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# *Invitation to Sociology*

PETER L. BERGER

*In this classic essay, Peter Berger gives us a peek at the kinds of people who become sociologists and the things that interest them. He argues that the “fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives.” While looking at familiar things in an unfamiliar way is exciting, it can also make us uncomfortable, because it calls into question our previous understandings of the world. Berger’s “Invitation to Sociology” reflects a well-known sociologist’s passion for the discipline.*

... *The sociologist . . . is a person intensively, endlessly, shamelessly interested in the doings of men. His natural habitat is all the human gathering places of the world, wherever men come together. The sociologist may be interested in many other things. But his consuming interest remains in the world of men, their institutions, their history, their passions. And since he is interested in men, nothing that men do can be altogether tedious for him. He will naturally be interested in the events that engage men’s ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday. He will know reverence, but this reverence will not prevent him from wanting to see and to understand. He may sometimes feel revulsion or contempt. But this also will not deter him from wanting to have his questions answered. The sociologist, in his quest for understanding, moves through the world of men without respect for the usual lines of demarcation. Nobility and*

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“Invitation to Sociology,” by Peter L. Berger, reprinted from *Invitation to Sociology*, 1963, Anchor Books/Doubleday & Company, Inc. Copyright © by Peter L. Berger. pp.1-24. [www.randomhouse.com](http://www.randomhouse.com)

degradation, power and obscurity, intelligence and folly—these are equally *interesting* to him, however unequal they may be in his personal values or tastes. Thus his questions may lead him to all possible levels of society, the best and the least known places, the most respected and the most despised. And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers.

. . . We could say that the sociologist, but for the grace of his academic title, is the man who must listen to gossip despite himself, who is tempted to look through keyholes, to read other people's mail, to open closed cabinets. Before some otherwise unoccupied psychologist sets out now to construct an aptitude test for sociologists on the basis of sublimated voyeurism, let us quickly say that we are speaking merely by way of analogy. Perhaps some little boys consumed with curiosity to watch their maiden aunts in the bathroom later become inveterate sociologists. This is quite uninteresting. What interests us is the curiosity that grips any sociologist in front of a closed door behind which there are human voices. If he is a good sociologist, he will want to open that door, to understand these voices. Behind each closed door he will anticipate some new facet of human life not yet perceived and understood.

The sociologist will occupy himself with matters that others regard as too sacred or as too distasteful for dispassionate investigation. He will find rewarding the company of priests or of prostitutes, depending not on his personal preferences but on the questions he happens to be asking at the moment. He will also concern himself with matters that others may find much too boring. He will be interested in the human interaction that goes with warfare or with great intellectual discoveries, but also in the relations between people employed in a restaurant or between a group of little girls playing with their dolls. His main focus of attention is not the ultimate significance of what men do, but the action in itself, as another example of the infinite richness of human conduct. . . .

In these journeys through the world of men the sociologist will inevitably encounter other professional Peeping Toms. Sometimes



these will resent his presence, feeling that he is poaching on their preserves. In some places the sociologist will meet up with the economist, in others with the political scientist, in yet others with the psychologist or the ethnologist. Yet chances are that the questions that have brought him to these same places are different from the ones that propelled his fellow-trespassers. The sociologist's questions always remain essentially the same: "What are people doing with each other here?" "What are their relationships to each other?" "How are these relationships organized in institutions?" "What are the collective ideas that move men and institutions?" In trying to answer these questions in specific instances, the sociologist will, of course, have to deal with economic or political matters, but he will do so in a way rather different from that of the economist or the political scientist. The scene that he contemplates is the same human scene that these other scientists concern themselves with. But the sociologist's angle of vision is different. When this is understood, it becomes clear that it makes little sense to try to stake out a special enclave within which the sociologist will carry on business in his own right. . . . There is, however, one traveler whose path the sociologist will cross more often than anyone else's on his journeys. This is the historian. Indeed, as soon as the sociologist turns from the present to the past, his preoccupations are very hard indeed to distinguish from those of the historian. However, we shall leave this relationship to the later part of our considerations. Suffice it to say here that the sociological journey will be much impoverished unless it is punctuated frequently by conversation with that other particular traveler.

Any intellectual activity derives excitement from the moment it becomes a trail of discovery. In some fields of learning this is the discovery of worlds previously unthought and unthinkable. . . . The excitement of sociology is usually of a different sort. Sometimes, it is true, the sociologist penetrates into worlds that had previously been quite unknown to him—for instance, the world of crime, or the world of some bizarre religious sect, or the world fashioned by the exclusive concerns of some group such as medical specialists or military leaders or advertising executives. However, much of the time the

sociologist moves in sectors of experience that are familiar to him and to most people in his society. He investigates communities, institutions and activities that one can read about every day in the newspapers. Yet there is another excitement of discovery beckoning in his investigations. It is not the excitement of coming upon the totally unfamiliar, but rather the excitement of finding the familiar becoming transformed in its meaning. The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives. This also constitutes a transformation of consciousness. Moreover, this transformation is more relevant existentially than that of many other intellectual disciplines, because it is more difficult to segregate in some special compartment of the mind. The astronomer does not live in the remote galaxies, and the nuclear physicist can, outside his laboratory, eat and laugh and marry and vote without thinking about the insides of the atom. The geologist looks at rocks only at appropriate times, and the linguist speaks English with his wife. The sociologist lives in society, on the job and off it. His own life, inevitably, is part of his subject matter. Men being what they are, sociologists too manage to segregate their professional insights from their everyday affairs. But it is a rather difficult feat to perform in good faith.

The sociologist moves in the common world of men, close to what most of them would call real. The categories he employs in his analyses are only refinements of the categories by which other men live—power, class, status, race, ethnicity. As a result, there is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology.

Let us take a specific example. Imagine a sociology class in a Southern college where almost all the students are white Southerners. Imagine a lecture on the subject of the racial system of the South. The lecturer is talking here of matters that have been familiar to his students from the time of their infancy. Indeed, it may be that they are much more familiar with the minutiae of this system than he is. They are quite bored as a result. It seems to them that he is only using more pretentious words to describe what they already know. Thus he may use the term “caste,” only commonly used now by American sociologists to describe the Southern racial system. But in explaining the term he shifts to traditional Hindu society, to make it clearer. He then goes on to analyze the magical beliefs inherent in caste tabus, the social dynamics of commensalism and connubium, the economic interests concealed within the system, the way in which religious beliefs relate to the tabus, the effects of the caste system upon the industrial development of the society and vice versa—all in India. But suddenly India is not very far away at all. The lecture then goes back to its Southern theme. The familiar now seems not quite so familiar any more. Questions are raised that are new, perhaps raised angrily, but raised all the same. And at least some of the students have begun to understand that there are functions involved in this business of race that they have not read about in the newspapers (at least not those in their hometowns) and that their parents have not told them—partly, at least, because neither the newspapers nor the parents knew about them.

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem. This too is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole.

Anthropologists use the term “culture shock” to describe the impact of a totally new culture upon a newcomer. In an extreme instance such shock will be experienced by the Western explorer who is told, halfway through dinner, that he is eating the nice old lady he had been chatting with the previous day—a shock with predictable

physiological if not moral consequences. Most explorers no longer encounter cannibalism in their travels today. However, the first encounters with polygamy or with puberty rites or even with the way some nations drive their automobiles can be quite a shock to an American visitor. With the shock may go not only disapproval or disgust but a sense of excitement that things can *really* be that different from what they are at home. To some extent, at least, this is the excitement of any first travel abroad. The experience of sociological discovery could be described as “culture shock” minus geographical displacement. In other words, the sociologist travels at home—with shocking results. He is unlikely to find that he is eating a nice old lady for dinner. But the discovery, for instance, that his own church has considerable money invested in the missile industry or that a few blocks from his home there are people who engage in cultic orgies may not be drastically different in emotional impact. Yet we would not want to imply that sociological discoveries are always or even usually outrageous to moral sentiment. Not at all. What they have in common with exploration in distant lands, however, is the sudden illumination of new and unsuspected facets of human existence in society. . . .

People who like to avoid shocking discoveries, who prefer to believe that society is just what they were taught in Sunday School, who like the safety of the rules and the maxims of what Alfred Schuetz has called the “world-taken-for-granted,” should stay away from sociology. People who feel no temptation before closed doors, who have no curiosity about human beings, who are content to admire scenery without wondering about the people who live in those houses on the other side of that river, should probably also stay away from sociology. They will find it unpleasant or, at any rate, unrewarding. People who are interested in human beings only if they can change, convert or reform them should also be warned, for they will find sociology much less useful than they hoped. And people whose interest is mainly in their own conceptual constructions will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing

more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.

. . . To be sure, sociology is an individual pastime in the sense that it interests some men and bores others. Some like to observe human beings, others to experiment with mice. The world is big enough to hold all kinds and there is no logical priority for one interest as against another. But the word “pastime” is weak in describing what we mean. Sociology is more like a passion. The sociological perspective is more like a demon that possesses one, that drives one compellingly, again and again, to the questions that are its own. An introduction to sociology is, therefore, an invitation to a very special kind of passion. . . .



## *Questions*

1. According to Berger, what is the role of curiosity in sociological studies?
2. What do sociologists study?
3. Why did Berger argue that sociology can be dangerous? If sociology can be viewed as dangerous, to what extent might sociologists also be viewed as dangerous?
4. What does Berger mean when he says that “things are not what they seem. . . . Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole.” Provide an example to illustrate Berger’s statement.

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# Body Ritual Among the Nacirema

HORACE MINER

University of Michigan

*As many sociologists will tell you, cross-cultural research is difficult but exciting. Not only might you encounter unusual or disturbing behavior during your research, but you may also find yourself in danger or face-to-face with ethnocentrism—your own, that is. It is easy to judge the rituals, behavior, and general way of life of other peoples as bizarre, strange, or inferior compared to our own. In this reading, Horace Miner lets us confront these issues by allowing us a peek into the lives of the mysterious Nacirema tribe. As you read, note the way the tribe members live, the things that are important to them, and the ways in which they get others to conform to socially approved, but rather odd, behaviors. Would you want to live among the Nacirema?*

The anthropologist has become so familiar with the diversity of ways in which different peoples behave in similar situations that he is not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs. In fact, if all of the logically possible combinations of behavior have not been found somewhere in the world, he is apt to suspect that they must be present in some yet undescribed tribe. This point has, in fact, been expressed with respect to clan organization by Murdock (1949:71). In this light, the magical beliefs and practices of the Nacirema present such unusual aspects that it seems desirable to

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“Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” by Horace Miner, reprinted from *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, No. 3, June 1956. pp. 503–507.

describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go.

Professor Linton first brought the ritual of the Nacirema to the attention of anthropologists twenty years ago (1936:326), but the culture of this people is still very poorly understood. They are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, although tradition states that they came from the east. According to Nacirema mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero, Notgnihsaw, who is otherwise known for two great feats of strength—the throwing of a piece of wampum across the river Po-To-Mac and the chopping down of a cherry tree in which the Spirit of Truth resided.

Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy which has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern in the ethos of the people. While such a concern is certainly not unusual, its ceremonial aspects and associated philosophy are unique.

The fundamental belief underlying the whole system appears to be that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency is to debility and disease. Incarcerated in such a body, man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use of the powerful influences of ritual and ceremony. Every household has one or more shrines devoted to this purpose. The more powerful individuals in the society have several shrines in their houses and, in fact, the opulence of a house is often referred to in terms of the number of such ritual centers it possesses. Most houses are of wattle and daub construction, but the shrine rooms of the more wealthy are walled with stone. Poorer families imitate the rich by applying pottery plaques to their shrine walls.

While each family has at least one such shrine, the rituals associated with it are not family ceremonies but are private and secret. The

rites are normally only discussed with children, and then only during the period when they are being initiated into these mysteries. I was able, however, to establish sufficient rapport with the natives to examine these shrines and to have the rituals described to me.

The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized practitioners. The most powerful of these are the medicine men, whose assistance must be rewarded with substantial gifts. However, the medicine men do not provide the curative potions for their clients, but decide what the ingredients should be and then write them down in an ancient and secret language. This writing is understood only by the medicine men and by the herbalists who, for another gift, provide the required charm.

The charm is not disposed of after it has served its purpose, but is placed in the charm-box of the household shrine. As these magical materials are specific for certain ills, and the real or imagined maladies of the people are many, the charm-box is usually full to overflowing. The magical packets are so numerous that people forget what their purposes were and fear to use them again. While the natives are very vague on this point, we can only assume that the idea in retaining all the old magical materials is that their presence in the charm-box, before which the body rituals are conducted, will in some way protect the worshipper.

Beneath the charm-box is a small font. Each day every member of the family, in succession, enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm-box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief rite of ablution. The holy waters are secured from the Water Temple of the community, where the priests conduct elaborate ceremonies to make the liquid ritually pure.

In the hierarchy of magical practitioners, and below the medicine men in prestige, are specialists whose designation is best translated "holy-mouth-men." The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is



believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them. They also believe that a strong relationship exists between oral and moral characteristics. For example, there is a ritual ablution of the mouth for children which is supposed to improve their moral fiber.

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth-rite. Despite the fact that these people are so punctilious about care of the mouth, this rite involves a practice which strikes the uninitiated stranger as revolting. It was reported to me that the ritual consists of inserting a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures.

