutions tend to be more formal; in tribal societies, they are more informal. Education in industrialized societies, for example, is highly structured, while in tribal societies it usually consists of informally learning what adults do. Figure 4.2 on the next page summarizes the basic social institutions. Note that each institution has its own groups, statuses, values, and norms. Social institutions are so significant that Part IV of this book focuses on them.

The Sociological Significance of Social Institutions

To understand social institutions is to realize how profoundly social structure affects our lives. Much of the influence of social institutions lies beyond our ordinary awareness. For example, because of our economic institution, it is common to work eight hours a day for five days every week. There is nothing normal or natural about this pattern, however. Its regularity is only an arbitrary arrangement for dividing work and leisure. Yet this one aspect of a single social institution has far-reaching effects, not only in terms of how people structure their time and activities but also in terms of how they deal with family and friends, and how they meet their personal needs.

Each of the other social institutions also has far-reaching effects on our lives. Our social institutions establish the context in which we live, shaping our behavior and coloring our thoughts. Social institutions are so significant that if they were different, we would be different people. We certainly could not remain the same, for social institutions influence our orientations to the social world, and even to life itself.

An Example: The Mass Media as an Emerging Social Institution

Far beyond serving simply as sources of information, the mass media influence our attitudes toward social issues, the ways that we view other people, and even our self-concept. Because the media significantly shape public opinion, all totalitarian governments attempt to maintain tight control over them.

The mass media are relatively new in human history, owing their origins to the invention of the printing press in the 1400s. This invention had profound consequences on all social institutions. The printing of the Bible altered religion, for instance, while the publication of political broadsides and newspapers altered politics. From these beginnings, a series of inventions—from radio and movies to television and the microchip—has made the media an increasingly powerful force.

One of the most significant questions we can ask about this social institution is: Who controls it? That control, which in totalitarian countries is obvious, is much less visible in democratic nations. Functionalists might conclude that the media in a democratic nation represent the varied interests of the many groups that make up that nation. Conflict theorists, in contrast, see the matter quite differently: The mass media—at least a country’s most influential newspapers and television stations—represent the interests of the political elite. They give coverage to mildly dissenting opinions, but they stand solidly behind the government. The most obvious example is the positive treatment that the media give to the inauguration of a president.
Their lawbreaking, which was limited to a small area, readily came to the attention of the community. Microsociology also reveals how their respective reputations opened doors of opportunity to the first group of boys while closing them to the other. Thus we need both kinds of sociology, and both are stressed in the following chapters.

Levels of Sociological Analysis

*What two levels of analysis do sociologists use?*

Sociologists use macrosociological and microsociological levels of analysis. In *macrosociology*, the focus is placed on large-scale features of social life, while in *microsociology*, the focus is on *social interaction*. Functionalists and conflict theorists tend to use a macrosociological approach, while symbolic interactionists are more likely to use a microsociological approach. Pp. 96–97.

The Macrosociological Perspective: Social Structure

*How does social structure influence our behavior?*

The term *social structure* refers to the social envelope that surrounds us and establishes limits on our behavior. Social structure consists of culture, social class, social statuses, roles, groups, and social institutions. Together, these serve as foundations for how we view the world. Our location in the social structure underlies our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Culture lays the broadest framework, while *social class* divides people according to income, education, and occupational prestige. Each of us receives *ascribed statuses* at birth; later we add *achieved statuses*. Our behaviors and orientations are further influenced by the *roles* we play, the *groups* to which we belong, and our experiences with social institutions. These components of society work together to help maintain social order. Pp. 97–101.

Social Institutions

*What are social institutions?*

Social institutions are the standard ways that a society develops to meet its basic needs. As summarized in Figure 4.2 (page 102), industrialized societies have ten social institutions—the family, religion, education, economics, medicine, politics, law, science, the military, and the mass media. From the functionalist perspective, social institutions meet universal group needs, or *functional requisites*. Conflict theorists stress how society’s elites use social institutions to maintain their privileged positions. Pp. 101–105.

What holds society together?

According to Emile Durkheim, in agricultural societies people are united by *mechanical solidarity* (similar views and feelings). With industrialization comes *organic solidarity* (people depend on one another to do their more specialized jobs). Ferdinand Tönnies pointed out that the informal means of control of *Gemeinschaft* (small, intimate) societies are replaced by formal mechanisms in *Gesellschaft* (larger, more impersonal) societies. Pp. 105–106.

The Microsociological Perspective: Social Interaction in Everyday Life

*What is the focus of symbolic interactionism?*

In contrast to functionalists and conflict theorists, who as macrosociologists focus on the “big picture,” symbolic interactionists tend to be microsociologists who focus on face-to-face social interaction. Symbolic interactionists analyze how people define their worlds, and how their definitions, in turn, influence their behavior. P. 106.
How do stereotypes affect social interaction?

Stereotypes are assumptions of what people are like. When we first meet people, we classify them according to our perceptions of their visible characteristics. Our ideas about those characteristics guide our behavior toward them. Our behavior, in turn, may influence them to behave in ways that reinforce our stereotypes. Pp. 107–108, 109.

Do all human groups share a similar sense of personal space?

In examining how people use physical space, symbolic interactionists stress that we surround ourselves with a “personal bubble,” one that we carefully protect. People from different cultures use “personal bubbles” of varying sizes, so the answer to the question is no. Americans typically use four different “distance zones”—intimate, personal, social, and public. Pp. 108, 110.

What is dramaturgy?

Erving Goffman developed dramaturgy (or dramaturgical analysis), in which everyday life is analyzed in terms of the stage. At the core of this analysis is impression management, our attempts to control the impressions we make on others. For this, we use the sign-vehicles of setting, appearance, and manner. Our performances often call for teamwork and face-saving behavior. Pp. 110–117.

What is the social construction of reality?

The phrase the social construction of reality refers to how we construct our views of the world, which, in turn, underlie our actions. Ethnomethodology is the study of how people make sense of everyday life. Ethnomethodologists try to uncover background assumptions, our basic ideas about the way life is. Pp. 117–119.

The Need for Both Macrosociology and Microsociology

Why are both levels of analysis necessary?

Because each focuses on different aspects of the human experience, both microsociology and macrosociology are necessary for us to understand social life. P. 119:

1. The major components of social structure are culture, social class, social status, roles, groups, and social institutions. Use social structure to explain why Native Americans have such a low rate of college graduation. (See Table 12.2 on page 346.)

2. Dramaturgy is a form of microsociology. Use dramaturgy to analyze a situation with which you are intimately familiar (such as interaction with your family or friends, or even interaction in one of your college classes).

3. To illustrate why we need both macrosociology and microsociology to understand social life, use an example from your own life.

CHAPTER 4
TV and magazine ads keep pounding home the message that our bodies aren’t good enough, that we’ve got to improve them. The way to improve them, of course, is to buy the advertised products: wigs, hairpieces, hair transplants, padded brassieres, diet pills, and exercise equipment. Muscular hulks show off machines that magically produce “six-pack abs” and incredible biceps—in just a few minutes a day. Female movie stars effortlessly go through their own tough workouts without even breaking into a sweat. Women and men get the feeling that attractive members of the opposite sex will flock to them if they purchase that wonder-working workout machine.

Although we try to shrug off such messages, knowing that they are designed to sell products, the messages still get our attention. They penetrate our thinking and feelings, helping to shape ideal images of how we “ought” to look. Those models so attractively clothed and coiffed as they walk down the runway, could they be any thinner? For women, the message is clear: You can’t be thin enough. The men’s message is also clear: You can’t be strong enough.

Woman or man, your body isn’t good enough. It sags where it should be firm. It bulges where it should be smooth. It sticks out where it shouldn’t, and it doesn’t stick out enough where it should.

And—no matter what your weight—it’s too much. You’ve got to be thinner.

Exercise takes time, and getting in shape is painful. Once you do get in shape, if you slack off it seems to take only a few days for your body to sag into its previous slothful, drab appearance. You can’t let up, you can’t exercise enough, and you can’t diet enough.

But who can continue at such a torrid pace, striving for what are unrealistic cultural ideals? A few people, of course, but not many. So liposuction is appealing. Just lie there, put up with a little discomfort, and the doctor will vacuum the fat right out of you. Surgeons can transform flat breasts into super breasts overnight. They can lower receding hairlines and smooth furrowed brows. They remove lumps with their magical tummy tucks, and can take off a decade with their rejuvenating skin peels, face lifts, and Botox injections.

With the impossibly shaped models at Victoria’s Secret as the standard to which they hold themselves, even teens call the plastic surgeon. Anxious lest their child violate the ideals and trail behind in her race for popularity, parents foot the bill. Some parents pay $25,000 just to give their daughter a flatter tummy (Gross 1998).

With peer pressure to alter the body already intense, surgeons keep stoking the fire. A sample ad: “No Ifs, Ands or Butts. You Can Change Your Bottom Line in Hours!” Some surgeons even offer gift certificates—so you can give a box of liposuction or Botox injections along with their greeting card (Dowd 2002).

The thinness craze has spread to the East. Glossy magazines in Japan and China are filled with skinny models and crammed with ads touting diet pills and diet teas. In China, where famine used to abound, a little extra padding was valued as a sign of good health. Today, the obsession is thinness (Rosenthal 1999; Prystay and Fowler 2003). Not-so-subtle ads scream that fat is bad. Some teas come with a package of diet pills. Weight-loss machines, with electrodes attached to acupuncture pressure points, not only reduce fat but also build breasts—or so the advertisers claim.

Not limited by our rules, advertisers in Japan and China push a soap that supposedly “sucks up fat through the skin’s pores” (Marshall 1995). What a dream product! After all, even though our TV models smile as they go through their paces, those exercise machines do look like a lot of hard work.

Then there is the other bottom line: Attractiveness does pay off. Economists studied physical attractiveness and earnings. The result? “Good-looking” men and women earn the most, “average-looking” men and women earn more than “plain” people, and the “ugly” are paid a “pittance” (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994). Consider obese women: Their net worth is less than half that of their slimmer sisters (“Fat is a Financial Issue” 2000). “Attractive” women have another cash advantage: They attract and marry higher-earning men.

More popularity and more money? Maybe you can’t be thin enough after all. Maybe those exercise machines are a good investment. If only we could catch up with the Japanese and develop a soap that would suck the fat right out of our pores. You can practically hear the jingle now.

**for your Consideration**

What image do you have of your body? How do cultural expectations of “ideal” bodies underlie your image? Can you recall any advertisement or television program that has affected your body image?
s I was watching television on March 20, 2003, I heard a report that a tornado had hit Camilla, Georgia. "Like a giant lawn mower," the report said, it had cut a path of destruction through this little town. In its fury, the tornado had left behind six dead and about 200 injured.

From sociological studies of natural disasters, I knew that immediately after the initial shock the survivors of natural disasters work together to try to restore order to their disrupted lives. I wanted to see this restructuring process first hand. The next morning, I took off for Georgia.