In addition to the private mouth-rite, the people seek out a holy-mouth-man once or twice a year. These practitioners have an impressive set of paraphernalia, consisting of a variety of augers, awls, probes, and prods. The use of these objects in the exorcism of the evils of the mouth involves almost unbelievable ritual torture of the client. The holy-mouth-man opens the client's mouth and, using the above-mentioned tools, enlarges any holes which decay may have created in the teeth. Magical materials are put into these holes. If there are no naturally occurring holes in the teeth, large sections of one or more teeth are gouged out so that the supernatural substance can be applied. In the client's view, the purpose of these ministrations is to arrest decay and to draw friends. The extremely sacred and traditional character of the rite is evident in the fact that the natives return to the holy-mouth-men year after year, despite the fact that their teeth continue to decay.

It is to be hoped that, when a thorough study of the Nacirema is made, there will be careful inquiry into the personality structure of these people. One has but to watch the gleam in the eye of a holy-mouth-man, as he jabs an awl into an exposed nerve, to suspect that a certain amount of sadism is involved. If this can be established, a very interesting pattern emerges, for most of the population shows

definite masochistic tendencies. It was to these that Professor Linton referred in discussing a distinctive part of the daily body ritual which is performed only by men. This part of the rite involves scraping and lacerating the surface of the face with a sharp instrument. Special women's rites are performed only four times during each lunar month, but what they lack in frequency is made up in barbarity. As part of this ceremony, women bake their heads in small ovens for about an hour. The theoretically interesting point is that what seems to be a preponderantly masochistic people have developed sadistic specialists.

The medicine men have an imposing temple, or *latipso*, in every community of any size. The more elaborate ceremonies required to treat very sick patients can only be performed at this temple. These ceremonies involve not only the thaumaturge but a permanent group of vestal maidens who move sedately about the temple chambers in distinctive costume and headdress.

The *latipso* ceremonies are so harsh that it is phenomenal that a fair proportion of the really sick natives who enter the temple ever recover. Small children whose indoctrination is still incomplete have been known to resist attempts to take them to the temple because "that is where you go to die." Despite this fact, sick adults are not only willing but eager to undergo the protracted ritual purification, if they can afford to do so. No matter how ill the supplicant or how grave the emergency, the guardians of many temples will not admit a client if he cannot give a rich gift to the custodian. Even after one has gained admission and survived the ceremonies, the guardians will not permit the neophyte to leave until he makes still another gift.

The supplicant entering the temple is first stripped of all his or her clothes. In everyday life the Nacirema avoids exposure of his body and its natural functions. Bathing and excretory acts are performed only in the secrecy of the household shrine, where they are ritualized as part of the body-rites. Psychological shock results from the fact that body secrecy is suddenly lost upon entry into the *latipso*. A man, whose own wife has never seen him in an excretory act, suddenly finds himself naked and assisted by a vestal maiden while

he performs his natural functions into a sacred vessel. This sort of ceremonial treatment is necessitated by the fact that the excreta are used by a diviner to ascertain the course and nature of the client's sickness. Female clients, on the other hand, find their naked bodies are subjected to the scrutiny, manipulation and prodding of the medicine men.

Few supplicants in the temple are well enough to do anything but lie on their hard beds. The daily ceremonies, like the rites of the holy-mouth-men, involve discomfort and torture. With ritual precision, the vestals awaken their miserable charges each dawn and roll them about on their beds of pain while performing ablutions, in the formal movements of which the maidens are highly trained. At other times they insert magic wands in the supplicant's mouth or force him to eat substances which are supposed to be healing. From time to time the medicine men come to their clients and jab magically treated needles into their flesh. The fact that these temple ceremonies may not cure, and may even kill the neophyte, in no way decreases the people's faith in the medicine men.

There remains one other kind of practitioner, known as a "listener." This witch-doctor has the power to exorcise the devils that lodge in the heads of people who have been bewitched. The Nacirema believe that parents bewitch their own children. Mothers are particularly suspected of putting a curse on children while teaching them the secret body rituals. The counter-magic of the witch-doctor is unusual in its lack of ritual. The patient simply tells the "listener" all his troubles and fears, beginning with the earliest difficulties he can remember. The memory displayed by the Nacirema in these exorcism sessions is truly remarkable. It is not uncommon for the patient to bemoan the rejection he felt upon being weaned as a babe, and a few individuals even see their troubles going back to the traumatic effects of their own birth.

In conclusion, mention must be made of certain practices which have their base in native esthetics but which depend upon the pervasive aversion to the natural body and its functions. There are ritual fasts to make fat people thin and ceremonial feasts to make thin peo-

ple fat. Still other rites are used to make women's breasts larger if they are small, and smaller if they are large. General dissatisfaction with breast shape is symbolized in the fact that the ideal form is virtually outside the range of human variation. A few women afflicted with almost inhuman hypermammary development are so idolized that they make a handsome living by simply going from village to village and permitting the natives to stare at them for a fee.

Reference has already been made to the fact that excretory functions are ritualized, routinized, and relegated to secrecy. Natural reproductive functions are similarly distorted. Intercourse is taboo as a topic and scheduled as an act. Efforts are made to avoid pregnancy by the use of magical materials or by limiting intercourse to certain phases of the moon. Conception is actually very infrequent. When pregnant, women dress so as to hide their condition. Parturition takes place in secret, without friends or relatives to assist, and the majority of women do not nurse their infants.

Our review of the ritual life of the Nacirema has certainly shown them to be a magic-ridden people. It is hard to understand how they have managed to exist so long under the burdens which they have imposed upon themselves. But even such exotic customs as these take on real meaning when they are viewed with the insight provided by Malinowski when he wrote (1948:70):

Looking from far and above, from our high places of safety in the developed civilization, it is easy to see all the crudity and irrelevance of magic. But without its power and guidance early man could not have mastered his practical difficulties as he has done, nor could man have advanced to the higher stages of civilization.

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## *Questions*

1. We might find many things strange about the Nacirema. What might the Nacirema find strange about us? List three possibilities and explain your choices.
2. Use the reading to explain and cite examples of the following concepts: value, norm, and sanction.
3. What benefit might we derive from studying the Nacirema way of life?
4. Miner studied the Nacirema from an anthropological perspective; as a sociologist who wants to understand the Nacirema, what would you do differently in studying them?
5. What role does the listener play in Nacirema culture?
6. Explain the role of magic in the daily lives of the Nacirema.
7. Many readers finish this article without realizing that “Nacirema” is “American” spelled backwards. Why did Miner write about Americans as if we were a strange tribe? What insights do we gain about ourselves by taking this perspective?

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# *The Way We Weren't: The Myth and Reality of the "Traditional" Family*

STEPHANIE COONTZ

*Many politicians and religious leaders have urged a return to the "traditional" family. However, historian Stephanie Coontz argues that this supposed "traditional" family is actually mythological. In this article, she provides snapshots of family life from colonial to present times. By doing so, she reveals that none of these family structures protected people from inequalities based on race, class, gender, or interpersonal conflict.*

...

## ☉ Colonial Families

American families always have been diverse, and the male breadwinner-female homemaker, nuclear ideal that most people associate with "the" traditional family has predominated for only a small portion of our history. In colonial America, several types of families coexisted or competed. Native American kinship systems subordinated the nuclear family to a much larger network of marital alliances and kin obligations, ensuring that no single family was forced to go it alone.

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"The Way We Weren't: The Myth and Reality of the 'Traditional' Family," by Stephanie Coontz, reprinted from *National Forum: The Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, Summer 1995, pp. 11-14. Copyright © 1995 by Stephanie Coontz.

Wealthy settler families from Europe, by contrast, formed independent households that pulled in labor from poorer neighbors and relatives, building their extended family solidarities on the backs of truncated families among indentured servants, slaves, and the poor. Even wealthy families, though, often were disrupted by death; a majority of colonial Americans probably spent some time in a step-family. Meanwhile, African Americans, denied the legal protection of marriage and parenthood, built extensive kinship networks and obligations through fictive kin ties, ritual co-parenting or godparenting, adoption of orphans, and complex naming patterns designed to preserve family links across space and time.

The dominant family values of colonial days left no room for sentimentalizing childhood. Colonial mothers, for example, spent far less time doing child care than do modern working women, typically delegating this task to servants or older siblings. Among white families, patriarchal authority was so absolute that disobedience by wife or child was seen as a small form of treason, theoretically punishable by death, and family relations were based on power, not love.

## ☺ *The Nineteenth-Century Family*

With the emergence of a wage-labor system and a national market in the first third of the nineteenth century, white middle-class families became less patriarchal and more child-centered. The ideal of the male breadwinner and the nurturing mother now appeared. But the emergence of domesticity for middle-class women and children depended on its absence among the immigrant, working class, and African American women or children who worked as servants, grew the cotton, or toiled in the textile mills to free middle-class wives from the chores that had occupied their time previously.

Even in the minority of nineteenth-century families who could afford domesticity, though, emotional arrangements were quite different from nostalgic images of “traditional” families. Rigid insistence on separate spheres for men and women made male-female relations

extremely stilted, so that women commonly turned to other women, not their husbands, for their most intimate relations. The idea that all of one's passionate feelings should go toward a member of the opposite sex was a twentieth-century invention—closely associated with the emergence of a mass consumer society and promulgated by the very film industry that “traditionalists” now blame for undermining such values.

## ☺ *Early Twentieth-Century Families*

Throughout the nineteenth century, at least as much divergence and disruption in the experience of family life existed as does today, even though divorce and unwed motherhood were less common. Indeed, couples who marry today have a better chance of celebrating a fortieth wedding anniversary than at any previous time in history. The life cycles of nineteenth-century youth (in job entry, completion of schooling, age at marriage, and establishment of separate residence) were far more diverse than they became in the early twentieth-century. At the turn of the century a higher proportion of people remained single for their entire lives than at any period since. Not until the 1920s did a bare majority of children come to live in a male breadwinner-female homemaker family, and even at the height of this family form in the 1950s, only 60% of American children spent their entire childhoods in such a family.

From about 1900 to the 1920s, the growth of mass production and emergence of a public policy aimed at establishing a family wage led to new ideas about family self-sufficiency, especially in the white middle class and a privileged sector of the working class. The resulting families lost their organic connection to intermediary units in society such as local shops, neighborhood work cultures and churches, ethnic associations, and mutual-aid organizations.

As families related more directly to the state, the market, and the mass media, they also developed a new cult of privacy, along with heightened expectations about the family's role in fostering individual



fulfillment. New family values stressed the early independence of children and the romantic coupling of husband and wife, repudiating the intense same-sex ties and mother-infant bonding of earlier years as unhealthy. From this family we get the idea that women are sexual, that youth is attractive, and that marriage should be the center of our emotional fulfillment.

Even aside from its lack of relevance to the lives of most immigrants, Mexican Americans, African Americans, rural families, and the urban poor, big contradictions existed between image and reality in the middle-class family ideal of the early twentieth century. This is the period when many Americans first accepted the idea that the family should be sacred from outside intervention; yet the development of the private, self-sufficient family depended on state intervention in the economy, government regulation of parent-child relations, and state-directed destruction of class and community institutions that hindered the development of family privacy. Acceptance of a youth and leisure culture sanctioned early marriage and raised expectations about the quality of married life, but also introduced new tensions between the generations and new conflicts between husband and wife over what were adequate levels of financial and emotional support.

The nineteenth-century middle-class ideal of the family as a refuge from the world of work was surprisingly modest compared with emerging twentieth-century demands that the family provide a whole alternative world of satisfaction and intimacy to that of work and neighborhood. Where a family succeeded in doing so, people might find pleasures in the home never before imagined. But the new ideals also increased the possibilities for failure: America has had the highest divorce rate in the world since the turn of the century.

In the 1920s, these contradictions created a sense of foreboding about “the future of the family” that was every bit as widespread and intense as today’s. Social scientists and popular commentators of the time hearkened back to the “good old days,” bemoaning the sexual revolution, the fragility of nuclear family ties, the cult of youthful romance, the decline of respect for grandparents, and the threat of the

“New Woman.” But such criticism was sidetracked by the stock-market crash, the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the advent of World War II.

Domestic violence escalated during the Depression, while murder rates were as high in the 1930s as in the 1980s. Divorce rates fell, but desertion increased and fertility plummeted. The war stimulated a marriage boom, but by the late 1940s one in every three marriages was ending in divorce.

## ☺ The 1950s Family

At the end of the 1940s, after the hardships of the Depression and war, many Americans revived the nuclear family ideals that had so disturbed commentators during the 1920s. The unprecedented post-war prosperity allowed young families to achieve consumer satisfactions and socioeconomic mobility that would have been inconceivable in earlier days. The 1950s family that resulted from these economic and cultural trends, however, was hardly “traditional.” Indeed it is best seen as a historical aberration. For the first time in 100 years, divorce rates dropped, fertility soared, the gap between men’s and women’s job and educational prospects widened (making middle-class women more dependent on marriage), and the age of marriage fell—to the point that teenage birth rates were almost double what they are today.

Admirers of these very *nontraditional* 1950s family forms and values point out that household arrangements and gender roles were less diverse in the 1950s than today, and marriages more stable. But this was partly because diversity was ruthlessly suppressed and partly because economic and political support systems for socially-sanctioned families were far more generous than they are today. Real wages rose more in any single year of the 1950s than they did in the entire decade of the 1980s; the average thirty-year-old man could buy a median-priced home on 15 to 18% of his income. The government funded public investment, home ownership, and job creation at a rate more than triple that of the past two decades, while 40% of young

men were eligible for veteran's benefits. Forming and maintaining families was far easier than it is today.

Yet the stability of these 1950s families did not guarantee good outcomes for their members. Even though most births occurred within wedlock, almost a third of American children lived in poverty during the 1950s, a higher figure than today. More than 50% of black married-couple families were poor. Women were often refused the right to serve on juries, sign contracts, take out credit cards in their own names, or establish legal residence. Wife-battering rates were low, but that was because wife-beating was seldom counted as a crime. Most victims of incest, such as Miss America of 1958, kept the secret of their fathers' abuse until the 1970s or 1980s, when the women's movement became powerful enough to offer them the support denied them in the 1950s.

## ☺ *The Post-1950s Family*

In the 1960s, the civil rights, antiwar, and women's liberation movements exposed the racial, economic, and sexual injustices that had been papered over by the Ozzie and Harriet images on television. Their activism made older kinds of public and private oppression unacceptable and helped create the incomplete, flawed, but much-needed reforms of the Great Society. Contrary to the big lie of the past decade that such programs caused our current family dilemmas, those antipoverty and social justice reforms helped overcome many of the family problems that prevailed in the 1950s.

In 1964, after 14 years of unrivaled family stability and economic prosperity, the poverty rate was still 19%; in 1969, after five years of civil rights activism, the rebirth of feminism, and the institution of nontraditional if relatively modest government welfare programs, it was down to 12%, a low that has not been seen again since the social welfare cutbacks began in the late 1970s. In 1965, 20% of American children still lived in poverty; within five years, that had fallen to 15%. Infant mortality was cut in half between 1965 and 1980. The gap in nutrition between low-income Americans and other

Americans narrowed significantly, as a direct result of food stamp and school lunch programs. In 1963, 20% of Americans living below the poverty line had *never* been examined by a physician; by 1970 this was true of only 8% of the poor.

Since 1973, however, real wages have been falling for most Americans. Attempts to counter this through tax revolts and spending freezes have led to drastic cutbacks in government investment programs. Corporations also spend far less on research and job creation than they did in the 1950s and 1960s, though the average compensation to executives has soared. The gap between rich and poor, according to the April 17, 1995, *New York Times*, is higher in the United States than in any other industrial nation.

## ☺ Family Stress

These inequities are not driven by changes in family forms, contrary to ideologues who persist in confusing correlations with causes; but they certainly exacerbate such changes, and they tend to bring out the worst in *all* families. The result has been an accumulation of stresses on families, alongside some important expansions of personal options. Working couples with children try to balance three full-time jobs, as employers and schools cling to policies that assume every employee has a “wife” at home to take care of family matters. Divorce and remarriage have allowed many adults and children to escape from toxic family environments, yet our lack of social support networks and failure to forge new values for sustaining intergenerational obligations have let many children fall through the cracks in the process.

Meanwhile, young people find it harder and harder to form or sustain families. According to an Associated Press report of April 25, 1995, the median income of men aged 25 to 34 fell by 26% between 1972 and 1994, while the proportion of such men with earnings below the poverty level for a family of four more than doubled to 32%. The figures are even worse for African American and Latino men. Poor individuals are twice as likely to divorce as more affluent

ones, three to four times less likely to marry in the first place, and five to seven times more likely to have a child out of wedlock.

As conservatives insist, there is a moral crisis as well as an economic one in modern America: a pervasive sense of social alienation, new levels of violence, and a decreasing willingness to make sacrifices for others. But romanticizing “traditional” families and gender roles will not produce the changes in job structures, work policies, child care, medical practice, educational preparation, political discourse, and gender inequities that would permit families to develop moral and ethical systems relevant to 1990s realities.

America needs more than a revival of the narrow family obligations of the 1950s, whose (greatly exaggerated) protection for white, middle-class children was achieved only at tremendous cost to the women in those families and to all those who could not or would not aspire to the Ozzie and Harriet ideal. We need a concern for children that goes beyond the question of whether a mother is waiting with cookies when her kids come home from school. We need a moral language that allows us to address something besides people’s sexual habits. We need to build values and social institutions that can reconcile people’s needs for independence with their equally important rights to dependence, and surely we must reject older solutions that involved balancing these needs on the backs of women. We will not find our answers in nostalgia for a mythical “traditional family.”



## *Questions*

1. Describe how children and childhood were perceived in colonial times. How does this perception compare to our view of children today? What changes in society caused us to change our perspective?
2. If you were a white female, in which historical period would you choose to live? Which historical period would you select if you were African American? Explain why you made these choices.

3. According to Coontz, what puts stress on families today? What can we do to relieve some of this stress?
4. Suppose that an editorial appearing in your local newspaper called for a return to the traditional family values of the 1950s as a way to save the family. Write a letter to the editor explaining why this plea is neither feasible nor desirable.

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# The Power Elite

C. WRIGHT MILLS

*“The power elite” is an expression clearly associated with the work of C. Wright Mills. Today, the term is widely used in organizational sociology, political sociology, and other areas. It also has connotations of social conflict, which is not necessarily what Mills had in mind. As you read this piece, think about which sociological perspective the power elite would most closely align with theoretically and whether Mills’s original conceptualization is accurately portrayed in more contemporary works.*

Except for the unsuccessful Civil War, changes in the power system of the United States have not involved important challenges to its basic legitimations. Even when they have been decisive enough to be called “revolutions,” they have not involved the “resort to the guns of a cruiser, the dispersal of an elected assembly by bayonets, or the mechanisms of a police state.”<sup>1</sup> Nor have they involved, in any decisive way, any ideological struggle to control masses. Changes in the American structure of power have generally come about by institutional shifts in the relative positions of the political, the economic, and the military orders.

...

## ☉ The Nature of the Power Elite

We study history, it has been said, to rid ourselves of it, and the history of the power elite is a clear case for which this maxim is correct. Like the tempo of American life in general, the long-term trends of

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<sup>1</sup>“The Power Elite,” by C. Wright Mills, reprinted from *The Power Elite*, 1956. Copyright © by Oxford University Press. pp. 269–297.

the power structure have been greatly speeded up since World War II, and certain newer trends within and between the dominant institutions have also set the shape of the power elite. . . .

I. In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the political order, that clue is the decline of politics as genuine and public debate of alternative decisions—with nationally responsible and policy-coherent parties and with autonomous organizations connecting the lower and middle levels of power with the top levels of decision. America is now in considerable part more a formal political democracy than a democratic social structure, and even the formal political mechanics are weak.

The long-time tendency of business and government to become more intricately and deeply involved with each other has, in the fifth epoch, reached a new point of explicitness. The two cannot now be seen clearly as two distinct worlds. It is in terms of the executive agencies of the state that the rapprochement has proceeded most decisively. The growth of the executive branch of the government, with its agencies that patrol the complex economy, does not mean merely the “enlargement of government” as some sort of autonomous bureaucracy: it has meant the ascendancy of the corporation’s man as a political eminence. . . .

II. In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the enlarged and military state, that clue becomes evident in the military ascendancy. The warlords have gained decisive political relevance, and the military structure of America is now in considerable part a political structure. The seemingly permanent military threat places a premium on the military and upon their control of men, material, money, and power; virtually all political and economic actions are now judged in terms of military definitions of reality: the higher warlords have ascended to a firm position within the power elite of the fifth epoch. . . .

III. In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the economic order, that clue is the fact that the economy is at once a permanent-war economy and a private-corporation economy. American capitalism is now in considerable part a military capitalism,



and the most important relation of the big corporation to the state rests on the coincidence of interests between military and corporate needs, as defined by warlords and corporate rich. Within the elite as a whole, this coincidence of interest between the high military and the corporate chieftains strengthens both of them and further subordinates the role of the merely political men. Not politicians, but corporate executives, sit with the military and plan the organization of war effort. . . .

The power elite is composed of political, economic, and military men, but this instituted elite is frequently in some tension: it comes together only on certain coinciding points and only on certain occasions of "crisis." In the long peace of the nineteenth century, the military were not in the high councils of state, not of the political directorate, and neither were the economic men—they made raids upon the state but they did not join its directorate. During the thirties, the political man was ascendant. Now the military and the corporate men are in top positions.

Of the three types of circle that compose the power elite today, it is the military that has benefited the most in its enhanced power, although the corporate circles have also become more explicitly entrenched in the more public decision-making circles. It is the professional politician that has lost the most, so much that in examining the events and decisions, one is tempted to speak of a political vacuum in which the corporate rich and the high warlord, in their coinciding interest, rule.

It should not be said that the three "take turns" in carrying the initiative, for the mechanics of the power elite are not often as deliberate as that would imply. At times, of course, it is—as when political men, thinking they can borrow the prestige of generals, find that they must pay for it, or, as when during big slumps, economic men feel the need of a politician at once safe and possessing vote appeal. Today all three are involved in virtually all widely ramifying decisions. Which of the three types seems to lead depends upon "the tasks of the period" as they, the elite, define them. Just now, these tasks center upon "defense" and international affairs. Accordingly, as we have

seen, the military are ascendant in two senses: as personnel and as justifying ideology. That is why, just now, we can most easily specify the unity and the shape of the power elite in terms of the military ascendancy.

But we must always be historically specific and open to complexities. The simple Marxian view makes the big economic man the *real* holder of power; the simple liberal view makes the big political man the chief of the power system; and there are some who would view the warlords as virtual dictators. Each of these is an oversimplified view. It is to avoid them that we use the term “power elite” rather than, for example, “ruling class.”

In so far as the power elite has come to wide public attention, it has done so in terms of “military clique.” The power elite does, in fact, take its current shape from the decisive entrance into it of the military. Their presence and their ideology are its major legitimations, whenever the power elite feels the need to provide any. But what is called the “Washington military clique” is not composed merely of military men, and it does not prevail merely in Washington. Its members exist all over the country, and it is a coalition of generals in the roles of corporation executives, of politicians masquerading as admirals, of corporation executives acting like politicians, of civil servants who become majors, of vice-admirals who are also the assistants to a cabinet officer, who is himself, by the way, really a member of the managerial elite.

Neither the idea of a “ruling class” nor of a simple monolithic rise of “bureaucratic politicians” nor of a “military clique” is adequate. The power elite today involves the often uneasy coincidence of economic, military, and political power.

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## ☺ *The Composition of the Power Elite*

Despite their social similarity and psychological affinities, the members of the power elite do not constitute a club having a permanent membership with fixed and formal boundaries. It is of the nature of the power elite that within it there is a good deal of shifting about, and that it thus does not consist of one small set of the same men in the same positions in the same hierarchies. Because men know each other personally does not mean that among them there is a unity of policy; and because they do not know each other personally does not mean that among them there is a disunity. The conception of the power elite does not rest, as I have repeatedly said, primarily upon personal friendship.

As the requirements of the top places in each of the major hierarchies become similar, the types of men occupying these roles at the top—by selection and by training in the jobs—become similar. This is no mere deduction from structure to personnel. That it is a fact is revealed by the heavy traffic that has been going on between the three structures, often in very intricate patterns. The chief executives, the warlords, and selected politicians came into contact with one another in an intimate, working way during World War II; after that war ended, they continued their associations, out of common beliefs, social congeniality, and coinciding interests. Noticeable proportions of top men from the military, the economic, and the political worlds have during the last fifteen years occupied positions in one or both of the other worlds: between these higher circles there is an interchangeability of position based formally upon the supposed transferability of “executive ability,” based in substance upon the co-optation by cliques of insiders. As members of a power elite, many of those busy in this traffic have come to look upon “the government” as an umbrella under whose authority they do their work.

As the business between the big three increases in volume and importance, so does the traffic in personnel. The very criteria for selecting men who will rise come to embody this fact. The corporate

commissar, dealing with the state and its military, is wiser to choose a young man who has experienced the state and its military than one who has not. The political director, often dependent for his own political success upon corporate decisions and corporations, is also wiser to choose a man with corporate experience. Thus, by virtue of the very criterion of success, the interchange of personnel and the unity of the power elite is increased.

Given the formal similarity of the three hierarchies in which the several members of the elite spend their working lives, given the ramifications of the decisions made in each upon the others, given the coincidence of interest that prevails among them at many points, and given the administrative vacuum of the American civilian state along with its enlargement of tasks—given these trends of structure, and adding to them the psychological affinities we have noted—we should indeed be surprised were we to find that men said to be skilled in administrative contacts and full of organizing ability would fail to do more than get in touch with one another. They have, of course, done much more than that: increasingly, they assume positions in one another's domains.

The unity revealed by the interchangeability of top roles rests upon the parallel development of the top jobs in each of the big three domains. The interchange occurs most frequently at the points of their coinciding interest, as between regulatory agency and the regulated industry, contracting agency and contractor. And, as we shall see, it leads to co-ordinations that are more explicit, and even formal.

The inner core of the power elite consists, first, of those who interchange commanding roles at the top of one dominant institutional order with those in another: the admiral who is also a banker and a lawyer and who heads up an important federal commission; the corporation executive whose company was one of the two or three leading war material producers who is now the Secretary of Defense; the wartime general who dons civilian clothes to sit on the political directorate and then becomes a member of the board of directors of a leading economic corporation.

Although the executive who becomes a general, the general who becomes a statesman, the statesman who becomes a banker, see much more than ordinary men in their ordinary environments, still the perspectives of even such men often remain tied to their dominant locales. In their very career, however, they interchange roles within the big three and thus readily transcend the particularity of interest in any one of these institutional milieus. By their very careers and activities, they lace the three types of milieus together. They are, accordingly, the core members of the power elite.