These photos, taken the day after the tornado struck, tell the story of people who are in the midst of trying to put their lives back together. I was impressed at how little time people spend commiserating about their misfortune and how quickly they take practical steps to restore their lives.

As you look at these photos, try to determine why you need both microsociology and macrosociology to understand what occurs after a natural disaster.
[After they went inside their trailer, Buba threatened to shoot Cindy. He loaded a shotgun, pointed it at her, and said]: “The only way you’re going to get out of this is if you kill me, and I’ll—I’ll kill you.” [Buba gave me the shotgun and] turned around and walked right down the hall, because he knew I wouldn’t do nothing. And I just sat there a minute. And I don’t know what happened. I just, you know. I went to the bedroom, and I seen him laying there, and I just shot him. He moved. I shot him again because I thought he was going to get up again... I loved him too much. And I just wanted to help him.

Source: ABC Television, 20/20, October 18, 1979

What Is a Valid Sociological Topic?

Sociologists do research on just about every area of human behavior. On the macro level, they study such broad matters as race relations (Wilson 2000), the military (Moscos and Butler 1997), and multinational corporations (Kanter et al. 1997). On the micro level, they study such individualistic matters as pelvic examinations (Henslin and Biggs 1971/2005), how people interact on street corners (Whyte 1989, 2001), and even how people decorate their homes at Christmas (Caplow 1991). In fact, no human behavior is ineligible for sociological scrutiny—whether that behavior is routine or unusual, respectable or reprehensible.

What happened to Cindy and Buba, then, is also a valid topic of sociological research. But exactly how would you research spouse abuse? As we look at how sociologists do research, we shall try to answer this question.

Common Sense and the Need for Sociological Research

First, why do we need sociological research? Why can’t we simply depend on common sense, on “what everyone knows”? As noted in Chapter 1 (pages 5–7), commonsense ideas may or may not be true. Common sense, for example, tells us that spouse abuse has a significant impact on the lives of the people who are abused. Although this particular idea is accurate, we need research to test commonsense ideas, because not all such ideas are true. After all, common sense also tells us that if a woman is abused, she will pack up and leave her husband. Research, however, shows that the reality of abuse is much more complicated than this. Some women do leave right away, some even after the first incident of abuse. For a variety of reasons, however, some women suffer abuse for years. The main reason is that they feel trapped and don’t perceive any viable alternatives.

This brings us to the need for sociological research, for we may want to know why some women put up with abuse, while others don’t. Or we may want to know something entirely different, such as why men are more likely to be the abusers. Or why some people abuse the people they say they love.

In order to answer a question, we need to move beyond guesswork and common sense. We want to know what is really going on. To find out, sociologists do research on about every aspect of social life. Let’s look at how they do their research.
**Unobtrusive Measures**

Researchers sometimes use **unobtrusive measures**, observing the behavior of people who do not know they are being studied. For example, social researchers studied the level of whisky consumption in a town that was legally “dry” by counting empty bottles in trashcans. To study the degree of fear induced by ghost stories, they measured the shrinking diameter of a circle of seated children. Some sociologists even examined garbage. They found that more beef is wasted during a beef shortage—presumably because people buy more than they can store properly (Lee 2000). Researchers have also gone high-tech in their unobtrusive measures (Hays 2004). To trace customers’ paths through stores, they have attached infrared surveillance devices to shopping carts. Grocery chains use these findings to place higher-profit items in more strategic locations (McCarthy 1993). Casinos use high-tech chips that transmit radio frequencies, allowing casino operators to know exactly how much their high rollers are betting at every hand of poker or blackjack (Sanders 2005).

It would be considered unethical to use most unobtrusive measures to research spouse abuse. You could, however, analyze 911 calls. If there were a public forum held by abused or abusing spouses on the Internet, you could also record and analyze the online conversations.

**Deciding Which Method to Use**

How do sociologists choose among these methods? Four primary factors affect their decision. First, **resources** are crucial. Sociologists must match methods with available resources. For example, they may want to conduct a survey, but they may find that finances won’t permit it. Instead, they turn to the study of documents. The second significant factor is **access to subjects**. If the people who comprise a sample live in remote parts of the country, researchers may have to mail them questionnaires or conduct a survey by telephone or e-mail rather than visit them. They would prefer face-to-face interviews. The third factor concerns the **purpose of the research**, the questions that the sociologist wants to investigate and answer. Each method is better for answering certain types of questions. Participant observation, for example, is good for uncovering people’s attitudes, while experiments are better at resolving questions of cause and effect. Fourth, the **researcher’s background or training** comes into play. In graduate school, sociologists study many methods, but they are able to practice only some of them. Consequently, after graduate school, they generally use the methods in which they have had the most training.

Thus, sociologists who have been trained in **quantitative research methods**, which emphasize measurement, numbers, and statistics, are likely to use surveys. Sociologists who have been trained in **qualitative research methods**, which emphasize observing and interpreting people’s behavior, lean toward participant observation. In the Down-to-Earth Sociology box above, you can see how applied sociologists use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Sociologists sometimes find themselves in the hot seat because of their research. Some poke into private areas of life, which upsets people. Others investigate public matters, but their findings threaten those who have a stake in the situation. When a survey showed that if there were a peace settlement, most Palestinian refugees would be willing to accept compensation and not return to Israel, an enraged mob beat the researcher and trashed his office (Bennet 2003). From the following Thinking Critically section, you can see how using rigorous research methods to simply find out how many homeless people there are can land sociologists in the midst of controversy.
How Research and Theory Work Together

What is the relationship between theory and research?

Theory and research depend on one another. Sociologists use theory to interpret the data they gather. Theory also generates questions that need to be answered by research. Research, in turn, helps to generate theory: When findings don’t match what is expected, this indicates the need for new thinking. Pp. 143–144.

1. Why do we need sociological research?
2. What factors make for bad sociological research? How can these be avoided?
3. What ethics govern sociological research?

CHAPTER

5

OUTLINE

The Research Model

Source: Modification of Figure 2.2 of Schaeffer 1989.

CHAPTER 5 HOW SOCIOLOGISTS DO RESEARCH

Because sociologists find all human behavior to be valid research topics, their research runs from the unusual to the routines of everyday life. Their studies range from broad scale social change, such as the globalization of capitalism, to such events as exhibitions of tattooing, piercing, and body painting. Shown here at the Australian Museum in Sydney is Lucky Rich, displaying his stainless steel teeth.
Marketing researchers, of course, do not see things this way. They argue that marketing research is a neutral activity, that there is no reason to be against it on principle. They add that they do more than just help sell beer and soft drinks. They point out that they have helped colleges attract students and communities assess public needs. They argue that the decision to do research on any topic involves the researcher’s own values. This applies to studying how to reduce juvenile delinquency as well as how to sell facial scrubs for acne. It is presumptuous, they say, for anyone to pass judgment on marketing research—as though other research were morally superior.

Sources: Based on Straus 1991 and communication with Straus 1993; Hays 2004.

Before they begin to sell a product, companies spend huge amounts of money in researching the public’s interest and, often, in stimulating that interest.

Research sometimes lands sociologists in the midst of controversy. An example is a study conducted to determine how many homeless people there are in the United States. Homeless advocates were not pleased with the results. Homelessness is a global problem. Shown here are homeless street kids in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Ethics in social research are of vital concern to sociologists. As discussed in the text, sociologists may disagree on some of the issue’s finer points, but none would approve of slipping LSD to unsuspecting subjects like these Marine recruits in basic training at Parris Island, South Carolina. This was done to U.S. servicemen in the 1960s under the guise of legitimate testing—just “to see what would happen.”

Summary and Review

- Thinking Critically about Chapter 5
Societies and Their Transformation

To better understand groups—people who interact with one another and who think of themselves as belonging together—let’s first look at the big picture. The largest and most complex group that sociologists study is society, which consists of people who share a culture and a territory. Society, which surrounds us, sets the stage for our life experiences. Not only does it lay the broad framework for our behavior but also it influences the ways we think and feel. Since our society is so significant in our lives, let’s look at how it developed. In Figure 6.1, you can see that technology is the key to understanding the broad, sweeping changes that have produced our society. As we summarize these changes, picture yourself as a member of each society. Consider how your life—even your thoughts and values—would be different in each society.

Hunting and Gathering Societies

Societies with the fewest social divisions are called hunting and gathering societies. As the name implies, these groups depend on hunting animals and gathering plants for their survival. In some, the men do the hunting, and the women the gathering. In others, both men and women (and children) gather plants, the men hunt large animals, and both men and women hunt small animals. Beyond this basic division of labor by sex, there are few social divisions. The groups usually have a shaman, an individual thought to be able to influence spiritual forces, but shamans, too, must help obtain food. Although these groups give greater prestige to the men hunters, the women gatherers contribute more food to the group, perhaps even four-fifths of their total food supply (Bernard 1992).

In addition to gender, the major unit of organization is the family. Most group members are related by ancestry or marriage. Because the family is the only distinct social institution in these societies, it fulfills many functions that are divided among modern society’s many specialized institutions. The family distributes food to its members, educates its children (especially in survival skills), nurses its sick, and provides for virtually all other needs.

Because an area cannot support a large number of people who hunt animals and gather plants (they do not plant—they only gather what is already there), hunting and gathering societies are small. They usually consist of only twenty-five to forty people. These groups are nomadic, moving from one place to another as the food supply of an area gives out. They place high value on sharing food, which is essential to their survival. Because of disease, drought, and pestilence, children have only about a fifty-fifty chance of surviving childhood (Lenski and Lenski 1987).

Of all societies, hunters and gatherers are the most egalitarian. Because what they hunt and gather is perishable and they have no money, the people accumulate few personal possessions. Consequently, no one becomes wealthier than anyone else. There are no rulers, and most decisions are arrived at through discussion. Because their needs are basic and they do not work to store up material possessions, hunters and gatherers have the most leisure of all human groups (Sahlins 1972; Lorber 1994; Volti 1995). All human groups were once hunters and gatherers, and until several hundred years ago such societies were common. Their demise came when other groups took over the regions in which they moved about in their search for food. Today, fewer than 300 hunter-gatherer groups remain; they include the pygmies of central Africa, the aborigines of Australia, and groups in South America represented by the photo below (Stiles 2003). These groups seem doomed to a similar fate, and it is likely that their way of life will soon disappear from the human scene (Lenski and Lenski 1987).
In short, to divide the world into in-groups and out-groups is a natural part of social life. But in addition to bringing functional consequences, it can bring dysfunctional ones.

Reference Groups

Suppose you have just been offered a good job. It pays double what you hope to make even after you graduate from college. You have only two days to make up your mind. If you accept it, you will have to drop out of college. As you consider the matter, thoughts like this may go through your mind: “My friends will say I’m a fool if I don’t take the job. . . but Dad and Mom will practically go crazy. They’ve made sacrifices for me, and they’ll be crushed if I don’t finish college. They’ve always said I’ve got to get my education first, that good jobs will always be there. . . . But, then, I’d like to see the look on the faces of those neighbors who said I’d never amount to much!”

This is an example of how people use reference groups, the groups we use as standards to evaluate ourselves. Your reference groups may include your family, neighbors, teachers, classmates, co-workers, and the Scouts or the members of a church, synagogue, or mosque. If you were like Monster Kody in our opening vignette, the “set” would be your main reference group. Even a group you don’t belong to can be a reference group. For example, if you are thinking about going to graduate school, graduate students or members of the profession you want to join may form a reference group. You would consider their standards as you evaluate your grades or writing skills.

Providing a Yardstick Reference groups exert tremendous influence over our lives. For example, if you want to become a corporate executive, you might start to dress more formally, try to improve your vocabulary, read the Wall Street Journal, and change your major to business or law. In contrast, if you want to become a rock musician, you might wear jewelry in several places where you have pierced your body, get outrageous tattoos, dress in ways your parents and many of your peers consider extreme, read Rolling Stone, and hang out clubs and rock groups.

Exposure to Contradictory Standards in a Socially Diverse Society From these examples, you can see that the yardsticks provided by reference groups operate as a form of social control. When we see ourselves as measuring up to the yardstick, we feel no conflict. If our behavior, or even aspirations, do not match the group’s standards, however, the mismatch can lead to inner turmoil. For example, to want to become a corporate executive would create no inner turmoil for most of us, but it would if we had grown up in an Amish home, for the Amish strongly disapprove of such aspirations for their children. They ban high school and college education, three-piece suits, and corporate employment. Similarly, if you wanted to become a soldier and your parents were dedicated pacifists, you likely would feel deep conflict, as your parents would hold quite different aspirations for you.

Given the social diversity of our society as well as our social mobility, many of us are exposed to contradictory ideas and standards from the many groups that become significant to us. The “internal recordings” that play contradictory messages from these reference groups, then, are one price we pay for our social mobility.

Social Networks

If you are a member of a large group, you probably associate regularly with a few people within that group. In a sociology class I was teaching at a commuter campus, six women who didn’t know one another ended up working together on a project. They got along well, and they began to sit together. Eventually they planned a Christmas party at one of their homes. These clusters, or internal factions, are called cliques (cleeks).
presents—including in many instances the husband’s jealousy that he is getting less attention from his wife—the marriage usually becomes stronger. Although the intensity of interaction is less in triads, they are inherently stronger and give greater stability to a relationship.

Yet, as Simmel noted, triads, too, are inherently unstable. They tend to form coalitions—some group members aligning themselves against others. In a triad, it is not uncommon for two members to feel strong bonds and prefer one another. This leaves the third person feeling hurt and excluded. Another characteristic of triads is that they often produce an arbitrator or mediator, someone who tries to settle disagreements between the other two. In one-child families, you can often observe both of these characteristics of triads—coalitions and arbitration.

The general principle is this: As a small group grows larger, it becomes more stable, but its intensity, or intimacy, decreases. To see why, look at Figure 6.3. As each new person comes into a group, the connections among people multiply. In a dyad, there is only 1 relationship; in a triad, there are 3; in a group of four, 6; in a group of five, 10. If we expand the group to six, we have 15 relationships, while a group of seven yields 21 relationships. If we continue adding members, we soon are unable to follow the connections: A group of eight has 28 possible relationships; a group of nine, 36 relationships; a group of ten, 45; and so on.

It is not only the number of relationships that makes larger groups more stable. As groups grow, they also tend to develop a more formal structure to accomplish their goals. For example, leaders emerge and more specialized roles come into play. This often results in such familiar offices as president, secretary, and treasurer. This structure provides a framework that helps the group survive over time.

Effects of Group Size on Attitudes and Behavior

Imagine that your social psychology professors have asked you to join a few students to discuss your adjustment to college life. When you arrive, they tell you that to make the discussion anonymous they want you to sit unseen in a booth. You will participate in the discussion over an intercom, talking when your microphone comes on. The professors say that they will not listen to the conversation, and they leave.

You find the format somewhat strange, to say the least, but you go along with it. You have not seen the other students in their booths, but when they talk about their experiences, you find yourself becoming wrapped up in the problems that they begin to share. One student even mentions how frightening he has found college because of his history of epileptic seizures. Later, you hear this individual breathe heavily into the microphone. Then he stammers and cries for help. A crashing noise follows, and you imagine him lying helpless on the floor.

Nothing but an eerie silence follows. What do you do?

Your professors, John Darley and Bibb Latané (1968), staged the whole thing, but you don’t know this. No one had a seizure. In fact, no one was even in the other booths. Everything, except your comments, was on tape.

Some participants were told that they would be discussing the topic with just one other student, others with two, others with three, and so on. Darley and Latané found that all students who thought they were part of a dyad rushed out to help. If they thought they were part of a triad, only 80 percent went to help—and they were slower in leaving the booth. In six-person groups, only 60 percent went to see what was wrong—and they were even slower.

This experiment demonstrates how deeply group size influences our attitudes and behavior: It even affects our willingness to help one another. Students in the dyad knew
**Types of Leaders** Groups have two types of leaders (Bales 1950, 1953; Cartwright and Zander 1968). The first is easy to recognize. This person, called an **instrumental leader** (or task-oriented leader), tries to keep the group moving toward its goals. These leaders try to keep group members from getting sidetracked, reminding them of what they are trying to accomplish. The **expressive leader** (or socioemotional leader), in contrast, usually is not recognized as a leader, but he or she certainly is one. This person is likely to crack jokes, to offer sympathy, or to do other things that help to lift the group’s morale. Both types of leadership are essential: the one to keep the group on track, the other to increase harmony and minimize conflicts.

It is difficult for the same person to be both an instrumental and an expressive leader, for these roles contradict one another. Because instrumental leaders are task oriented, they sometimes create friction as they prod the group to get on with the job. Their actions often cost them popularity. Expressive leaders, in contrast, who stimulate personal bonds and reduce friction, are usually more popular (Olmsted and Hare 1978).

**Leadership Styles** Let’s suppose that the president of your college has asked you to head a task force to determine how the college can improve race relations on campus. Although this position requires you to be an instrumental leader, you can adopt a number of leadership styles, or ways of expressing yourself as a leader. The three basic styles are those of authoritarian leader, one who gives orders; democratic leader, one who tries to gain a consensus; and laissez-faire leader, one who is highly permissive. Which style should you choose?

Social psychologists Ronald Lippitt and Ralph White (1958) carried out a classic study of these leadership styles. Boys who were matched for IQ, personality, physical energy, and leadership were assigned to "craft clubs" made up of five boys each. The experimenters trained adult men in the three leadership styles. As the researchers peered through peepholes, taking notes and making movies, each adult rotated among the clubs, playing all three styles to control possible effects of their individual personalities. The authoritarian leaders assigned tasks to the boys and told them exactly what to do. They also praised or condemned the boys’ work arbitrarily, giving no explanation for why they judged it good or bad. The democratic leaders held discussions with the boys, outlining the steps that would help them reach their goals. They also suggested alternative approaches and let the boys work at their own pace. When they evaluated the projects, they gave “facts” as the bases for their decisions. The laissez-faire leaders were passive. They gave the boys almost total freedom to do as they wished. They offered help when asked, but made few suggestions. They did not evaluate the boys’ projects, either positively or negatively.

The results? The boys who had authoritarian leaders grew dependent on their leader and showed a high degree of internal solidarity. They also became either aggressive or apathetic, with the aggressive boys growing hostile toward their leader. In contrast, the boys who had democratic leaders were friendlier, and looked to one another for mutual approval. They did less scapegoating, and when the leader left the room they continued to work at a steadier pace. The boys with laissez-faire leaders asked more questions, but they made fewer decisions. They were notable for their lack of achievement. The researchers concluded that the democratic style of leadership works best. Their conclusion, however, may have been biased, as the researchers favored a democratic style of leadership in the first place (Olmsted and Hare 1978). Apparently, this same bias in studies of leadership continues (Cassel 1999).

You may have noted that only boys and men were involved in this experiment. It is interesting to speculate how the results might differ if we were to repeat the experiment with all-girl groups and with mixed groups of girls and boys—and if we used both men
What were the results? Asch (1952) tested fifty people. One-third (33 percent) gave in to the group half the time, giving what they knew to be wrong answers. Another two out of five (40 percent) gave wrong answers, but not as often. One out of four (25 percent) stuck to their guns and always gave the right answer. I don’t know how I would do on this test (if I knew nothing about it in advance), but I like to think that I would be part of the 25 percent. You probably feel the same way about yourself. But why should we feel that we wouldn’t be like most people?

The results are disturbing, and more researchers have replicated Asch’s experiment than any other study (Levine 1999). In our “land of individualism,” the group is so powerful that most people are willing to say things that they know are not true. And this was a group of strangers! How much more conformity can we expect when our group consists of friends, people we value highly and depend on for getting along in life? Again, maybe you will become the sociologist to run that variation of Asch’s experiment, perhaps using female subjects.

The Power of Authority: The Milgram Experiment

Even more disturbing are the results of the experiment described in the following Thinking Critically section.

Thinking Critically

If Hitler Asked You to Execute a Stranger, Would You? The Milgram Experiment

Imagine that you are taking a course with Dr. Stanley Milgram (1963, 1965), a former student of Dr. Asch. Assume that you do not know about the Asch experiment and have no reason to be wary. You arrive at the laboratory to participate in a study on punishment and learning. You and a second student draw lots for the roles of “teacher” and “learner.” You are to be the teacher. When you see that the learner’s chair has protruding electrodes, you are glad that you are the teacher. Dr. Milgram shows you the machine you will run. You see that one side of the control panel is marked “Mild Shock, 15 volts,” while the center says “Intense Shock, 350 Volts,” and the far right side reads “DANGER: SEVERE SHOCK.”

“As the teacher, you will read aloud a pair of words,” explains Dr. Milgram. “Then you will repeat the first word, and the learner will reply with the second word. If the learner can’t remember the word, you press this lever on the shock generator. The shock will serve as punishment, and we can then determine if punishment improves memory.” You nod, now very relieved that you haven’t been designated the learner.

“Every time the learner makes an error, increase the punishment by 15 volts,” instructs Dr. Milgram. Then, seeing the look on your face, he adds, “The shocks can be extremely painful, but they won’t cause any permanent tissue damage.” He pauses, and then says, “I want you to see.” You then follow him to the “electric chair,” and Dr. Milgram gives you a shock of 45 volts. “There. That wasn’t too bad, was it?” “No,” you mumble.

The experiment begins. You hope for the learner’s sake that he is bright, but unfortunately he turns out to be rather dull. He gets some answers right, but you have to keep turning up the dial. Each turn makes you more and more uncomfortable. You find yourself hoping that the learner won’t miss another answer. But he does. When he received the first shocks, he let out some moans and groans, but now he is screaming in agony. He even protests that he suffers from a heart condition.