These men are not necessarily familiar with every major arena of power. We refer to one man who moves in and between perhaps two circles—say the industrial and the military—and to another man who moves in the military and the political, and to a third who moves in the political as well as among opinion-makers. These in-between types most closely display our image of the power elite's structure and operation, even of behind-the-scenes operations. To the extent that there is any "invisible elite," these advisory and liaison types are its core. Even if—as I believe to be very likely—many of them are, at least in the first part of their careers, "agents" of the various elites rather than themselves elite, it is they who are most active in organizing the several top milieus into a structure of power and maintaining it.

...

The outermost fringes of the power elite—which change more than its core—consist of "those who count" even though they may not be "in" on given decisions of consequence nor in their career move between the hierarchies. Each member of the power elite need not be a man who personally decides every decision that is to be ascribed to the power elite. Each member, in the decisions that he does make, takes the others seriously into account. They not only make decisions in the several major areas of war and peace; they are the men who, in decisions in which they take no direct part, are taken into decisive account by those who are directly in charge.

On the fringes and below them, somewhat to the side of the lower echelons, the power elite fades off into the middle levels of

power, into the rank and file of the Congress, the pressure groups that are not vested in the power elite itself, as well as a multiplicity of regional and state and local interests. If all the men on the middle levels are not among those who count, they sometimes must be taken into account, handled, cajoled, broken or raised to higher circles.

...

## ☉ *The Interests of the Power Elite*

The conception of the power elite and of its unity rests upon the corresponding developments and the coincidence of interests among economic, political, and military organizations. It also rests upon the similarity of origin and outlook, and the social and personal intermingling of the top circles from each of these dominant hierarchies. This conjunction of institutional and psychological forces, in turn, is revealed by the heavy personnel traffic within and between the big three institutional orders, as well as by the rise of go-betweens as in the high-level lobbying. The conception of the power elite, accordingly, does *not* rest upon the assumption that American history since the origins of World War II must be understood as a secret plot, or as a great and co-ordinated conspiracy of the members of this elite. The conception rests upon quite impersonal grounds.

There is, however, little doubt that the American power elite—which contains, we are told some of the greatest organizers in the world—has also planned and has plotted. The rise of the elite, as we have already made clear, was not and could not have been caused by a plot; and the tenability of the conception does not rest upon the existence of any secret or any publicly known organization. But, once the conjunction of structural trend and of the personal will to utilize it gave rise to the power elite, then plans and programs did occur to its members and indeed it is not possible to interpret many events and official policies of the fifth epoch without reference to the power elite. “There is a great difference,” Richard Hofstadter has remarked,

“between locating conspiracies in history and saying that history is, in effect, a conspiracy. . . .”

The structural trends of institutions become defined as opportunities by those who occupy their command posts. Once such opportunities are recognized, men may avail themselves of them. Certain types of men from each of the dominant institutional areas, more far-sighted than others, have actively promoted the liaison before it took its truly modern shape. They have often done so for reasons not shared by their partners, although not objected to by them either; and often the outcome of their liaison has had consequences which none of them foresaw, much less shaped, and which only later in the course of development came under explicit control. Only after it was well under way did most of its members find themselves part of it and become gladdened, although sometimes also worried, by this fact. But once the co-ordination is a going concern, new men come readily into it and assume its existence without question.

So far as explicit organization—conspiratorial or not—is concerned, the power elite, by its very nature, is more likely to use existing organizations, working within and between them, than to set up explicit organizations whose membership is strictly limited to its own members. But if there is no machinery in existence to ensure for example, that military and political factors will be balanced in decisions made, they will invent such machinery and use it, as with the National Security Council. Moreover, in a formally democratic polity, the aims and the powers of the various elements of this elite are further supported by an aspect of the permanent war economy: the assumption that the security of the nation supposedly rests upon great secrecy of plan and intent. Many higher events that would reveal the working of the power elite can be withheld from public knowledge under the guise of secrecy. With the wide secrecy covering their operations and decisions, the power elite can mask their intentions, operations, and further consolidation. Any secrecy that is imposed upon those in positions to observe high decision-makers clearly works for and not against the operations of the power elite.

There is accordingly reason to suspect—but by the nature of case, no proof—that the power elite is not altogether “surfaced.” There is nothing hidden about it, although its members often know one another, seem quite naturally to work together, and share many organizations in common. There is nothing conspiratorial about it, although its decisions are often publicly unknown and its mode of operation manipulative rather than explicit.

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## ☉ Conclusion

The idea of the power elite rests upon and enables us to make sense of (1) the decisive institutional trends that characterize the structure of our epoch, in particular, the military ascendancy in a privately incorporated economy, and more broadly, the several coincidences of objective interests between economic, military, and political institutions; (2) the social similarities and the psychological affinities of the men who occupy the command posts of these structures, in particular the increased interchangeability of the top positions in each of them and the increased traffic between these orders in the careers of men of power; (3) the ramifications, to the point of virtual totality, of the kind of decisions that are made at the top, and the rise to power of a set of men who, by training and bent, are professional organizers of considerable force and who are unrestrained by democratic party training.

Negatively, the formation of the power elite rests upon (1) the relegation of the professional party politician to the middle levels of power, (2) the semi-organized stalemate of the interests of sovereign localities into which the legislative function has fallen, (3) the virtually complete absence of a civil service that constitutes a politically neutral, but politically relevant, depository of brainpower and executive skill, and (4) the increased official secrecy behind which great decisions are made without benefit of public or even Congressional debate.



As a result, the political directorate, the corporate rich, and the ascendant military have come together as the power elite, and the expanded and centralized hierarchies which they head have encroached upon the old balances and have now relegated them to the middle levels of power. Now the balancing society is a conception that pertains accurately to the middle levels, and on that level the balance has become more often an affair of entrenched provincial and nationally irresponsible forces and demands than a center of power and national decision.

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### *Endnote*

<sup>1</sup>Hofstadter, R. op. cit., pp. 71–72.



### *Questions*

1. Define the power elite.
2. According to Mills, which three domains (i.e., institutions) make up the core of the power elite?
3. Of the three domains, which takes precedence? Explain the interplay among the three institutions. How do the interests of these three groups conflict? How are their interests similar?
4. To what degree does Mills rely on a “conspiracy theory” to explain the existence and continued prominence of the power elite?
5. Mills’s thesis was first presented some four decades ago to explain a historical pattern that may or may not be applicable today. Which groups do you think make up the power elite in contemporary American society? Which groups constitute the power elite in other societies? Speculate as to why these groups might differ across cultures or societies.

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# Fraternities and Rape Culture

A. AYRES BOSWELL AND JOAN Z. SPADE

*College certainly is a varied experience: challenging with its many assignments, higher academic standards, and new vocabularies; frustrating, when concepts don't seem to sink in and instructors seem too demanding; fulfilling, with the satisfactions that come from forming new friendships and the sense of accomplishment that comes with passing courses and mastering new ideas; and, at the end, threatening, when the world of work and careers looms and, by comparison, college life suddenly appears so comfortable and inviting.*

*On many campuses, fraternities are part of college life, a welcome respite from onerous classroom demands. They provide friendships, fun, and an escape from responsibilities with like-minded, compatible people who share your sentiments. In some cases, bonds forged in fraternities become significant foundations for successful careers. Some fraternities have a darker side, however; a definition of masculinity that includes a calculated exploitation that destroys people. Not all fraternities are the same, though, and this selection exposes cultural elements that minimize or maximize the exploitation of women.*

**D**ate rape and acquaintance rape on college campuses are topics of concern to both researchers and college administrators. . . . Although considerable attention focuses on the incidence of rape, we know relatively little about the context or the *rape culture* surrounding date [and] acquaintance rape. Rape culture is a set of values and beliefs that provide[s] an environment conducive to rape. The term applies to a generic culture surrounding and promoting rape, not the specific settings in which rape is likely to occur. We believe that the specific settings also are important in defining relationships between men and women.

Some have argued that fraternities are places where rape is likely to occur on college campuses and that the students most likely to accept rape myths and be more sexually aggressive are more likely to live in fraternities and sororities, consume higher doses of alcohol and drugs, and place a

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higher value on social life at college. Others suggest that sexual aggression is learned in settings such as fraternities and is not part of predispositions or preexisting attitudes. To prevent further incidences of rape on college campuses, we need to understand what it is about fraternities in particular and college life in general that may contribute to the maintenance of a rape culture on college campuses.

Our approach is to identify the social contexts that link fraternities to campus rape and promote a rape culture. Instead of assuming that all fraternities provide an environment conducive to rape, we compare the interactions of men and women at fraternities identified on campus as being especially *dangerous* places for women, where the likelihood of rape is high, to those seen as *safer* places, where the perceived probability of rape occurring is lower. . .

## ☺ Method

We observed social interactions between men and women at a private coeducational school in which a high percentage (49.4 percent) of students affiliate with Greek organizations. The university has an undergraduate population of approximately 4,500 students, just more than one third of whom are women; the students are primarily from upper-middle-class families. . . .

We used a variety of data collection approaches: observations of interactions between men and women at fraternity parties and bars, formal interviews, and informal conversations. The first author, a former undergraduate at this school and a graduate student at the time of the study, collected the data. She knew about the social life at the school and had established rapport and trust between herself and undergraduate students as a teaching assistant in a human sexuality course.

. . . In our study, 40 women students identified fraternities that they considered to be high risk, or to have more sexually aggressive members and higher incidence of rape, as well as fraternities that they considered to be safe houses. The women represented all four years of undergraduate college and different living groups (sororities residence halls, and off-campus housing). Observations focused on the four fraternities named most often by these women as high-risk houses and the four identified as low-risk houses.

Throughout the spring semester, the first author observed at two fraternity parties each weekend at two different houses (fraternities could have parties only on weekends at this campus). . . . The observer focused on the social context as well as interaction among participants at each setting. In

terms of social context, she observed the following: ratio of men to women, physical setting such as the party decor and theme, use and control of alcohol and level of intoxication, and explicit and implicit norms. She noted interactions between men and women (i.e., physical contact, conversational style, use of jokes) and the relations among men (i.e., their treatment of pledges and other men at fraternity parties). . . .

## ☉ Results

### *The Settings*

**Fraternity Parties** We observed several differences in the quality of the interaction of men and women at parties at high-risk fraternities compared to those at low-risk houses. A typical party at a low-risk house included an equal number of women and men. The social atmosphere was friendly, with considerable interaction between women and men. Men and women danced in groups and in couples, with many of the couples kissing and displaying affection, toward each other. Brothers explained that, because many of the men in these houses had girlfriends, it was normal to see couples kissing on the dance floor. Coed groups engaged in conversations at many of these houses, with women and men engaging in friendly exchanges, giving the impression that they knew each other well. Almost no cursing and yelling was observed at parties in low-risk houses; when pushing occurred, the participants apologized. Respect for women extended to the women's bathrooms, which were clean and well supplied.

At high-risk houses, parties typically had skewed gender ratios, sometimes involving more men and other times involving more women. Gender segregation also was evident at these parties, with the men on one side of a room or in the bar drinking while women gathered in another area. Men treated women differently in the high-risk houses. The women's bathrooms in the high-risk houses were filthy, including clogged toilets and vomit in the sinks. When a brother was told of the mess in the bathroom at a high-risk house, he replied, "Good, maybe some of these beer wenches will leave so there will be more beer for us."

Men attending parties at high-risk houses treated women less respectfully, engaging in jokes, conversations, and behaviors that degraded women. Men made a display of assessing women's bodies and rated them with thumbs up or thumbs down for the other men in the sight of the women.

One man attending a party at a high-risk fraternity said to another, “Did you know that this week is Women’s Awareness Week? I guess that means we get to abuse them more this week.” Men behaved more crudely at parties at high-risk houses. At one party, a brother dropped his pants, including his underwear, while dancing in front of several women. Another brother slid across the dance floor completely naked.

The atmosphere at parties in high-risk fraternities was less friendly overall. With the exception of greetings, men and women rarely smiled or laughed and spoke to each other less often than was the case at parties in low-risk houses. The few one-on-one conversations between women and men appeared to be strictly flirtatious (lots of eye contact, touching, and very close talking). It was rare to see a group of men and women together talking. Men were openly hostile, which made the high-risk parties seem almost threatening at times. For example, there was a lot of touching, pushing, profanity, and name calling, some done by women.

Students at parties at the high-risk houses seemed self-conscious and aware of the presence of members of the opposite sex, an awareness that was sexually charged. Dancing early in the evening was usually between women. Close to midnight, the sex ratio began to balance out with the arrival of more men or more women. Couples began to dance together but in a sexual way (close dancing with lots of pelvic thrusts). Men tried to pick up women using lines such as “Want to see my fish tank?” and “Let’s go upstairs so that we can talk; I can’t hear what you’re saying in here.”

Although many of the same people who attended high-risk parties also attended low-risk parties, their behavior changed as they moved from setting to setting. Group norms differed across contexts as well. At a party that was held jointly at a low-risk house with a high-risk fraternity, the ambience was that of a party at a high-risk fraternity with heavier drinking, less dancing, and fewer conversations between women and men. The men from both high- and low-risk fraternities were very aggressive; a fight broke out, and there was pushing and shoving on the dance floor and in general.

As others have found, fraternity brothers at high-risk houses on this campus told about routinely discussing their sexual exploits at breakfast the morning after parties and sometimes at house meetings. During these sessions, the brothers we interviewed said that men bragged about what they did the night before with stories of sexual conquests often told by the same men, usually sophomores. The women involved in these exploits were women they did not know or knew but did not respect, or faceless victims. Men usually treated girlfriends with respect and did not talk about them in

these storytelling sessions. Men from low-risk houses, however, did not describe similar sessions in their houses. . . .

## Gender Relations

Relations between women and men are shaped by the contexts in which they meet and interact. As is the case on other college campuses, *hooking up* has replaced dating on this campus, and fraternities are places where many students hook up. Hooking up is a loosely applied term on college campuses that had different meanings for men and women on this campus.

Most men defined hooking up similarly. One man said it was something that happens

when you are really drunk and meet up with a woman you sort of know, or possibly don't know at all and don't care about. You go home with her with the intention of getting as much sexual, physical pleasure as she'll give you, which can range anywhere from kissing to intercourse, without any strings attached.

The exception to this rule is when men hook up with women they admire. Men said they are less likely to press for sexual activity with someone they know and like because they want the relationship to continue and be based on respect.

Women's version of hooking up differed. Women said they hook up only with men they cared about and described hooking up as kissing and petting but not sexual intercourse. Many women said that hooking up was disappointing because they wanted longer-term relationships. First-year women students realized quickly that hook-ups were usually one-night stands with no strings attached, but many continued to hook up because they had few opportunities to develop relationships with men on campus. One first-year woman . . . said, "It was fun in the beginning. You get a lot of attention and kiss a lot of boys and think this is what college is about, but it gets tiresome fast."

Whereas first-year women get tired of the hook-up scene early on, many men do not become bored with it until their junior or senior year. As one upperclassman said, "The whole game of hooking up became really meaningless and tiresome for me during my second semester of my sophomore year, but most of my friends didn't get bored with it until the following year."

In contrast to hooking up, students also described monogamous relationships with steady partners. Some type of commitment was expected, but most people did not anticipate marriage. The term *seeing each other* was

applied when people were sexually involved but free to date other people. This type of relationship involved less commitment than did one of boyfriend/girlfriend but was not considered to be a hook-up.

The general consensus of women and men interviewed on this campus was that the Greek system, called “the hill,” set the scene for gender relations. The predominance of Greek membership and subsequent living arrangements segregated men and women. During the week, little interaction occurred between women and men after their first year in college because students in fraternities or sororities live and dine in separate quarters. In addition, many non-Greek upper-class students move off campus into apartments. Therefore, students see each other in classes or in the library, but there is no place where students can just hang out together.

Both men and women said that fraternities dominate campus social life, a situation that everyone felt limited opportunities for meaningful interactions. One senior Greek man said,

This environment is horrible and so unhealthy for good male and female relationships and interactions to occur. It is so segregated and male dominated. . . . It is our party, with our rules and our beer. We are allowing these women and other men to come to our party. Men can feel superior in their domain.

Comments from a senior woman reinforced his views: “Men are dominant; they are the kings of the campus. It is their environment that they allow us to enter; therefore, we have to abide by their rules.” A junior woman described fraternity parties as

good for meeting acquaintances but almost impossible to really get to know anyone. The environment is so superficial, probably because there are so many social cliques due to the Greek system. Also, the music is too loud and the people are too drunk to attempt to have a real conversation, anyway.

Some students claim that fraternities even control the dating relationships of their members. One senior woman said, “Guys dictate how dating occurs on this campus, whether it’s cool, who it’s with, how much time can be spent with the girlfriend and with the brothers.” Couples either left campus for an evening or hung out separately with their own same-gender friends at fraternity parties, finally getting together with each other at about 2 A.M. Couples rarely went together to fraternity parties. Some men felt that a girlfriend was just a replacement for a hook-up. According to one junior man, “Basically a girlfriend is someone you go to at 2 A.M. after you’ve hung out with the guys. She is the sexual outlet that the guys can’t provide you with.”

Some fraternity brothers pressure each other to limit their time with and commitment to their girlfriends. One senior man said, “The hill [fraternities] and girlfriends don’t mix.” A brother described a constant battle between girlfriends and brothers over who the guy is going out with for the night, with the brothers usually winning. Brothers teased men with girlfriends with remarks such as “whipped” or “where’s the ball and chain?” A brother from a high-risk house said that few brothers at his house had girlfriends; some did, but it was uncommon. One man said that from the minute he was a pledge he knew he would probably never have a girlfriend on this campus because “it was just not the norm in my house. No one has girlfriends; the guys have too much fun with [each other].”

The pressure on men to limit their commitment to girlfriends, however, was not true of all fraternities or of all men on campus. Couples attended low-risk fraternity parties together, and men in the low-risk houses went out on dates more often. A [man] in one low-risk house said that about 70 percent of the members of his house were involved in relationships with women, including the pledges (who were sophomores).

## Treatment of Women

Not all men held negative attitudes toward women that are typical of a rape culture, and not all social contexts promoted the negative treatment of women. When men were asked whether they treated the women on campus with respect, the most common response was “On an individual basis, yes, but when you have a group of men together, no.” Men said that, when together in groups with other men, they sensed a pressure to be disrespectful toward women. A first-year man’s perception of the treatment of women was that “they are treated with more respect to their faces, but behind closed doors, with a group of men present, respect for women is not an issue.” One senior man stated, “In general, college-aged men don’t treat women their age with respect because 90 percent of them think of women as merely a means to sex.” Women reinforced this perception. A first-year woman stated, “Men here are more interested in hooking up and drinking beer than they are in getting to know women as real people.” Another woman said, “Men here use and abuse women.”

Characteristic of rape culture, a double standard of sexual behavior for men versus women was prevalent on this campus. As one Greek senior man stated, “Women who sleep around are sluts and get bad reputations; men who do are champions and get a pat on the back from their brothers.” Women also supported a double standard for sexual behavior by criticizing sexually active



women. A first-year woman spoke out against women who are sexually active: "I think some girls here make it difficult for the men to respect women as a whole."

One concrete example of demeaning sexually active women on this campus is the "walk of shame." Fraternity brothers come out on the porches of their houses the night after parties and heckle women walking by. It is assumed that these women spent the night at fraternity houses and that the men they were with did not care enough about them to drive them home. Although sororities now reside in former fraternity houses, this practice continues and sometimes the victims of hecklings are sorority women on their way to study in the library. . . .

Fraternity men most often mistreated women they did not know personally. Men and women alike reported incidents in which brothers observed other brothers having sex with unknown women or women they knew only casually. A sophomore woman's experience exemplifies this anonymous state: "I don't mind if 10 guys were watching or it was video-taped. That's expected on this campus. It's the fact that he didn't apologize or even offer to drive me home that really upset me." Descriptions of sexual encounters involved the satisfaction of men by nameless women. A brother in a high-risk fraternity, described a similar occurrence:

A brother of mine was hooking up upstairs with an unattractive woman who had been pursuing him all night. He told some brothers to go outside the window and watch. Well, one thing led to another and they were almost completely naked when the woman noticed the brothers outside. She was then unwilling to go any further, so the brother went outside and yelled at the other brothers and then closed the shades. I don't know if he scored or not, because the woman was pretty upset. But he did win the award for hooking up with the ugliest chick that weekend. . . .

## ☉ Discussion and Conclusion

These findings describe the physical and normative aspects of one college campus as they relate to attitudes about and relations between men and women. Our findings suggest that an explanation emphasizing rape culture also must focus on those characteristics of the social setting that play a role in defining heterosexual relationships on college campuses. The degradation of women as portrayed in rape culture was not found in all fraternities on this campus. Both group norms and individual behavior changed as students

went from one place to another. Although individual men are the ones who rape, we found that some settings are more likely places for rape than are others. Our findings suggest that rape cannot be seen only as an isolated act and blamed on individual behavior and proclivities, whether it be alcohol consumption or attitudes. We also must consider characteristics of the settings that promote the behaviors that reinforce a rape culture.

Relations between women and men at parties in low-risk fraternities varied considerably from those in high-risk houses. Peer pressure and situational norms influenced women as well as men. Although many men in high- and low-risk houses shared similar views and attitudes about the Greek system, women on this campus, and date rape, their behaviors at fraternity parties were quite different. . . .

The social scene on this campus, and on most others, offers women and men few other options to socialize. Although there may be no such thing as a completely safe fraternity party for women, parties at low-risk house . . . encouraged men and women to get know each other better and decreased the probability that women would become faceless victims. Although both men and women found the social scene on this campus demeaning, neither demanded different settings for socializing, and attendance at fraternity parties is a common form of entertainment.

These findings suggest that a more conducive environment for conversation can promote more positive interactions between men and women. Simple changes would provide the opportunity for men and women to interact in meaningful ways such as adding places to sit and lowering the volume of music at fraternity parties or having parties in neutral locations, where men are not in control. The typical party room in fraternity houses includes a place to dance but not to sit and talk. The music often is loud, making it difficult, if not impossible, to carry on conversations; however, there were more conversations at the low-risk parties, where there also was more respect shown toward women. . . .

The degree of conformity required by Greeks may be greater than that required in most social groups, with considerable pressure to adopt and maintain the image of their houses. The fraternity system intensifies the “groupthink syndrome” by solidifying the identity of the in-group and creating an us/them atmosphere. Within the fraternity culture, brothers are highly regarded and women are viewed as outsiders. For men in high-risk fraternities, women threatened their brotherhood; therefore, brothers discouraged relationships and harassed those who treated women as equals

or with respect. The pressure to be one of the guys and hang out with the guys strengthens a rape culture on college campus by demeaning women and encouraging the segregation of men and women . . .

Not all men and women accepted the demeaning treatment of women, but they continued to participate in behaviors that supported aspects of a rape culture. Many women participated in the hook-up scene even after they had been humiliated and hurt because they had few other means of initiating contact with men on campus. Men and women alike played out this scene, recognizing its injustices in many cases but being unable to change the course of their behaviors. . . .

Our findings indicate that a rape culture exists in some fraternities, especially those we identified as high-risk houses. College administrators are responding to this situation by providing counseling and educational programs that increase awareness of date rape including campaigns such as “No means no.” These strategies are important in changing attitudes, values, and behaviors; however, changing individuals is not enough. The structure of campus life and the impact of that structure on gender relations on campus are highly determinative. To eliminate campus rape culture, student leaders and administrators must examine the situations in which women and men meet and restructure these settings to provide opportunities for respectful interaction. Change may not require abolishing fraternities; rather, it may require promoting settings that facilitate positive gender relations.



## Thinking Critically

As you read this selection, ask yourself:

1. Based on this article, what *social* factors produce rape?
2. Compare the characteristics of the high-risk and low-risk fraternities analyzed in this selection. Why do you think that fraternities differ so greatly?
3. How do the findings reported in this selection support or detract from the main sociological principle emphasized in *Sociology*—that even our intensely personal characteristics (our attitudes, self-evaluations, and points of view) have *social* origins and are *socially* maintained?

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# “Night to His Day”: The Social Construction of Gender

JUDITH LORBER

*In this article, Judith Lorber focuses on something that most people take for granted—gender. She explains how gender is socially constructed and how cultural expectations of what constitutes appropriate masculine and feminine behavior vary from one culture to another. After you have completed this article, you will not only understand how gender is socially constructed, but how we become gendered.*

Talking about gender for most people is the equivalent of fish talking about water. Gender is so much the routine ground of everyday activities that questioning its taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions is like thinking about whether the sun will come up. Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. Most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

And everyone “does gender” without thinking about it. Today, on the subway, I saw a well-dressed man with a year-old child in a stroller. Yesterday, on a bus, I saw a man with a tiny baby in a carrier

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“Night to His Day”: The Social Construction of Gender,” by Judith Lorber, reprinted from *Paradoxes of Gender*, 1994. pp. 13-27.

on his chest. Seeing men taking care of small children in public is increasingly common—at least in New York City. But both men are quite obviously stared at—and smiled at, approvingly. Everyone was doing gender—the men who were changing the role of fathers and the other passengers, who were applauding them silently. But there was more gendering going on that probably fewer people noticed. The baby was wearing a white crocheted cap and white clothes. You couldn’t tell if it was a boy or a girl. The child in the stroller was wearing a dark blue T-shirt and dark print pants. As they started to leave the train, the father put a Yankees baseball cap on the child’s head. Ah, a boy, I thought. Then I noticed the gleam of tiny earrings in the child’s ears, and as they got off, I saw the little flowered sneakers and lace-trimmed socks. Not a boy after all. Gender done.

Gender is such a familiar part of daily life that it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced. Gender signs and signals are so ubiquitous that we usually fail to note them—unless they are missing or ambiguous. Then we are uncomfortable until we have successfully placed the other person in a gender status; otherwise, we feel socially dislocated. In our society, in addition to man and woman, the status can be *transvestite* (a person who dresses in opposite-gender clothes) and *transsexual* (a person who has had sex-change surgery). Transvestites and transsexuals carefully construct their gender status by dressing, speaking, walking, gesturing in the ways prescribed for women or men—whichever they want to be taken for—and so does any “normal” person.

For the individual, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of what the genitalia look like at birth.<sup>1</sup> Then babies are dressed or adorned in a way that displays the category because parents don’t want to be constantly asked whether their baby is a girl or a boy. A sex category become a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers. Once a child’s gender is evident, others treat those in one gender differently from those in the other, and the children respond to the different treatment by feeling different and behaving differently. As soon as they can talk,

they start to refer to themselves as members of their gender. Sex doesn't come into play again until puberty, but by that time, sexual feelings and desires and practices have been shaped by gendered norms and expectations. Adolescent boys and girls approach and avoid each other in an elaborately scripted and gendered mating dance. Parenting is gendered, with different expectations for mothers and for fathers, and people of different genders work at different kinds of jobs. The work adults do as mothers and fathers and as low-level workers and high-level bosses, shapes women's and men's life experiences, and these experiences produce different feelings, consciousness, relationships, skills—ways of being that we call feminine or masculine. All of these processes constitute the social construction of gender.