How far do you turn that dial?

By now, you probably have guessed that there was no electricity attached to the electrodes and that the “learner” was a stooge who only pretended to feel pain. The purpose of the experiment was to find out at what point people refuse to participate. Does anyone actually turn the lever all the way to “DANGER: SEVERE SHOCK”?
The Transformation of Societies

How is technology linked to the change from one type of society to another?

On their way to postindustrial society, humans passed through four types of societies. Each emerged from a social revolution that was linked to new technology. The domestication revolution, which brought the pasturing of animals and the cultivation of plants, transformed hunting and gathering societies into pastoral and horticultural societies. Then the invention of the plow ushered in the agricultural society, while the Industrial Revolution, brought about by machines that were powered by fuels, led to the industrial society. The computer chip ushered in a new type of society called post-industrial (or information) society. Another new type of society, the bioetech society, may be emerging. Pp. 148–153.

How is social inequality linked to the transformation of societies?

Social equality was greatest in hunting and gathering societies, but over time social inequality grew. The root of the transition to social inequality was the accumulation of a food surplus, made possible through the domestication revolution. This surplus stimulated the division of labor, trade, accumulation of material goods, the subordination of females by males, the emergence of leaders, and the development of the state. Pp. 150–153.

Groups Within Society

How do sociologists classify groups?

Sociologists divide groups into primary groups, secondary groups, in-groups, out-groups, reference groups, and networks. The cooperative, intimate, long-term, face-to-face relationships provided by primary groups are fundamental to our sense of self. Secondary groups are larger, relatively temporary, and more anonymous, formal, and impersonal than primary groups. In-groups provide members with a strong sense of identity and belonging. Out-groups also foster identity by showing in-group members what they are not. Reference groups are groups whose standards we refer to as we evaluate ourselves. Social networks consist of social ties that link people together. The new technology has given birth to a new type of group, the electronic community. Pp. 153–161.

Group Dynamics

How does a group's size affect its dynamics?

The term group dynamics refers to how individuals affect groups and how groups influence individuals. In a small group, everyone can interact directly with everyone else. As a group grows larger, its intensity decreases but its stability increases. A dyad, consisting of two people, is the most unstable of human groups, but it provides the most intense or intimate relationships. The addition of a third person, forming a triad, fundamentally alters relationships. Triads are unstable, as coalitions (the alignment of some members of a group against others) tend to form. Pp. 161–164.

What characterizes a leader?

A leader is someone who influences others. Instrumental leaders try to keep a group moving toward its goals, even though this causes friction and they lose popularity. Expressive leaders focus on creating harmony and raising group morale. Both types are essential to the functioning of groups. Pp. 164–165.
What are the three main leadership styles?

Authoritarian leaders give orders, democratic leaders try to lead by consensus, and laissez-faire leaders are highly permissive. An authoritarian style appears to be more effective in emergency situations, a democratic style works best for most situations, and a laissez-faire style is usually ineffective. Pp. 165–166.

How do groups encourage conformity?

The Asch experiment was cited to illustrate the power of peer pressure, the Milgram experiment to illustrate the influence of authority. Both experiments demonstrate how easily we can succumb to groupthink, a kind of collective tunnel vision. Preventing groupthink requires the free circulation of contrasting ideas. Pp. 166–169.

1. How would your orientations to life (your ideas, attitudes, values, goals) be different if you had been reared in an agricultural society?
2. Identify your in-groups and your out-groups. How have your in-groups influenced the way you see the world?
3. Asch’s experiment illustrates the power of peer pressure. How has peer pressure operated in your life? Think about something that you did not want to do but did anyway because of peer pressure.

CHAPTER

OUTLINE

As society—the largest and most complex type of group—changes, so, too, do the groups, activities, and, ultimately, the type of people who form that society. This photo of Stacy Keibler and Torrie Wilson in Madison Square Garden captures some of the changes that U.S. society has been undergoing in recent years. What social changes can you identify from this photo?

CHAPTER 6 SOCIETIES TO SOCIAL NETWORKS
What Coors cares about, of course, is the bottom line. It’s the same with other corporations. Blatant racism and sexism once made no difference to profitability. Today, they do. To promote profitability, companies must promote diversity—or at least pretend to. The sincerity of corporate leaders is not what’s important; diversity in the workplace is.

Diversity training has the potential to build bridges, but it can backfire. Directors of these programs can be so incompetent that they create antagonisms and reinforce stereotypes. The leaders of a diversity training session at the U.S. Department of Transportation, for example, had women grope men as the men ran by. They encouraged blacks and whites to insult one another and to call each other names (Reibstein 1996). The intention may have been good (understanding the other through role reversal and getting hostilities “out in the open”), but the approach was moronic. Instead of healing, such behaviors wound and leave scars.

Pepsi provides a positive example of diversity training. Managers at Pepsi are given the assignment of sponsoring a group of employees who are unlike themselves. Men sponsor women, African Americans sponsor whites, and so on. The executives are expected to try to understand work from the perspective of the people they sponsor, to identify key talent, and to personally mentor at least three people in their group. Accountability is built in—the sponsors have to give updates to executives even higher up (Terhune 2005).

for your Consideration

Do you think that corporations and government agencies should offer diversity training? If so, how can we develop diversity training that fosters mutual respect? Can you suggest practical ways to develop workplaces that are not divided by gender and race-ethnicity?

Humanizing the Corporate Culture

Bureaucracies have transformed society by harnessing people’s energies to reach goals and monitor progress to achieve those goals. Weber (1946) predicted that because bureaucracies were so efficient and had the capacity to replace themselves, they would come to dominate social life. More than any prediction in sociology, this one has withstood the test of time (Rothschild and Whitt 1986; Perrow 1991).

Attempts to Humanize the Work Setting

Bureaucracies appear likely to remain our dominant form of social organization, and most of us, like it or not, are destined to spend our working lives in bureaucracies. Many people have become concerned about the negative side of bureaucracies, and would like to make them more humane. Humanizing a work setting means organizing work in such a way that it develops rather than impedes human potential. Humanized work settings offer more equal access to opportunities, distribute power more equally, have more flexible rules, and are more open in decision making.

Can bureaucracies adapt to such a model? Contrary to some images, not all bureaucracies are unyielding, unwieldy monoliths. There is nothing in the nature of bureaucracies that makes them inherently insensitive to people’s needs or that prevents them from fostering a corporate culture that maximizes human potential.

But what about the cost of such changes? The United States faces formidable economic competitors—Japan, Europe, South America, and now China and India. Humanizing corporate culture, however, does not require huge expense. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983) compared forty-seven companies that were rigidly bureaucratic with competitors of the same size that were more flexible. Kanter found that the more flexible companies were more profitable—probably because their greater flexibility encouraged greater creativity, productivity, and company loyalty.
The whole situation was depressing, and I wondered why I ever decided to switch from civil engineering to anthropology in the first place. . . . (Soon) I was covered with red pigment, the result of a dozen or so complete examinations. . . . These examinations capped an otherwise grim day. The Indians would blow their noses into their hands, flick as much of the mucus off that would separate in a snap of the wrist, wipe the residue into their hair, and then carefully examine my face, arms, legs, hair, and the contents of my pockets. I said (in their language), “Your hands are dirty”; my comments were met by the Indians in the following way: they would “clean” their hands by spitting a quantity of slimy tobacco juice into them, rub them together, and then proceed with the examination.

This is how Napoleon Chagnon describes his eye-opening introduction to the Yanomamö tribe of the rain forests of Brazil. His ensuing months of fieldwork continued to bring surprise after surprise, and often Chagnon (1977) could hardly believe his eyes—or his nose. If you were to list the deviant behaviors of the Yanomamö, what would you include? The way they appear naked in public? Use hallucinogenic drugs? Let mucus hang from their noses? Or the way they rub hands filled with mucus, spit, and tobacco juice over a frightened stranger who doesn’t dare to protest? Perhaps. But it isn’t this simple, for as we shall see, deviance is relative.

What Is Deviance?

Sociologists use the term deviance to refer to any violation of norms, whether the infraction is as minor as driving over the speed limit, as serious as murder, or as humorous as Chagnon’s encounter with the Yanomamö. This deceptively simple definition takes us to the heart of the sociological perspective on deviance, which sociologist Howard S. Becker (1966) described this way: It is not the act itself, but the reactions to the act, that make something deviant. Chagnon was frightened by what he saw, but to the Yanomamö those same behaviors represented normal, everyday life. What was deviant to Chagnon was conformist to the Yanomamö. From their viewpoint, you should check out strangers the way they did, and nakedness is good, as are hallucinogenic drugs and letting mucus be “natural.”

Chagnon’s abrupt introduction to the Yanomamö allows us to see the relativity of deviance, a major point made by symbolic interactionists. Because different groups have different norms, what is deviant to some is not deviant to others. (See the photo on this page.) This principle holds within a society as well as across cultures. Thus acts that are acceptable in one culture—or in one group within a society—may be considered deviant in another culture, or by another group within the same society. This idea is explored in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page.

This principle also applies to a specific form of deviance known as crime, the violation of rules that have been written into law. In the extreme, an act that is applauded by one group may be so despised by another group that it is punishable by death. Making a huge profit on a business deal is one example. Americans who do this are admired. Like Donald Trump and Jack Welch, they may even write books about their exploits. In China, however, until recently this same act was a crime called profiteering. Anyone who was found guilty was hanged in a public square as a lesson to all.

Unlike the general public, sociologists use the term deviance nonjudgmentally, to refer to any act to which people respond negatively. When sociologists use this term, it does not
unemployment and poverty. From its ranks come most of the prison inmates in the United States. Desperate, these people commit street crimes, and because their crimes threaten the social order that keeps the elite in power, they are punished severely.

The Law as an Instrument of Oppression

According to conflict theorists, the idea that the law operates impartially and administers a code that is shared by all is a cultural myth promoted by the capitalist class. These theorists see the law as an instrument of oppression, a tool designed by the powerful to maintain their privileged position (Spitzer 1975; Reiman 2004; Chambliss 2000, 2006). Because the working class has the potential to rebel and overthrow the current social order, when its members get out of line, the law comes down hard on them. For this reason, the criminal justice system does not focus on the owners of corporations and the harm they do through unsafe products, pollution, and price manipulations—or the crimes of Hughes and Boeing mentioned on the previous page. Instead, it directs its energies against violations by the working class. The violations of the capitalist class cannot be ignored totally, however, for if they become too outrageous or oppressive, the working class might rise up and revolt. To prevent this, a flagrant violation by a member of the capitalist class is occasionally prosecuted. The publicity given to the case helps to stabilize the social system by providing evidence of the “fairness” of the criminal justice system.