Gendered roles change—today fathers are taking care of little children, girls and boys are wearing unisex clothing and getting the same education, women and men are working at the same jobs. Although many traditional social groups are quite strict about maintaining gender differences, in other social groups they seem to be blurring. Then why the one-year-old's earrings? Why is it still so important to mark a child as a girl or a boy, to make sure she is not taken for a boy or he for a girl? What would happen if they were? They would, quite literally, have changed places in their social world.

To explain why gendering is done from birth, constantly and by everyone, we have to look not only at the way individuals experience gender but at gender as a social institution. As a social institution, gender is one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives. Human society depends on a predictable division of labor, a designated allocation of scarce goods, assigned responsibility for children and others who cannot care for themselves, common values and their systematic transmission to new members, legitimate leadership, music, art, stories, games, and other symbolic productions. One way of choosing people for the different tasks of society is on the basis of their talents, motivations, and competence—their demonstrated achievements. The other way is on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity—ascribed membership in a category of people. Although soci-

eties vary in the extent to which they use one or the other of these ways of allocating people to work and to carry out other responsibilities, every society uses gender and age grades. Every society classifies people as “girl and boy children,” “girls and boys ready to be married,” and “fully adult women and men,” constructs similarities among them and differences between them, and assigns them to different roles and responsibilities. Personality characteristics, feelings, motivations, and ambitions flow from these different life experiences so that the members of these different groups become different kinds of people. The process of gendering and its outcome are legitimated by religion, law, science, and the society’s entire set of values.

• • •

Western society’s values legitimate gendering by claiming that it all comes from physiology—female and male procreative differences. But gender and sex are not equivalent, and gender as a social construction does not flow automatically from genitalia and reproductive organs, the main physiological differences of females and males. In the construction of ascribed social statuses, physiological differences such as sex, stage of development, color of skin, and size are crude markers. They are not the source of the social statuses of gender, age grade, and race. Social statuses are carefully constructed through prescribed processes of teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement. Whatever genes, hormones, and biological evolution contribute to human social institutions is materially as well as qualitatively transformed by social practices. Every social institution has a material base, but culture and social practices transform that base into something with qualitatively different patterns and constraints. The economy is much more than producing food and goods and distributing them to eaters and users; family and kinship are not the equivalent of having sex and procreating; morals and religions cannot be equated with the fears and ecstasies of the brain; language goes far beyond the sounds produced by tongue and larynx. No one eats “money” or “credit”; the concepts of “god” and “angels” are the subjects of theological disquisitions; not only words but objects, such as their flag, “speak” to the citizens of a country.

Similarly, gender cannot be equated with biological and physiological differences between human females and males. The building blocks of gender are *socially constructed statuses*. Western societies have only two genders, "man" and "woman." Some societies have three genders—men, women, and *berdaches* or *hijras* or *xaniths*. Berdaches, hijras, and xaniths are biological males who behave, dress, work, and are treated in most respects as social women; they are therefore not men, nor are they female women; they are, in our language, "male women."<sup>2</sup> There are African and American Indian societies that have a gender status called *manly hearted women*—biological females who work, marry, and parent as men; their social status is "female men" (Amadiume, 1987; Blackwood, 1984). They do not have to behave or dress as men to have the social responsibilities and prerogatives of husbands and fathers; what makes them men is enough wealth to buy a wife.

Modern Western societies' *transsexuals* and *transvestites* are the nearest equivalent of these crossover genders, but they are not institutionalized as third genders (Bolin, 1987). Transsexuals are biological males and females who have sex-change operations to alter their genitalia. They do so in order to bring their physical anatomy in congruence with the way they want to live and with their own sense of gender identity. They do not become a third gender; they change genders. Transvestites are males who live as women and females who live as men but do not intend to have sex-change surgery. Their dress, appearance, and mannerisms fall within the range of what is expected from members of the opposite gender, so that they "pass." They also change genders, sometimes temporarily, some for most of their lives. Transvestite women have fought in wars as men soldiers as recently as the nineteenth century; some married women, and others went back to being women and married men once the war was over.<sup>3</sup> Some were discovered when their wounds were treated; others not until they died. In order to work as a jazz musician, a man's occupation, Billy Tipton, a woman, lived most of her life as a man. She died recently at seventy-four, leaving a wife and three adopted sons for whom she was husband and father, and musicians with whom she



had played and traveled, for whom she was "one of the boys" (*New York Times*, 1989).<sup>4</sup> There have been many other such occurrences of women passing as men who do more prestigious or lucrative men's work (Matthaei, 1982, p. 192–93).<sup>5</sup>

Genders, therefore, are not attached to a biological substratum. Gender boundaries are breachable, and individual and socially organized shifts from one gender to another call attention to "cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances" (Garber, 1992, p. 16). These odd or deviant or third genders show us what we ordinarily take for granted—that people have to learn to be women and men. Because transvestism is direct evidence of how gender is constructed, Marjorie Garber claims it as "extraordinary power . . . to disrupt, expose, and challenge, putting in question the very notion of the 'original' and of stable identity" (1992, 16).

## ☉ Gender Bending

It is difficult to see how gender is constructed because we take it for granted that it's all biology, or hormones, or human nature. The differences between women and men seem to be self-evident, and we think they would occur no matter what society did. But in actuality, human females and males are physiologically more similar in appearance than are the two sexes of many species of animals and are more alike than different in traits and behavior (C. F. Epstein, 1988). Without the deliberate use of gendered clothing, hairstyles, jewelry, and cosmetics, women and men would look far more alike.<sup>6</sup> Even societies that do not cover women's breasts have gender-identifying clothing, scarification, jewelry, and hairstyles.

The ease with which many transvestite women pass as men and transvestite men as women is corroborated by the common gender misidentification in Westernized societies of people in jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers. Men with long hair may be addressed as "miss," and women with short hair are often taken for men unless they offset the potential ambiguity with deliberate gender markers (Devor, 1987, 1989). Jan Morris, in *Conundrum*, an autobiographical account of events just before and just after a sex-change operation, described

how easy it was to shift back and forth from being a man to being a woman when testing how it would feel to change gender status. During this time, Morris still had a penis and wore more or less unisex clothing; the context alone made the man and the woman:

Sometimes the arena of my ambivalence was uncomfortably small. At the Travellers' Club, for example, I was obviously known as a man or sorts—women were only allowed on the premises at all during a few hours of the day, and even then were hidden away as far as possible in lesser rooms or alcoves. But I had another club, only a few hundred yards away, where I was known only as a woman, and often I went directly from one to the other, imperceptibly changing roles on the way—"Cheerio, sir," the porter would say at one club, and "Hello, madam," the porter would greet me at the other. (1975, p. 132)

Gender shifts are actually a common phenomenon in public roles as well. Queen Elizabeth II of England bore children, but when she went to Saudi Arabia on a state visit, she was considered an honorary man so that she could confer and dine with the men who were heads of a state that forbids unrelated men and women to have face-to-unveiled-face contact. In contemporary Egypt, lower-class women who run restaurants or shops dress in men's clothing and engage in unfeminine aggressive behavior, and middle-class educated women of professional or managerial status can take positions of authority (Rugh, 1986, p. 131). In these situations, there is an important status change: These women are treated by the others in the situation as if they are men. From their own point of view, they are still women. From the social perspective, however, they are men.<sup>7</sup>

In many cultures, gender bending is prevalent in theater or dance—the Japanese kabuki are men actors who play both women and men; in Shakespeare's theater company, there were no actresses—Juliet and Lady Macbeth were played by boys. Shakespeare's comedies are full of witty comments on gender shifts. Women characters frequently masquerade as young men, and other women characters fall in love with them; the boys playing these masquerading women, meanwhile, are acting out pining for the love of men characters.<sup>8</sup>

...

But despite the ease with which gender boundaries can be traversed in work, in social relationships, and in cultural productions, gender statuses remain. Transvestites and transsexuals do not challenge the social construction of gender. Their goal is to be feminine women and masculine men (Kando, 1973). Those who do not want to change their anatomy but do want to change their gender behavior fare less well in establishing their social identity. . . .

Paradoxically, then, bending gender rules and passing between genders does not erode but rather preserves gender boundaries. In societies with only two genders, the gender dichotomy is not disturbed by transvestites, because others feel that a transvestite is only transitorily ambiguous—is “really a man or woman underneath.” After sex-change surgery, transsexuals end up in a conventional gender status—a “man” or a “woman” with the appropriate genitals (Eichler 1989). When women dress as men for business reasons, they are indicating that in that situation, they want to be treated the way men are treated; when they dress as women, they want to be treated as women:

By their male dress, female entrepreneurs signal their desire to suspend the expectations of accepted feminine conduct without losing respect and reputation. By wearing what is “unattractive” they signify that they are not intending to display their physical charms while engaging in public activity. Their loud, aggressive banter contrasts with the modest demeanor that attracts men. . . . Overt signalling of a suspension of the rules preserves normal conduct from eroding expectations. (Rugh, 1986, p. 131)

## ☺ *For Individuals, Gender Means Sameness*

Although the possible combinations of genitalia, body shapes, clothing, mannerisms, sexuality, and roles could produce infinite varieties in human beings, the social institution of gender depends on the pro-

duction and maintenance of a limited number of gender statuses and of making the members of these statuses similar to each other. Individuals are born sexed but not gendered, and they have to be taught to be masculine or feminine.<sup>9</sup> As Simone de Beauvoir said: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. . . .; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which is described as feminine.” (1952, p. 267).

Children learn to walk, talk, and gesture the way their social group says girls and boys should. Ray Birdwhistell, in his analysis of body motion as human communication, calls these learned gender displays *tertiary* sex characteristics and argues that they are needed to distinguish genders because humans are a weakly dimorphic species—their only sex markers are genitalia (1970, p. 39–46). Clothing, paradoxically, often hides the sex but displays the gender.

In early childhood, humans develop gendered personality structures and sexual orientations through their interactions with parents of the same and opposite gender. As adolescents, they conduct their sexual behavior according to gendered scripts. Schools, parents, peers, and the mass media guide young people into gendered work and family roles. As adults, they take on a gendered social status in their society’s stratification system. Gender is thus both ascribed and achieved (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The achievement of gender was most dramatically revealed in a case of an accidental transsexual—a baby boy whose penis was destroyed in the course of a botched circumcision when he was seven months old (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 118–23). The child’s sex category was changed to “female,” and a vagina was surgically constructed when the child was seventeen months old. The parents were advised that they could successfully raise the child, one of identical twins, as a girl. Physicians assured them that the child was too young to have formed a gender identity. Children’s sense of which gender they belong to usually develops around the age of three, at the time that they start to group objects and recognize that the people around them also fit into categories—big, little; pink-skinned, brown-skinned; boys, girls. Three has also been the age when children’s

appearance is ritually gendered, usually by cutting a boy's hair or dressing him in distinctively masculine clothing. In Victorian times, English boys wore dresses up to the age of three, when they were put into short pants. (Garber, 1992, p. 1–2)

The parents of the accidental transsexual bent over backward to feminize the child—and succeeded. Frilly dresses, hair ribbons, and jewelry created a pride in looks, neatness, and “daintiness.” More significant, the child's dominance was also feminized:

The girl had many tomboyish traits, such as abundant physical energy, a high level of activity, stubbornness, and being often the dominant one in a girls' group. Her mother tried to modify her tomboyishness: “. . . I teach her to be more polite and quiet. I always wanted those virtues. I never did manage, but I'm going to try to manage them to—my daughter—to be more quiet and ladylike.” From the beginning the girl had been the dominant twin. By the age of three, her dominance over her brother was, as her mother described it, that of a mother hen. The boy in turn took up for his sister, if anyone threatened her. (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972, 122)

This child was not a tomboy because of male genes or hormones; according to her mother, she herself had also been a tomboy. What the mother had learned poorly while growing up as a “natural” female she insisted that her physically reconstructed son-daughter learn well. For both mother and child, the social construction of gender overrode any possibly inborn traits.

People go along with the imposition of gender norms because the weight of morality as well as immediate social pressure enforces them. Consider how many instructions for properly gendered behavior are packed into this mother's admonition to her daughter: “This is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming” (Kincaid, 1978).

Gender norms are inscribed in the way people move, gesture, and even eat. In one African society, men were supposed to eat with their

“whole mouth, wholeheartedly, and not, like women, just with the lips, that is halfheartedly, with reservation and restraint” (Bordieu, [1980] 1990, p. 70). Men and women in this society learned to walk in ways that proclaimed their different positions in the society:

The manly man . . . stands up straight into the face of the person he approaches, or wishes to welcome. Ever on the alert, because ever threatened, he misses nothing of what happens around him. . . . Conversely, a well brought-up woman . . . is expected to walk with a slight stoop, avoiding every misplaced movement of her body, her head or her arms, looking down, keeping her eyes on the spot where she will next put her foot, especially if she happens to have to walk past the men’s assembly. (70)

Many cultures go beyond clothing, gestures, and demeanor in gendering children. They inscribe gender directly into bodies. In traditional Chinese society, mothers bound their daughters’ feet into three-inch stumps to enhance their sexual attractiveness. Jewish fathers circumcise their infant sons to show their covenant with God. Women in African societies remove the clitoris of prepubescent girls, scrape their labia, and make the lips grow together to preserve their chastity and ensure their marriageability. In Western societies, women augment their breast size with silicone and reconstruct their faces with cosmetic surgery to conform to cultural ideals of feminine beauty. . . .