Usually, however, the powerful are able to bypass the courts altogether, appearing instead before an agency that has no power to imprison (such as the Federal Trade Commission). People from wealthy backgrounds who sympathize with the intricacies of the corporate world direct these agencies. It is they who oversee most cases of manipulating the price of stocks, insider trading, violating fiduciary duty, and so on. Is it surprising, then, that the typical sanction for corporate crime is a token fine?

When groups that have been denied access to power gain that access, we can expect to see changes in the legal system. This is precisely what is occurring now. Racial-ethnic-minorities, for example, have more political power today than ever before. In line with conflict theory, a new category called hate crime has been formulated. We analyze this change in a different context on page 222.

IN SUM From the perspective of conflict theory, the small penalties that are imposed for crimes committed by the powerful are typical of a legal system that has been designed by the elite (capitalists) to keep themselves in power, to control workers, and, ultimately, to stabilize the social order. From this perspective, law enforcement is a cultural device through which the capitalist class carries out self-protective and repressive policies.

Reactions to Deviance

Whether it involves cheating on a sociology quiz or holding up a liquor store, any violation of norms invites reaction. Let’s look at some of these reactions.

Street Crime and Prisons

Today, we don’t make people wear scarlet letters, but we do remove them from society and make them wear prison uniforms. And we still use degradation ceremonies—in this case, a public trial and an announcement (the sentencing) that someone is “unfit” to live among “decent, law-abiding people” for some specified period of time.
Why should we have a separate classification called hate crime? Why aren’t the crimes of assault, robbery, and murder adequate? As one analyst (Sullivan 1999) said: “Was the brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard [a hate crime] in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998 worse than the abduction, rape, and murder of an eight-year-old Laramie girl [not a hate crime] by a pedophile that same year?”

How do you think your social location (race-ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or physical ability) affects your opinion?

The Trouble with Official Statistics

Both the findings of symbolic interactionists (that stereotypes operate when authorities deal with groups such as the Saints and the Roughnecks) and the conclusion of conflict theorists (that the criminal justice system exists to serve the ruling elite) demonstrate the need for caution in interpreting official statistics. Crime statistics do not have an objective, independent existence. They are not like oranges that you pick out in a grocery store. Rather, crime statistics are a human creation. They are produced within a specific social and political context for some particular purpose. Change that context, and the statistics would change.

Consider this: According to official statistics, working-class boys are clearly more delinquent than middle-class boys. Yet, as we have seen, who actually gets arrested for what is affected by social class, a point that has far-reaching implications. As symbolic interactionists point out, the police follow a symbolic system as they enforce the law. Their ideas of “typical criminals” and “typical good citizens,” for example, can color their work. The more a suspect matches their stereotypes (which they call “criminal profile”), the more likely that person is to be arrested.

Police discretion, the decision of whether to arrest someone or even to ignore a matter, is a routine part of police work. Consequently, official crime statistics always reflect these and many other biases.

IN SUM. Reactions to deviants vary from such mild sanctions as frowns and stares to such severe responses as imprisonment and death. Some sanctions are formal—court hearings, for example—although most are informal, as when friends refuse to talk to each other. One sanction is to label someone a deviant, which can have powerful consequences for the person’s life, especially if the label closes off conforming activities and opens deviant ones. The degradation ceremony, in which someone is publicly labeled “not one of us,” is a powerful sanction. So is imprisonment. Official statistics must be viewed with caution, for they reflect biases.

The Medicalization of Deviance: Mental Illness

Another way in which society deals with deviance is to “medicalize” it. Let’s look at what this entails.

Neither Mental Nor Illness? To medicalize something is to make it a medical matter, to classify it as a form of illness that properly belongs in the care of physicians. For the past hundred years or so, especially since the time of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the Viennese physician who founded psychoanalysis, there has been a growing tendency toward the medicalization of deviance. In this view, deviance, including crime, is a sign of mental sickness. Rape, murder, stealing, cheating, and so on are external symptoms of internal disorders, consequences of a confused or tortured mind.

Thomas Szasz (1986, 1996, 1998), a renegade in his profession of psychiatry, argues that mental illnesses are neither mental nor illness. They are simply problem behaviors. Some forms of so-called mental illnesses have organic causes; that is, they are physical illnesses that result in unusual perceptions or behavior. Some depression, for example,
I nodded. When I left, Jamie was pointing to the sky, for, as she told me, she also controlled the flight of airplanes.

To most of us, Jamie’s behavior and thinking are bizarre. They simply do not match any reality we know. Could you or I become like Jamie?

Suppose for a bitter moment that you are homeless and have to live on the streets. You have no money, no place to sleep, no bathroom. You do not know if you are going to eat, much less where. You have no friends or anyone you can trust, and you live in constant fear of rape and other violence. Do you think this might be enough to drive you over the edge?

Consider just the problems involved in not having a place to bathe. (Shelters are often so dangerous that many homeless prefer to sleep in public settings.) At first, you try to wash in the rest rooms of gas stations, bars, the bus station, or a shopping center. But you are dirty, and people stare when you enter and call the management when they see you wash your feet in the sink. You are thrown out and told in no uncertain terms never to come back. So you get dirtier and dirtier. Eventually, you come to think of being dirty as a fact of life. Soon, maybe, you don’t even care. The stares no longer bother you—at least not as much.

No one will talk to you, and you withdraw more and more into yourself. You begin to build a fantasy life. You talk openly to yourself. People stare, but so what? They are anyway. Besides, they are no longer important to you.

Jamie might be mentally ill. Some organic problem, such as a chemical imbalance in her brain, might underlie her behavior. But perhaps not. How long would it take you to exhibit bizarre behaviors if you were homeless—and hopeless? The point is that just being on the streets can cause mental illness—no matter whatever we want to call socially inappropriate behaviors that we find difficult to classify. Homelessness and mental illness are reciprocal: Just as “mental illness” can cause homelessness, so the trials of being homeless, living on cold, hostile streets, can lead to unusual and unacceptable thinking and behaviors.

The Need for a More Humane Approach

As Durkheim (1895/1964:68) pointed out, deviance is inevitable—even in a group of saints.

Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear [invisible] to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary [society].

With deviance inevitable, one measure of a society is how it treats its deviants. Our prisons certainly don’t say much good about U.S. society. Filled with the poor, they are warehouses of the unwanted. They reflect patterns of broad discrimination in our larger society. White-collar criminals continue to get by with a slap on the wrist while street criminals are punished severely. Some deviants, who fail to meet current standards of admission to either prison or mental hospital, take refuge in shelters and cardboard boxes in city streets. Although no one has the answer, it does not take much reflection to see that there are more humane approaches than these.

Because deviance is inevitable, the larger issues are to find ways to protect people from deviant behaviors that are harmful to themselves or others, to tolerate those behaviors that are not harmful, and to develop systems of fairer treatment for deviants. In the absence of fundamental changes that would bring about a truly equitable social system,
CHAPTER 8 DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

The cartoonist’s hyperbole makes an excellent commentary on the social class disparity of our criminal justice system. Not only are the crimes of the wealthy not as likely to come to the attention of authorities as are the crimes of the poor, but when they do, the wealthy can afford legal expertise that the poor cannot.

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THE CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

How Much Is Enough? The Explosion in the Number of U.S. Prisoners

To better understand how remarkable this change is, compare the prison growth with the growth of the U.S. population. Between 1970 and 2000, the U.S. population grew 38 percent, while the U.S. prison population grew 16 times as fast (605 percent). If the U.S. prison population had grown at the same rate as the U.S. population, there would be about 270,000 prisoners, one fifth of the actual number. (Or if the U.S. population had increased at the same rate as that of U.S. prisoners, the U.S. population would be 1,423,000,000—more than the population of China.)

Source: By the author. Based on Statistical Abstract 1995:Table 349; 2005:Table 336. Harrison and Beck 2005:Table 2. The broken line is the author’s estimate.

Inmates in U.S. State Prisons

Characteristics

Age
18–24
25–34
35–44
45–54
55 and older

Race–Ethnicity
African American
White
Latino
Native Americans
Asian Americans

Sex
Male
Female

Marital Status
Never Married
Divorced
REATIONS TO DEVIANCE

Recidivism of U.S. Prisoners
Note: The individuals were not necessarily rearrested for the same crime for which they had originally been in prison.
Source: By the author. Based on Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2002:Table 6.44.

CHAPTER 8 DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Beneath the humor of this cartoon lies a serious point about the high recidivism of U.S. prisoners.
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Executions in the United States
Executions since 1977, when the death penalty was reinstated.
Source: By the author. Based on Statistical Abstract 2005:Table 342.

REATIONS TO DEVIANCE

The Killer Next Door: Serial Murderers in Our Midst

I WAS STUNNED BY THE IMAGES. Television cameras showed the Houston police digging up dozens of bodies in a boat storage shed. Fascinated, I waited impatiently for spring break. A few days later, I drove from Illinois to Houston, where 33-year-old Dean Corll had befriended Elmer Wayne Henley and David Brooks, two teenagers from broken homes. Together, they had killed 27 boys. Elmer and David would pick up young hitchhikers and deliver them to Corll to rape and kill. Sometimes they even brought him their high school classmates.

I talked to one of Elmer’s neighbors, as he was painting his front porch. His 15-year-old son had gone to get a haircut one Saturday morning; it was the last time he had seen his son alive. The police insisted that the boy had run away, and they refused to investigate. On a city map, I plotted the locations of the homes of the local murder victims. Many clustered around the homes of the teenage killers.

I was going to spend my coming sabbatical writing a novel on this case, but, to be frank, I became frightened and didn’t write the book. I didn’t know if I could recover psychologically if I were to immerse myself in grisly details day after day for months on end. One of these details was a piece of plywood, with a hole in each of its four corners. Corll and the boys would spreadeagle their victims handcuffed to the plywood. There, they would torture the boys (no girl victims) for hours. Sometimes, they would even pause to order pizza.
In Ethiopia, the average male can expect to live to age 48, the average female to 50. The Mulletas’ most valuable possession is their oxen. Their wishes for the future: more animals, better seed, and a second set of clothing.

***

In Guadalajara, Mexico, Ambrosio and Carmen Castillo Balderas and their five children, ages 2 to 10, live in a four-room house. They also have a walled courtyard, where the family spends a good deal of time. They even have a washing machine, which is hooked up to a garden hose that runs to a public water main several hundred yards away. Like most Mexicans, they do not have a telephone, nor do they own a car.

Unlike many, however, they own a refrigerator, a stereo, and a recent proud purchase that makes them the envy of their neighbors: a television.

Ambrosio, 29, works full time as a wholesale distributor of produce. He also does welding on the side. The family’s total annual income is $3,600. They spend 57 percent of their income on food. Carmen works about 60 hours a week taking care of their children and keeping their home spotless. The neatness of their home stands in stark contrast to the neighborhood, whose dirt roads are covered in litter. As in many other Mexican neighborhoods, public utilities and roadwork do not keep pace with people’s needs.

The average life expectancy for males in Mexico is 70. For females, it is 76.

The Castillo Balderas’ most valued possessions are their refrigerator and television. Their wish for the future: a truck.

***

Springfield, Illinois, is home to the Kellys—Rick, 36, Patti, 34, Julie, 10, and Michael, 7. The Kellys live in a four-bedroom, 2 1/2 bath, 2,330-square-foot, carpeted ranch-style house, with a fireplace, central heating and air conditioning, a basement, and a two-car garage. Their home is equipped with a refrigerator, washing machine, clothes dryer, dishwasher, garbage disposal, vacuum cleaner, food processor, microwave, and toaster. They also own three radios, a CD player, six telephones (three cellular), four color televisions, a digital camcorder, VCR, DVD player, tape recorder, GameBoy, Nintendo, and a computer, printer, scanner, and fax machine, not to mention two blow dryers, an answering machine, a blender, an electric can opener, and four electric toothbrushes. This count doesn’t include the stereo-radio-CD players in their pickup truck and SUV.

Rick works 40 hours a week as a cable splicer for a telephone company. Patti teaches school part time. Together they make $51,680, plus benefits. The Kellys can choose from among dozens of superstocked supermarkets. They spend $4,431 for food they eat at home, and another $3,014 eating out, a total of 14 percent of their annual income.

In the United States, the average life expectancy is 75 for males, 81 for females.
control, slave states passed laws making it illegal for slaves to hold meetings or to be away from the master's premises without carrying a pass (Lerner 1972). As sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1935/1966:12) noted, "gradually the entire white South became an armed camp to keep Negroes in slavery and to kill the black rebel."

The Civil War did not end legal discrimination. For example, until 1954 the states operated two separate school systems. Even until the 1950s, in order to keep the races from "mixing," it was illegal in Mississippi for a white and an African American to sit together on the same seat of a car! The reason there was no outright ban on blacks and whites being in the same car was to allow whites to employ African American chauffeurs.

**Slavery Today** Slavery has again reared its ugly head, this time in the Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, and Sudan. This region has a long history of slavery, and not until the 1980s was slavery made illegal in Mauritania and Sudan (Ayittey 1998). It took until 2004 for slavery to be banned in Niger (Andersson 2005). Although officially abolished, slavery continues, the topic of the Mass Media box on the next page.

**Caste**

The second system of social stratification is caste. In a **caste system**, status is determined by birth and is lifelong. Someone who is born into a low-status group will always have low status, no matter how much that person may accomplish in life. In sociological terms, a caste system is built on ascribed status (discussed on page 99). Achieved status cannot change an individual's place in this system. Societies with this form of stratification try to make certain that the boundaries between castes remain firm. They practice **endogamy**, marrying within their own group, and prohibit intermarriage. To reduce contact between castes, they even develop elaborate rules about **ritual pollution**, teaching that contact with inferior castes contaminates the superior caste.

**India's Religious Castes**

India provides the best example of a caste system. Based not on race but on religion, India's caste system has existed for almost three thousand years (Chandra 1993a; Berger 2004). India's four main castes are depicted in Table 9.1. These four castes are subdivided into about three thousand subcastes, or *jati*. Each *jati* specializes in some occupation. For example, one subcaste washes clothes, another sharpens knives, and yet another repairs shoes.

The lowest group listed in Table 9.1, the Dalit, are called the "untouchables." If a Dalit touches someone of a higher caste, that person becomes unclean. Even the shadow of an untouchable can contaminate. Early morning and late afternoons are especially risky, for the long shadows of these periods pose a danger to everyone higher up the caste system. Consequently, Dalits are not allowed in some villages during these times. Anyone who becomes contaminated must follow **ablution**, or washing rituals, to restore purity.

Although the Indian government formally abolished the caste system in 1949, centuries-old practices cannot be eliminated so easily, and the caste system remains part of everyday life in India. The ceremonies people follow at births, marriages, and deaths, for example, are dictated by caste (Chandra 1993a). The upper castes dread the upward mobility of the untouchables, whom they detest. On occasion, they even resist it with violence and ritual suicide (Crossette 1996; Filkins 1997; Deliege 2001). From personal observations in India, I can add that in many villages Dalit children are not allowed in the government schools. If they try to enroll, they are beaten. An untouchable summed up his situation in life this way:
What Determines Social Class?

In the early days of sociology, a disagreement arose about the meaning of social class. Let’s compare how Marx and Weber analyzed the issue.

Karl Marx: The Means of Production

As was discussed in Chapter 1, the breakup of the feudal system displaced masses of peasants from their traditional lands and occupations. Fleeing to cities, they competed for the few available jobs. Offered only a pittance for their labor, they wore rags, went hungry, and slept under bridges and in shacks. In contrast, the factory owners built mansions, hired servants, and lived in the lap of luxury. Seeing this great disparity between owners and workers, Karl Marx (1818–1883) concluded that social class depends on a single factor: people’s relationship to the means of production—the tools, factories, land, and investment capital used to produce wealth (Marx 1844/1964; Marx and Engels 1848/1967).

Marx argued that the distinctions people often make among themselves—such as clothing, speech, education, paycheck, the neighborhood they live in, even the car they drive—are superficial matters. These things camouflage the only dividing line that counts. There are just two classes of people, said Marx: the bourgeoisie (capitalists), those who own the means of production, and the proletariat (workers), those who work for the owners. In short, people’s relationship to the means of production, not what clothes they wear or where they live, determines their social class.

Marx did recognize other groups: farmers and peasants; a lumpenproletariat (people living on the margin of society, such as beggars, vagrants, and criminals); and a middle group of self-employed professionals. Marx did not consider these groups social classes, however, for they lack class consciousness—a shared identity based on their position in the means of production. In other words, they did not perceive themselves as exploited workers whose plight could be solved by collective action. Consequently, Marx thought these groups would be insignificant in the future he foresaw—a workers’ revolution that was destined to overthrow capitalism.

The capitalists will grow even wealthier, Marx said, and the hostilities will increase. When workers come to realize that capitalists are the source of their oppression, they will unite and throw off the chains of their oppressors. In a bloody revolution, they will seize the means of production and usher in a classless society, in which no longer will the few grow rich at the expense of the many. What holds back the workers’ unity and their revolution is false class consciousness, workers mistakenly thinking of themselves as capitalists. For example, workers with a few dollars in the bank may forget that they are workers and instead see themselves as investors, or as capitalists who are about to launch a successful business.

The only distinction worth mentioning, then, is whether a person is an owner or a worker. This decides everything else, Marx stressed, for property determines people’s lifestyles, shapes their ideas, and establishes their relationships with one another.

Max Weber: Property, Prestige, and Power

Max Weber (1864–1920) was an outspoken critic of Marx. Weber argued that property is only part of the picture. Social class, he said, is made up of three components: property, prestige, and power (Gerth and Mills 1958; Weber 1922/1968). Some call these the three P’s of social class. (Although Weber used the terms class, status, and power, some sociologists find property, prestige, and power to be clearer terms. To make them even clearer, you may wish to substitute wealth for property.)
army general compared with a private. The general’s decisions affect careers and paychecks, and may even determine life and death.

Positions with greater responsibility also require greater accountability. College presidents and army generals are accountable for their performance—to boards of trustees and to the leader of a country, respectively. How can society motivate highly qualified people to enter its higher-pressure positions? What keeps people from avoiding them and seeking only less demanding jobs?

The answer, said Davis and Moore, is that society offers greater rewards for its more demanding and accountable positions. If these jobs didn’t offer greater prestige, salaries, and benefits, why would anyone strive for them? Thus, a salary of $2 million, a country club membership, a chauffeured limousine, and box-seat season tickets to the local NFL franchise may be necessary in order to get the most highly qualified people to compete for some positions, while a $30,000 salary without fringe benefits is enough to get hundreds of less qualified people to compete for less demanding positions. It is the same with positions that require rigorous training. If you can get the same pay with a high school diploma, why suffer through the many tests and term papers that college requires?

**Tumin’s Critique of Davis and Moore**

Davis and Moore tried to explain why social stratification is universal, not justify social inequality. Nevertheless, their view makes many sociologists uncomfortable, for they see it as coming close to justifying the inequalities in society. Its bottom line seems to be: The people who contribute more to society are paid more, while those who contribute less are paid less.

Melvin Tumin (1953) was the first sociologist to point out what he saw as major flaws in the functionalist position. Here are three of his arguments.

*First*, how do we know that the positions that offer the highest rewards are the most important? Surgeons, for example, earn much more than garbage collectors, but this doesn’t mean that garbage collectors are less important to society. Garbage collectors help to prevent contagious diseases, saving thousands of lives. We need independent methods of measuring importance, and we don’t have them.

*Second*, if stratification worked as Davis and Moore described it, society would be a meritocracy; that is, positions would be awarded on the basis of merit. But is this what we have? The best predictor of who goes to college, for example, is not ability but income: The more a family earns, the more likely their children are to go to college (Conley 2001). This isn’t merit but, rather, inequality built into society. In short, people’s positions in society are based on many reasons other than merit.

*Third*, if social stratification is so functional, it ought to benefit almost everyone. Yet social stratification is dysfunctional for many. Think of the people who could have made valuable contributions to society had they not been born in slums and dropped out of school to take menial jobs to help support their families. Then there are the many who, born female, are assigned “women’s work,” thus ensuring that they do not maximize their mental abilities.

**IN SUM**

Functionalists argue that society works better if its most qualified people hold its most important positions. Therefore, those positions offer higher rewards. For example, to get highly talented people to become surgeons—to undergo years of rigorous training and then cope with life-and-death situations, as well as withstand the Sword of Damocles known as malpractice suits—society must provide a high payoff.
Maintaining Global Stratification

Regardless of how the world’s nations became stratified, why do the same countries remain rich year after year, while the rest stay poor? Let’s look at two explanations of how global stratification is maintained.

Neocolonialism

Sociologist Michael Harrington (1977) argued that colonialism fell out of style and was replaced by neocolonialism. When World War II changed public sentiment about sending soldiers and colonists to exploit weaker countries, the Most Industrialized Nations turned to the international markets as a way to control the Least Industrialized Nations. These powerful nations determine how much they will pay for tin from Bolivia, copper from Peru, coffee from Brazil, and so forth. They also move hazardous industries into the Least Industrialized Nations.

As many of us learn the hard way, owing a large debt and falling behind on payments puts us at the mercy of our creditors. So it is with neocolonialism. The policy of selling weapons and other manufactured goods to the Least Industrialized Nations on credit turns those countries into eternal debtors. The capital they need to develop their own industries goes instead to the debt, which becomes bloated with mounting interest. Keeping these nations in debt forces them to submit to trading terms dictated by the neocolonialists (Carrington 1993; S. Smith 2001).