Most parents create a gendered world for their newborn by naming, birth announcements, and dress. Children’s relationships with same-gendered and different-gendered caretakers structure their self-identifications and personalities. Through cognitive development, children extract and apply to their own actions the appropriate behavior for those who belong in their own gender, as well as race, religion, ethnic group, and social class, rejecting what is not appropriate. If their social categories are highly valued, they value themselves highly; if their social categories are low status, they lose self-esteem (Chodorow, 1974). Many feminist parents who want to raise androgynous children soon lose their children to the pull of gendered

norms (T. Gordon, 1990, p. 87–90). My son attended a carefully non-sexist elementary school, which didn't even have girls' and boys' bathrooms. When he was seven or eight years old, I attended a class play about “squares” and “circles” and their need for each other and noticed that all the girl squares and circles wore makeup, but none of the boy squares and circles did. I asked the teacher about it after the play, and she said, “Bobby said he was not going to wear makeup, and he is a powerful child, so none of the boys would either.” In a long discussion about conformity, my son confronted me with the question of who the conformists were, the boys who followed their leader or the girls who listened to the woman teacher. In actuality, they both were, because they both followed same-gender leaders and acted in gender-appropriate ways. (Actors may wear makeup, but real boys don't.)

For human beings there is no essential femaleness or maleness, femininity or masculinity, womanhood or manhood, but once gender is ascribed, the social order constructs and holds individuals to strongly gendered norms and expectations. Individuals may vary on many of the components of gender and may shift genders temporarily or permanently, but they must fit into the limited number of gender statuses their society recognizes. In the process, they re-create their society's version of women and men: “If we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements. . . . If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals—not the institutional arrangements—may be called to account (for our character, motives, and predispositions)” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 146).

The gendered practices of everyday life reproduce a society's view of how women and men should act (Bourdieu, [1980], 1990). Gendered social arrangements are justified by religion and cultural productions and backed by law, but the most powerful means of sustaining the moral hegemony of the dominant gender ideology is that the process is made invisible; any possible alternatives are virtually unthinkable (Foucault, 1972; Gramsci, 1971).

## ☉ *For Society, Gender Means Difference*

The persuasiveness of gender as a way of structuring social life demands that gender statuses be clearly differentiated. Varied talents, sexual preferences, identities, personalities, interests, and ways of interacting fragment the individual's bodily and social experiences. Nonetheless, these are organized in Western cultures into two and only two socially and legally recognized gender statuses, "man" and "woman."<sup>10</sup> In the social construction of gender, it does not matter what men and women actually do; it does not even matter if they do exactly the same thing. The social institution of gender insists only that what they do is *perceived* as different.

If men and women are doing the same tasks, they are usually spatially segregated to maintain gender separation, and often the tasks are given different job titles as well, such as executive secretary and administrative assistant (Reskin, 1988). If the differences between women and men begin to blur, society's "sameness taboo" goes into action (G. Rubin, 1975, p. 178). At a rock and roll dance at West Point in 1976, the year women were admitted to the prestigious military academy for the first time, the school's administrators "were reportedly perturbed by the sight of mirror-image couples dancing in short hair and dress gray trousers," and a rule was established that women cadets could dance at these events only if they wore skirts (Barkalow & Raab, 1970, p. 53). Women recruits in the U.S. Marine Corps are required to wear makeup—at a minimum, lipstick and eye shadow—and they have to take classes in makeup, hair care, poise, and etiquette. This feminization is part of a deliberate policy of making them clearly distinguishable from men Marines. Christine Williams quotes a twenty-five-year-old woman drill instructor as saying: "A lot of the recruits who come here don't wear makeup; they're tomboyish or athletic. A lot of them have the preconceived idea that going into the military means they can still be a tomboy. They don't realize that you are a *Woman Marine*" (1989, p. 76–77).<sup>11</sup>



If gender differences were genetic, physiological, or hormonal, gender bending and gender ambiguity would occur only in hermaphrodites, who are born with chromosomes and genitalia that are not clearly female or male. Since gender differences are socially constructed, all men and all women can enact the behavior of the other, because they know the other's social script: "'Man' and 'woman' are at once empty and overflowing categories. Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendental meaning. Overflowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions" (J. W. Scott, 1988a, p. 49). Nonetheless, though individuals may be able to shift gender statuses, the gender boundaries have to hold, or the whole gendered social order will come crashing down.

Paradoxically, it is the social importance of gender statuses and their external markers—clothing, mannerisms, and spatial segregation—that makes gender bending or gender crossing possible—or even necessary. The social viability of differentiated gender statuses produces the need or desire to shift statuses. Without gender differentiation, transvestitism and transsexuality could be meaningless. You couldn't dress in the opposite gender's clothing if all clothing were unisex. There would be no need to reconstruct genitalia to match identity if interests and life-styles were not gendered. There would be no need for women to pass as men to do certain kinds of work of jobs were not typed as "women's work" and "men's work." Women would not have to dress as men in public life in order to give orders or aggressively bargain with customers.

Gender boundaries are preserved when transsexuals create congruous autobiographies of always having felt like what they are now. The transvestite's story also "recuperates social and sexual norms" (Garber, 1992, p. 69). In the transvestite's normalized narrative, he or she "is 'compelled' by social and economic forces to disguise himself or herself in order to get a job, escape repression, or gain artistic or political 'freedom'" (Garber, 1992, p. 70). The "true identity," when revealed, causes amazement over how easily and successfully the per-

son passed as a member of the opposite gender, not a suspicion that gender itself is something of a put-on.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>In cases of ambiguity in countries with modern medicine, surgery is usually performed to make the genitalia more clearly male or female.
- <sup>2</sup>On the hijras of India, see Nanda 1990; on the xaniths of Oman, Wikan 1982, 168–86; on the American Indian berdaches, W. L. Williams 1986. Other societies that have similar institutionalized third-gender men are the Koniag of Alaska, the Tanala of Madagascar, the Mesakin of Nuba, and the Chukchee of Siberia (Wikan 1982, 1970).
- <sup>3</sup>Durova 1989; Freeman and Bond 1992; Wheelwright 1989.
- <sup>4</sup>Gender segregation of work in popular music still has not changed very much, according to Groce and Cooper 1989, despite considerable androgyny in some very popular figures. See Garber 1992 on the androgyny. She discusses Tipton on pp. 67–70.
- <sup>5</sup>In the nineteenth century, not only did these women get men’s wages, but they also “had male privileges and could do all manner of things other women could not: open a bank account, write checks, own property, go anywhere unaccompanied, vote in elections” (Faderman 1991, 44).
- <sup>6</sup>When unisex clothing and men wearing long hair came into vogue in the United States in the mid-1960s, beards and mustaches for men also came into style again as gender identifications.
- <sup>7</sup>For other accounts of women being treated as men in Islamic countries, as well as accounts of women and men cross-dressing in these countries, see Garber 1992, 304–52.
- <sup>8</sup>Dollimore 1986; Garber 1992, 32–40; Greenblatt 1987, 66–93; Howard 1988. For Renaissance accounts of sexual relations with women and men of ambiguous sex, see Laqueur 1990a, 134–39. For modern accounts of women passing as men that other women find sexually attractive, see Devor 1989, 136–37; Wheelwright 1989, 53–59.
- <sup>9</sup>For an account of how a potential man-to-woman transsexual learned to be feminine, see Garfinkel 1967, 116–85, 285–88. For a gloss on this account that points out how, throughout his encounter with Agnes,

Garfinkel failed to see how he himself was constructing his own masculinity, see Rogers 1992.

<sup>10</sup>Other societies recognize more than two categories, but usually no more than three or four (Jacobs and Roberts 1989).

<sup>11</sup>The taboo on males and females looking alike reflects the U.S. military's homophobia (Bérubé 1989). If you can't tell those with a penis from those with a vagina, how are you going to determine whether their sexual interest is heterosexual or homosexual unless you watch them having sexual relations?

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## Questions

1. What is gender? Why do many people believe that it is innate?
2. What is meant by the social construction of gender? How is gender socially constructed in everyday life?
3. What does Lorber mean when she says that people “do gender”? Why is doing gender important? How do *you* do gender?
4. What are third genders? Is there an equivalent of this in Western societies?
5. What is gender bending? Why is it beneficial for a society to have some members who are gender benders?
6. Lorber says that “it does not matter what men and women actually do; it does not matter if they do exactly the same thing. The social institution of gender insists only that what they do is *perceived* as different.” Explain what she means by this statement and give an example.

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# *When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*

ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD

*The social institution that introduces us to society is the family. Because it is within the family that we learn our basic orientations to social life, the family is considered to be the basic building block of society. Within this great socializer, we learn our language, basic norms of behavior and etiquette, even highly refined norms that are difficult to put into words, such as how much self-centeredness we are allowed to display in our interactions. Our family also introduces us to its ways of viewing gender, race, social class, religion, people with disabilities, the elderly—even our own body. With such far-reaching implications for what we become in life, it is difficult to overstate the influence of the family.*

*Like our other social institutions, U.S. families are changing. They have become smaller, they have more disposable income, parental authority has decreased, people are marrying later, wives have more power, and divorce has made families fragile. (Some sociologists point out that because parents used to die at a much earlier age, today's children have about the same chance as children of two hundred years ago of living through childhood with both their biological parents. Either way, marriage is fragile.) Sociologists have uncovered another change that is affecting family life, one that has just begun to appear. As factory work has declined in importance in our society and vast numbers of women have become white-collar workers, more emphasis is being placed on social relationships at work. This has made work more pleasant and satisfying. At the same time, children seem to be placing greater demands on parents. One result, as Hochschild found in her study of a company she calls Amerco, is a reversal of conditions: Many parents are finding work to be a refuge from home, rather than the family being a refuge from work.*

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It's 7:40 A.M. when Cassie Bell, 4, arrives at the Spotted Deer Child-Care Center, her hair half-combed, a blanket in one hand, a fudge bar in the other. "I'm late," her mother, Gwen, a sturdy young woman whose short-cropped hair frames a pleasant face, explains to the child-care worker in charge. "Cassie wanted the fudge bar so bad, I gave it to her," she adds apologetically.

"Please, can't you take me with you?" Cassie pleads.

"You know I can't take you to work," Gwen replies in a tone that suggests that she has been expecting this request. Cassie's shoulders droop. But she has struck a hard bargain—the morning fudge bar—aware of her mother's anxiety about the long day that lies ahead at the center. As Gwen explains later, she continually feels that she owes Cassie more time than she gives her—she has a "time debt."

Arriving at her office just before 8, Gwen finds on her desk a cup of coffee in her personal mug, milk no sugar (exactly as she likes it), prepared by a co-worker who managed to get in ahead of her. As the assistant to the head of public relations at a company I will call Amerco, Gwen has to handle responses to any reports that may appear about the company in the press—a challenging job, but one that gives her satisfaction. As she prepares for her first meeting of the day, she misses her daughter, but she also feels relief; there's a lot to get done at Amerco.

Gwen used to work a straight eight-hour day. But over the last three years, her workday has gradually stretched to eight and a half or nine hours, not counting the e-mail messages and faxes she answers from home. She complains about her hours to her co-workers and listens to their complaints—but she loves her job. Gwen picks up Cassie at 5:45 and gives her a long, affectionate hug.

At home, Gwen's husband, John, a computer programmer, plays with their daughter while Gwen prepares dinner. To protect the dinner "hour"—8:00–8:30—Gwen checks that the phone machine is on, hears the phone ring during dinner but resists the urge to answer. After Cassie's bath, Gwen and Cassie have "quality time," or "Q.T.," as John affectionately calls it. Half an hour later, at 9:30, Gwen tucks Cassie into bed.

There are, in a sense, two Bell households: the rushed family they actually are and the relaxed family they imagine they might be if only they had time. Gwen and John complain that they are in a time bind. What they say they want seems so modest—time to throw a ball, to read to Cassie, to witness the small dramas of her development, not to speak of having a little fun and romance themselves. Yet even these modest wishes seem strangely



out of reach. Before going to bed, Gwen has to e-mail messages to her colleagues in preparation for the next day's meeting; John goes to bed early, exhausted—he's out the door by 7 every morning.

Nationwide, many working parents are in the same boat. More mothers of small children than ever now work outside the home. American men average 48.8 hours of work a week, and women 41.7 hours, including overtime and commuting. All in all, more women are on the economic train, and for many—men and women alike—that train is going faster.

But Amerco has "family-friendly" policies. If your division head and supervisor agree, you can work part time, share a job with another worker, work some hours at home, take parental leave or use "flex time." But hardly anyone uses these policies. In seven years, only two Amerco fathers have taken formal parental leave. Fewer than 1 percent have taken advantage of the opportunity to work part time. Of all such policies, only flex time—which rearranges but does not shorten work time—has had a significant number of takers (perhaps a third of working parents at Amerco).

Forgoing family-friendly policies is not exclusive to Amerco workers. A study of 188 companies conducted by the Families and Work Institute found that while a majority offered part-time shifts, fewer than 5 percent of employees made use of them. Thirty-five percent offered "flex place"—work from home—and fewer than 3 percent of their employees took advantage of it. And a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey asked workers whether they preferred a shorter workweek, a longer one or their present schedule. About 62 percent preferred their present schedule; 28 percent would have preferred longer hours. Fewer than 10 percent said they wanted a cut in hours.