The oil-rich Middle Eastern nations provide a significant example of neocolonialism. Because of the two Gulf Wars and the terrorism that emanates from this region, it is worth considering Saudi Arabia (Strategic Energy Policy 2001; Prashad 2002). Great Britain founded Saudi Arabia, drawing its boundaries and naming the country after the man (Ibn Saud) that it picked to lead it. The Most Industrialized Nations need low-priced oil to keep their factories running at a profit—and the Saudis provided it. If other nations pumped less—due to the cause, whether revolution or an attempt to raise prices—the Saudis made up the shortfall. For decades, this arrangement brought low oil prices. In return, the United States overlooked human rights violations of the Saudi royal family and propped them up by selling them the latest weapons. Oil shortages have short-circuited this arrangement, however, and have brought higher gasoline prices at the pump.

Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations, companies that operate across many national boundaries, also help to maintain the global dominance of the Most Industrialized Nations. In some cases, multinational corporations exploit the Least Industrialized Nations directly. A prime example is the United Fruit Company, which used to control national and local politics in Central America. It ran these nations as fiefdoms for the company’s own profit while the U.S. Marines waited in the wings in case the company’s interests needed to be backed up.

Most commonly, however, it is simply by doing business that multinational corporations help to maintain international stratification. A single multinational may manage mining operations in several countries, do manufacturing in others, and run marketing networks around the globe. No matter where the profits are made, or where they are reinvested, the primary beneficiaries are the Most Industrialized Nations, especially the one in which the multinational corporation has its world headquarters.

In this game of profits, the elites of the Least Industrialized Nations are essential players (Skilair 2001; Wayne 2003). The multinational corporations funnel money to these elites, who, in return, create what is known as a “favorable business climate”—that is, low taxes
An Alternative Model of Global Stratification

Four Worlds of Development

1. Most Industrialized Nations
2. Industrializing Nations
3. Least Industrializing Nations
4. Oil-rich, nonindustrialized nations

CHAPTER 9 GLOBAL STRATIFICATION

HOW DID THE WORLD'S NATIONS BECOME STRATIFIED? THROUGH THE AUTHOR’S LENS

The Dump People:
Working and Living and Playing in the City Dump of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Social Class in the United States

What Is Social Class?
Wealth
Power
Prestige
Status Inconsistency

Sociological Models of Social Class
Updating Marx
Updating Weber
Social Class in the Automobile Industry

Consequences of Social Class
Physical Health
Mental Health
Family Life
Education
Religion
Politics
Crime and the Criminal Justice System
Social Class and the Changing Economy

Social Mobility
Three Types of Social Mobility
Women in Studies of Social Mobility
Interpreting Statistics on Social Mobility
The Pain of Social Mobility

Poverty
Drawing the Poverty Line
Who Are the Poor?
Children of Poverty
The Dynamics of Poverty
Why Are People Poor?
Welfare Reform
Deferred Gratification
Where Is Horatio Alger? The Social Functions of a Myth

Summary and Review

I was startled by a sight so out of step with the misery and despair that I stopped in midtrack.

Ah, New Orleans, that fabled city on the Mississippi Delta. Images from its rich past floated through my head—pirates, treasure, intrigue. Memories from a pleasant vacation stirred my thoughts—the exotic French Quarter with its enticing aroma of Creole food and sounds of earthy jazz drifting through the evening air.

The shelter for the homeless, however, forced me back to an unwelcome reality. The shelter was the same as those I had visited in the North, West, and East—only dirtier. The dirt, in fact, was the worst that I had encountered during my research, and this shelter was the only one to insist on payment in exchange for sleeping in one of its filthy beds.
Wealth

The primary dimension of social class is wealth, the value of a person's property, minus its debts. Property comes in many forms, such as buildings, land, animals, machinery, cars, stocks, bonds, businesses, furniture, and bank accounts. Income, in contrast, is a flow of money. It can come from a number of sources: usually a business or wages, but also from rent, interest, or royalties, even from alimony, an allowance, or gambling.

Distinguishing Between Wealth and Income

Wealth and income are sometimes confused, but they are not the same. Some people have much wealth and little income. For example, a farmer may own much land (a form of wealth), but bad weather, combined with the high cost of fertilizers and machinery, can cause income to dry up. Others have much income and little wealth. An executive with a $250,000 annual income may be debt-ridden. Below the surface prosperity—the exotic vacations, country club membership, private schools for the children, sports cars, and an elegant home—the credit cards may be maxed out, the sports cars in danger of being repossessed, and the mortgage payments “past due.” Typically, however, wealth and income go together.

How Wealth Is Distributed

Who owns the wealth in the United States? One answer, of course, is “everyone.” Although this statement has some merit, it overlooks how the nation’s wealth is divided among “everyone.” Let’s look at how property and income are distributed among Americans.

Distribution of Property

Overall, Americans are worth a hefty sum, about $33 trillion (Statistical Abstract 2005:Table 696). This includes all real estate, stocks, bonds, and business assets in the entire country. Figure 10.1 shows how highly concentrated property is. Most property, 70 percent, is owned by only 10 percent of the nation’s families. As you can also see from this figure, 1 percent of Americans own one third of all the U.S. assets.

Distribution of Income

How is income distributed in the United States? Economist Paul Samuelson (Samuelson and Nordhaus 2005) put it this way: “If we made an income pyramid out of a child’s blocks, with each layer portraying $500 of income, the peak would be far higher than Mount Everest, but most people would be within a few feet of the ground.”

Actually, if each block were 1/2 inch tall, the typical American would be just 8 feet off the ground, for the average per capita income in the United States is about $32,000 per year. (This average income includes every American, even children.) The typical family climbs a little higher, for most families have more than one worker, and together they average about $52,000 a year. Compared with the few families who are on the mountain’s peak, the average U.S. family would find itself only 13 feet off the ground (Statistical Abstract 2005:Tables 653, 670). Figure 10.2 portrays these differences.

The fact that some Americans enjoy the peaks of Mount Everest while most—despite their efforts—make it only 8 to 13 feet up the slope presents a striking image of income inequality in the United States. Another picture emerges if we divide the U.S. population into five equal groups and rank them from highest to lowest income. As Figure 10.3 shows, the top 20 percent of the population receives almost half (47.6 percent) of all income in the United States. In contrast, the bottom 20 percent of Americans receives only 4.2 percent of the nation’s income.

Two features of Figure 10.3 are outstanding. First, notice how consistent income inequality has remained through the years. The richest fifth have received between 41 and 52 percent of the nation’s income, while the poorest fifth have received between 4 and 5 percent. Second, note the trend toward greater income equality from 1935 to about 1970 or 1980, and its reversal. The richest 20 percent received 52 percent of the nation’s income in 1935, which dropped to 41 percent in 1970 and 1980. Today, the
The display of prestige permeates society. In Los Angeles, some people list their address as Beverly Hills and then add their correct ZIP code. When East Detroit changed its name to East Pointe to play off its proximity to swank Grosse Pointe, property values shot up (Fletcher 1997). Many pay more for clothing that bears a “designer” label. Prestige is often a primary factor in deciding which college to attend. Everyone knows how the prestige of a generic sheepskin from Regional State College compares with a degree from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, or Stanford.

Status symbols vary with social class. Clearly, only the wealthy can afford certain items, such as yachts. But beyond affordability lies a class-based preference in status symbols. For example, people who are striving to be upwardly mobile are quick to flaunt labels, Hummers, Land Rovers, and other material symbols to show that they have “arrived,” while the rich, more secure in their status, often downplay such images. The wealthy see designer labels of the “common” classes as cheap and showy. They, of course, flaunt their own status symbols, such as $50,000 Rolex watches. Like the other classes, they, too, try to outdo one another; they boast about who has the longest yacht or that they have a helicopter fly them to their golf games (Fabrikant 2005).

**Status Inconsistency**

Ordinarily a person has a similar rank on all three dimensions of social class—wealth, power, and prestige. The homeless men in the opening vignette are an example. Such people are status consistent. Sometimes that match is not there, however, and someone has a mixture of high and low ranks, a condition called status inconsistency. This leads to some interesting situations.

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1954, 1966) pointed out that each of us tries to maximize our status, our social ranking. Thus individuals who rank high on one dimension of social class but lower on others want people to judge them on the basis of their highest status. Others, however, who are trying to maximize their own position, may respond to them according to their lowest status.

A classic study of status inconsistency was done by sociologist Ray Gold (1952). He found that after apartment-house janitors unionized, they made more money than some of the tenants whose garbage they carried out. Tenants became upset when they saw their janitors driving more expensive cars than they did. Some attempted to “put the janitor in his place” by making “snotty” remarks to him. For their part, the janitors took delight in knowing “dirty” secrets about the tenants, gleaned from their garbage. Individuals with status inconsistency, then, are likely to confront one frustrating situation after another. They claim the higher status, but are handed the lower one. The sociological significance of this condition, said Lenski (1954), is that such people tend to be more politically radical. An example is college professors. Their prestige is very high, as we saw in Table 10.2, but their incomes are relatively low. Hardly anyone in U.S. society is more educated, and yet college professors don’t even come close to the top of the income pyramid. In line with Lenski’s prediction, the politics of most college professors are left of center. This hypothesis may also hold true among academic departments; that is, the higher a department’s average pay, the less radical are the members’ politics. Teachers in departments of business and medicine, for example, are among the most highly paid in the university—and they also are the most politically conservative.

Instant wealth, the topic of the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page, provides an interesting case of status inconsistency.
The Capitalist Class  Sitting on the top rung of the class ladder is a powerful elite that consists of just 1 percent of the U.S. population. As you saw in Figure 10.1, this capitalist class is so wealthy that it owns one-third of all U.S. assets. This tiny 1 percent is worth more than the entire bottom 90 percent of the country (Beeghley 2005). Power and influence cling to this small elite. They have direct access to top politicians, and their decisions open or close job opportunities for millions of people. They even help to shape the consciousness of the nation: They own our major newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations. They also control the boards of directors of our most influential colleges and universities. The super-rich perpetuate themselves in privilege by passing on their assets and social networks to their children. The capitalist class can be divided into “old” and “new” money. The longer that wealth has been in a family, the more it adds to the family’s prestige. The children of “old” money seldom mingle with “common” folk. Instead, they attend exclusive private schools where they learn views of life that support their privileged position. They don’t work for wages; instead, many study business or enter the field of law so that they can manage the family fortune. These old-money capitalists (also called “blue-bloods”) wield vast power as they use their extensive political connections to protect their huge economic empires (Domhoff 1990, 1999b; Sklair 2001).

At the lower end of the capitalist class are the **nouveau riche**, those who have “new money.” Although they have made fortunes in business, the stock market, inventions, entertainment, or sports, they are outsiders to this upper class. They have not attended the “right” schools, and they don’t share the social networks that come with old money. Not blue-bloods, they aren’t trusted to have the right orientations to life (Burris 2000). Even their “taste” in clothing and status symbols is suspect (Frabrikant 2005). Donald Trump, whose money is “new,” is not listed in the Social Register, the “White Pages” of the blue-bloods that lists the most prestigious and wealthy one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. population. Trump says he “doesn’t care,” but he reveals his true feelings by adding that his heirs will be in it (Kaufman 1996). He is probably right, for the children of the new-moneyed can ascend into the top part of the capitalist class—if they go to the right schools and marry old money.

Many in the capitalist class are philanthropic. They establish foundations and give huge sums to “causes.” Their motivations vary. Some feel guilty because they have so much while others have so little. Others feel a responsibility—even a sense of fate or purpose—to use their money for doing good. Still others seek prestige, acclaim, or fame.

The Upper Middle Class  Of all the classes, the upper middle class is the one most shaped by education. Almost all members of this class have at least a bachelor’s degree, and many have postgraduate degrees in business, management, law, or medicine. These people manage the corporations owned by the capitalist class or else operate their own business or profession. As Gilbert and Kahl (1998) say, these positions may not grant prestige equivalent to a title of nobility in the Germany of Max Weber, but they certainly represent the sign of having “made it” in contemporary America. . . . Their income is sufficient to purchase houses and cars and travel that become public symbols for all to see and for advertisers to portray with words and pictures that connote success, glamour, and high style.

Consequently, parents and teachers push children to prepare for upper-middle-class jobs. About 15 percent of the population belong to this class.
The homeless are the “fallout” of our postindustrial economy. In another era, they would have had plenty of work. They would have tended horses, worked on farms, dug ditches, shoveled coal, and run the factory looms. Some would have explored and settled the West. Others would have been lured to California, Alaska, and Australia by the prospect of gold. Today, however, with no frontiers to settle, factory jobs scarce, and farms that are becoming technological marvels, we have little need for unskilled labor.

Social Class in the Automobile Industry

Let’s use the automobile industry to illustrate the social class ladder. The Fords, for example, own and control a manufacturing and financial empire whose net worth is truly staggering. Their power matches their wealth, for through their multinational corporation their decisions affect production and employment in many countries. The family’s vast fortune, and its accrued power, are now several generations old. Consequently, Ford children go to the “right” schools, know how to spend money in the “right” way, and can be trusted to make family and class interests paramount in life. They are without question at the top level of the capitalist class.

Next in line come top Ford executives. Although they may have an income of several hundred thousand dollars a year (and some, with stock options and bonuses, earn several million dollars annually), most are new to wealth and power. Consequently, they would be classified at the lower end of the capitalist class.

A husband and wife who own a Ford agency are members of the upper middle class. Their income clearly sets them apart from the majority of Americans, and their reputation in the community is enviable. More than likely they also exert greater than-average influence in their community, but their capacity to wield power is limited.

A Ford salesperson, as well as people who work in the dealership office, belongs to the lower middle class. Although there are some exceptional salespeople, even a few who make handsome incomes selling prestigious, expensive cars to the capitalist class, those at a run-of-the-mill Ford agency are lower middle class. Compared with the owners of the agency, their income is less, their education is likely to be less, and their work is less prestigious.

Mechanics who repair customers’ cars are members of the working class. A mechanic who is promoted to supervise the repair shop joins the lower middle class.

Those who “detail” used cars (making them appear newer by washing and polishing the car, painting the tires, spraying “new car scent” into the interior, and so on) belong to the working poor. Their income and education are low, and the prestige accorded to their work minimal. They are laid off when selling slows down.

Ordinarily, the underclass is not represented in the automobile industry. It is conceivable, however, that the agency might hire a member of the underclass to do a specific job such as mowing the grass or cleaning up the used car lot. In general, however, personnel at the agency do not trust members of the underclass and do not want to associate with them—even for a few hours. They prefer to hire someone from the working poor for such jobs.

Consequences of Social Class

Each social class can be thought of as a broad subculture with distinct approaches to life. Social class affects people’s health, family life, and education. It also influences their religion and politics, and even their experiences with crime and the criminal justice system. Let’s look at these consequences of social class, as well as how the new technology is related to social class.
Education
As we saw in Figure 10.5 on page 269, education increases as one goes up the social class ladder. It is not just the amount of education that changes, but also the type of education. Children of the capitalist class bypass public schools. They attend exclusive private schools where they are trained to take a commanding role in society. Prep schools such as Phillips Exeter Academy, Groton School, and Woodberry Forest School teach upper-class values and prepare their students for prestigious universities (Beeghley 2005; Cookson and Persell 2005).

Keenly aware that private schools can be a key to social mobility, some upper middle class parents do their best to get their children into the prestigious preschools that feed into these exclusive prep schools. These preschools cost up to $17,000 a year (Gross 2003). The parents even elicit letters of recommendation for their 2- and 3-year-olds. Such parental expectations and resources are major reasons why children from the more privileged classes are more likely to enter and to graduate from college.

Religion
One area of social life that we might think would be unaffected by social class is religion. (“People are just religious, or they are not. What does social class have to do with it?”) As we shall see in Chapter 18, however, the classes tend to cluster in different denominations. Episcopalians, for example, are more likely to attract the middle and upper classes, while Baptists draw heavily from the lower classes. Patterns of worship also follow class lines: The lower classes are attracted to more expressive worship services and louder music, while the middle and upper classes prefer more “subdued” worship.

Politics
As has been stressed throughout this text, symbolic interactionists emphasize that people perceive events from their own corner in life. Political views are no exception to this principle, and the rich and the poor walk different political paths. The higher that people are on the social class ladder, the more likely they are to vote for Republicans (Burris 2005). In contrast, most members of the working class believe that the government should intervene in the economy to provide jobs and to make citizens financially secure. They are more likely to vote for Democrats. Although the working class is more liberal on economic issues (policies that increase government spending), it is more conservative on social issues (such as opposing abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment) (Lipset 1959; Houtman 1995). People toward the bottom of the class structure are also less likely to be politically active—to campaign for candidates, or even to vote (Soss 1999; Gilbert 2003; Beeghley 2005).

Crime and the Criminal Justice System
If justice is supposed to be blind, it certainly is not when it comes to one’s chances of being arrested (Henslin 2006). In Chapter 8 (pages 211–216), we discussed how the upper and lower social classes have different styles of crime. The white-collar crimes of the more privileged classes are more likely to be dealt with outside the criminal justice system, while the police and courts deal with the street crimes of the lower classes. One consequence of this class standard is that members of the lower classes are more likely to be in prison, on probation, or on parole. In addition, since people tend to commit crimes in or near their own neighborhoods, the lower classes are more likely to be robbed, burglarized, or murdered.
JoAnne Sims, 37, lives in Erie, New York, with her 7-year-old daughter Jamine. JoAnne left welfare, and now earns $6.75 an hour as a cook for Head Start. Her 37-hour week brings $239.75 before deductions. With the help of medical benefits and a mother who provides child care, JoAnne "gets by." She says, "From what I hear, a lot of us who went off welfare are still poor . . . let me tell you, it's not easy." (Peterson 2000)

Conflict theorists have an interesting interpretation of welfare. They say that welfare's purpose is not to help people, but, rather, to maintain a reserve labor force. It is designed to keep the unemployed alive during economic downturns until they are needed during the next economic boom. Reducing the welfare rolls through the 1996 law fits this model, as it occurred during the longest economic boom in U.S. history. Recessions are inevitable, however, and just as inevitable is surging unemployment. In line with conflict theory, we can predict that during the coming recession, welfare rules will be softened—in order to keep the reserve labor force ready for the next time they are needed.

Deferred Gratification

One consequence of a life of deprivation punctuated by emergencies—and of seeing the future as more of the same—is a lack of deferred gratification, giving up things in the present for the sake of greater gains in the future. It is difficult to practice the middle-class virtue if one does not have a middle-class surplus—or middle-class hope. Back in 1967, sociologist Elliot Liebow noted that black streetcorner men did not defer gratification. Their jobs were low-paying and insecure, their lives pitted with emergencies. With the future looking exactly like the present, and any savings they did manage gobbled up by emergencies, it seemed pointless to save for the future. The only thing that made sense from their perspective was to enjoy what they could at that moment. Immediate gratification, then, was not the cause of their poverty, but, rather, its consequence. Cause and consequence loop together, however, for their immediate gratification helped perpetuate their poverty. For another look at this "looping," see the Down-to-Earth Sociology box below, in which I share my personal experiences with poverty.

If both causes are at work, why do sociologists emphasize the structural explanation? Reverse the situation for a moment. Suppose that members of the middle class drove old cars that broke down, faced threats from the utility company to shut off the electricity and heat, and had to make a choice between paying the rent or buying medicine and food and diapers. How long would they practice deferred gratification? Their orientations to life would likely make a sharp U-turn. Sociologists, then, do not view the behaviors of the poor as the cause of their poverty, but, rather, as the result of their poverty. Poor people would welcome the middle-class opportunities that would allow them the chance to practice the middle-class virtue of deferred gratification. Without those opportunities, though, they just can’t afford it.
Sociological Models of Social Class

What models are used to portray the social classes?
Erik Wright developed a four-class model based on Marx: (1) capitalists (owners of large businesses), (2) petty bourgeoisie (small business owners), (3) managers, and (4) workers. Kahl and Gilbert developed a six-class model based on Weber. At the top is the capitalist class. In descending order are the upper middle class, the lower middle class, the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Pp. 266–272.

Consequences of Social Class

How does social class affect people’s lives?
Social class leaves no aspect of life untouched. It affects our chances of benefiting from the new technology, dying early, becoming ill, receiving good health care, and getting divorced. Social class membership also affects child rearing, educational attainment, religious affiliation, political participation, and contact with the criminal justice system. Pp. 272–276.

Social Mobility

What are the three types of social mobility?
The term intergenerational mobility refers to changes in social class from one generation to the next. Structural mobility refers to changes in society that lead large numbers of people to change their social class. Exchange mobility is the movement of large numbers of people from one class to another, with the net result that the relative proportions of the population in the classes remain about the same. Pp. 276–279.

Poverty

Who are the poor?
Poverty is unequally distributed in the United States. Racial–ethnic minorities (except Asian Americans), children, women-headed households, and rural Americans are more likely than others to be poor. The poverty rate of the elderly is less than that of the general population. Pp. 280–284.

Why are people poor?
Some social analysts believe that characteristics of individuals cause poverty. Sociologists, in contrast, examine structural features of society, such as employment opportunities, to find the causes of poverty. Sociologists generally conclude that life orientations are a consequence, not the cause, of people’s position in the social class structure. Pp. 284–287.

How is the Horatio Alger myth functional for society?
The Horatio Alger myth—the belief that anyone can get ahead if only he or she tries hard enough—encourages people to strive to get ahead. It also deflects blame for failure from society to the individual. P. 287.

1. The belief that the United States is the land of opportunity draws millions of legal and illegal immigrants to the United States each year. How do the materials in this chapter support or undermine this belief?
2. How does social class affect people’s lives?
3. What social mobility has your own family experienced? In what ways has this affected your life?