Still, I found it hard to believe that people didn't protest their long hours at work. So I contacted Bright Horizons, a company that runs 136 company-based child-care centers associated with corporations, hospitals and Federal agencies in 25 states. Bright Horizons allowed me to add questions to a questionnaire they sent out to 3,000 parents whose children attended the centers. The respondents, mainly middle-class parents in their early 30s, largely confirmed the picture I'd found at Amerco. A third of fathers and a fifth of mothers described themselves as "workaholic," and 1 out of 3 said their partners were.

To be sure, some parents have tried to shorten their hours. Twenty-one percent of the nation's women voluntarily work part time, as do 7 percent of men. A number of others make under-the-table arrangements that don't show up on surveys. But while working parents say they need more time at home, the main story of their lives does not center on a struggle to get it.

Why? Given the hours parents are working these days, why aren't they taking advantage of an opportunity to reduce their time at work?

The most widely held explanation is that working parents cannot afford to work shorter hours. Certainly this is true for many. But if money is the whole explanation, why would it be that at places like Amerco, the best-paid employees—upper-level managers and professionals—were the least interested in part-time work or job sharing, while clerical workers who earned less were more interested?

Similarly, if money were the answer, we would expect poorer new mothers to return to work more quickly after giving birth than rich mothers. But among working women nationwide, well-to-do new mothers are not much more likely to stay home after 13 weeks with a new baby than low-income new mothers. When asked what they look for in a job, only a third of respondents in a recent study said salary came first. Money is important, but by itself, money does not explain why many people don't want to cut back hours at work.

Were workers uninformed about the company's family-friendly policies? No. Some even mentioned that they were proud to work for a company that offered such enlightened policies. Were rigid middle managers standing in the way of workers using these policies? Sometimes. But when I compared Amerco employees who worked for flexible managers with those who worked for rigid managers, I found that the flexible managers reported only a few more applicants than the rigid ones. The evidence, however counterintuitive, pointed to a paradox: workers at the company I studied weren't protesting the time bind. They were accommodating to it.

Why? I did not anticipate the conclusion I found myself coming to: namely, that work has become a form of "home" and home has become "work." The worlds of home and work have not begun to blur, as the conventional wisdom goes, but to reverse places. We are used to thinking that home is where most people feel the most appreciated, the most truly "themselves," the most secure, the most relaxed. We are used to thinking that work is where most people feel like "just a number" or "a cog in a machine." It is where they have to be "on," have to "act," where they are least secure and most harried.

But new management techniques so pervasive in corporate life have helped transform the workplace into a more appreciative, personal sort of social world. Meanwhile, at home the divorce rate has risen, and the emotional demands have become more baffling and complex. In addition to teething, tantrums and the normal developments of growing children, the

needs of elderly parents are creating more tasks for the modern family—as are the blending, unblending, reblending of new stepparents, stepchildren, exes and former in-laws.

This idea began to dawn on me during one of my first interviews with an Amerco worker. Linda Avery, a friendly, 38-year-old mother, is a shift supervisor at an Amerco plant. When I meet her in the factory's coffee-break room over a couple of Cokes, she is wearing blue jeans and a pink jersey, her hair pulled back in a long, blond ponytail. Linda's husband, Bill, is a technician in the same plant. By working different shifts, they manage to share the care of their 2-year-old son and Linda's 16-year-old daughter from a previous marriage. "Bill works the 7 A.M. to 3 P.M. shift while I watch the baby," she explains. "Then I work the 3 P.M. to 11 P.M. shift and he watches the baby. My daughter works at Walgreen's after school."

Linda is working overtime, and so I begin by asking whether Amerco required the overtime or whether she volunteered for it. "Oh, I put in for it," she replies. I ask her whether, if finances and company policy permitted, she'd be interested in cutting back on the overtime. She takes off her safety glasses, rubs her face and, without answering my question, explains: "I get home, and the minute I turn the key, my daughter is right there. Granted, she needs somebody to talk to about her day. . . . The baby is still up. He should have been in bed two hours ago, and that upsets me. The dishes are piled in the sink. My daughter comes right up to the door and complains about anything her stepfather said or did, and she wants to talk about her job. My husband is in the other room hollering to my daughter, 'Tracy, I don't ever get any time to talk to your mother, because you're always monopolizing her time before I even get a chance!' They all come at me at once."

Linda's description of the urgency of demands and the unarbitrated quarrels that await her homecoming contrast with her account with of arriving at her job as a shift supervisor: "I usually come to work early, just to get away from the house. When I arrive, people are there waiting. We sit, we talk, we joke. I let them know what's going on, who has to be where, what changes I've made for the shift that day. We sit and chitchat for 5 or 10 minutes. There's laughing, joking, fun."

For Linda, home has come to feel like work and work has come to feel a bit like home. Indeed, she feels she can get relief from the "work" of being at home only by going to the "home" of work. Why has her life at home come to seem like this? Linda explains it this way: "My husband's a great help watching our baby. But as far as doing housework or even taking the

baby when I'm at home, no. He figures he works five days a week; he's not going to come home and clean. But he doesn't stop to think that I work seven days a week. Why should I have to come home and do the housework without help from anybody else? My husband and I have been through this over and over again. Even if he would just pick up from the kitchen table and stack the dishes for me, that would make a big difference. He does nothing. On his weekends off, he goes fishing. If I want any time off, I have to get a sitter. He'll help out if I'm not here, but the minute I am, all the work at home is mine."

With a light laugh, she continues: "So I take a lot of overtime. The more I get out of the house, the better I am. It's a terrible thing to say, but that's the way I feel."

When Bill feels the need for time off, to relax, to have fun, to feel free, he climbs in his truck and takes his free time without his family. Largely in response, Linda grabs what she also calls "free time"—at work. Neither Linda nor Bill Avery wants more time together at home, not as things are arranged now.

How do Linda and Bill Avery fit into the broader picture of American family and work life? Current research suggests that however hectic their lives, women who do paid work feel less depressed, think better of themselves and are more satisfied than women who stay at home. One study reported that women who work outside the home feel more valued at home than housewives do. Meanwhile, work is where many women feel like "good mothers." As Linda reflects: "I'm a good mom at home, but I'm a better mom at work. At home, I get into fights with Tracy. I want her to apply to a junior college, but she's not interested. At work, I think I'm better at seeing the other person's point of view."

Many workers feel more confident they could "get the job done" at work than at home. One study found that only 59 percent of workers feel their "performance" in the family is "good or unusually good," while 86 percent rank their performance on the job this way.

Forces at work and at home are simultaneously reinforcing this "reversal." This lure of work has been enhanced in recent years by the rise of company cultural engineering—in particular, the shift from Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management to the Total Quality principles originally set out by W. Edwards Deming. Under the influence of a Taylorist world view, the manager's job was to coerce the worker's mind and body, not to appeal to the worker's heart. The Taylorized worker was de-skilled, replaceable and cheap, and as a consequence felt bored, demeaned and unappreciated.

Using modern participative management techniques, many companies now train workers to make their own work decisions, and then set before their newly “empowered” employees moral as well as financial incentives. At Amerco, the Total Quality worker is invited to feel recognized for job accomplishments. Amerco regularly strengthens the familylike ties of co-workers by holding “recognition ceremonies” honoring particular workers or self-managed production teams. Amerco employees speak of “belonging to the Amerco family” and proudly wear their “Total Quality” pins or “High Performance Team” T-shirts, symbols of their loyalty to the company and of its loyalty to them.

The company occasionally decorates a section of the factory and serves refreshments. The production teams, too, have regular get-togethers. In a New Age recasting of an old business slogan—“The Customer Is Always Right”—Amerco proposes that its workers “Value the Internal Customer.” This means: Be as polite and considerate to co-workers inside the company as you would be to customers outside it. How many recognition ceremonies for competent performance are being offered at home? Who is valuing the internal customer there?

Amerco also tries to take on the role of a helpful relative with regard to employee problems at work and at home. The education-and-training division offers employees free courses (on company time) in “Dealing With Anger,” “How to Give and Accept Criticism,” “How to Cope With Difficult People.”

At home, of course, people seldom receive anything like this much help on issues basic to family life. There, no courses are being offered on “Dealing With Your Child’s Disappointment in You” or “How to Treat Your Spouse Like an Internal Customer.”

If Total Quality calls for “re-skilling” the worker in an “enriched” job environment, technological developments have long been de-skilling parents at home. Over the centuries, store-bought goods have replaced homespun cloth, homemade soup and home-baked foods. Day care for children, retirement homes for the elderly, even psychotherapy are, in a way, commercial substitutes for jobs that a mother once did at home. Even family-generated entertainment has, to some extent, been replaced by television, video games and the VCR. I sometimes watched Amerco families sitting together after their dinners, mute but cozy, watching sitcoms in which television mothers, fathers and children related in an animated way to one another while the viewing family engaged in relational loafing.

The one “skill” still required of family members is the hardest one of all—the emotional work of forging, deepening or repairing family relationships. It takes time to develop this skill, and even then things can go awry. Family ties are complicated. People get hurt. Yet as broken homes become more common—and as the sense of belonging to a geographical community grows less and less secure in an age of mobility—the corporate world has created a sense of “neighborhood,” of “feminine culture,” of family at work. Life at work can be insecure; the company can fire workers. But workers aren’t so secure at home, either. Many employees have been working for Amerco for 20 years but are on their second or third marriages or relationships. The shifting balance between these two “divorce rates” may be the most powerful reason why tired parents flee a world of unresolved quarrels and unwashed laundry for the orderliness, harmony and managed cheer of work. People are getting their “pink slips” at home.

Amerco workers have not only turned their offices into “home” and their homes into workplaces; many have also begun to “Taylorize” time at home, where families are succumbing to a cult of efficiency previously associated mainly with the office and factory. Meanwhile, work time, with its ever longer hours, has become more hospitable to sociability—periods of talking with friends on e-mail, patching up quarrels, gossiping. Within the long workday of many Amerco employees are great hidden pockets of inefficiency while, in the far smaller number of waking weekday hours at home, they are, despite themselves, forced to act increasingly time-conscious and efficient.

The Averys respond to their time bind at home by trying to value and protect “quality time.” A concept unknown to their parents and grandparents, “quality time” has become a powerful symbol of the struggle against the growing pressures at home. It reflects the extent to which modern parents feel the flow of time to be running against them. The premise behind “quality time” is that the time we devote to relationships can somehow be separated from ordinary time. Relationships go on during quantity time, of course, but then we are only passively, not actively, wholeheartedly, specializing in our emotional ties. We aren’t “on.” Quality time at home becomes like an office appointment. You don’t want to be caught “goofing off around the water cooler” when you are “at work.”

Quality time holds out the hope that scheduling intense periods of togetherness can compensate for an overall loss of time in such a way that a relationship will suffer no loss of quality. But this is just another way of transferring the cult of efficiency from office to home. We must now get our relationships in good repair in less time. Instead of nine hours a day with a

child, we declare ourselves capable of getting “the same result” with one intensely focused hour.

Parents now more commonly speak of time as if it is a threatened form of personal capital they have no choice but to manage and invest. What’s new here is the spread into the home of a financial manager’s attitude toward time. Working parents at Amerco owe what they think of as time debts at home. This is because they are, in a sense, inadvertently “Taylorizing” the house—speeding up the pace of home life as Taylor once tried to “scientifically” speed up the pace of factory life.

Advertisers of products aimed at women have recognized that this new reality provides an opportunity to sell products, and have turned the very pressure that threatens to explode the home into a positive attribute. Take, for example, an ad promoting Instant Quaker Oatmeal: it shows a smiling mother ready for the office in her square-shouldered suit, hugging her happy son. A caption reads: “Nicky is a very picky eater. With Instant Quaker Oatmeal, I can give him a terrific hot breakfast in just 90 seconds. And I don’t have to spend any time coaxing him to eat it!” Here, the modern mother seems to have absorbed the lessons of Frederick Taylor as she presses for efficiency at home because she is in a hurry to get to work.

Part of modern parenthood seems to include coping with the resistance of real children who are not so eager to get their cereal so fast. Some parents try desperately not to appease their children with special gifts or smooth-talking promises about the future. But when time is scarce, even the best parents find themselves passing a system-wide familial speed-up along to the most vulnerable workers on the line. Parents are then obliged to try to control the damage done by a reversal of worlds. They monitor mealtime, homework time, bedtime, trying to cut out “wasted” time.

In response, children often protest the pace, the deadlines, the grand irrationality of “efficient” family life. Children dawdle. They refuse to leave places when it’s time to leave. They insist on leaving places when it’s not time to leave. Surely, this is part of the usual stop-and-go of childhood itself, but perhaps, too, it is the plea of children for more family time and more control over what time there is. This only adds to the feeling that life at home has become hard work.

Instead of trying to arrange shorter or more flexible work schedules, Amerco parents often avoid confronting the reality of the time bind. Some minimize their ideas about how much care a child, a partner or they themselves “really need.” They make do with less time, less attention, less understanding and less support at home than they once imagined possible.

They *emotionally downsize* life. In essence, they deny the needs of family members, and they themselves become emotional ascetics. If they once “needed” time with each other, they are now increasingly “fine” without it.

Another way that working parents try to evade the time bind is to buy themselves out of it—an approach that puts women in particular at the heart of a contradiction. Like men, women absorb the work-family speed-up far more than they resist it; but unlike men, they still shoulder most of the workload at home. And women still represent in people’s minds the heart and soul of family life. They’re the ones—especially women of the urban middle and upper-middle classes—who feel most acutely the need to save time, who are the most tempted by the new “time saving” goods and services—and who wind up feeling the most guilty about it. For example, Playgroup Connections, a Washington-area business started by a former executive recruiter, matches playmates to one another. One mother hired the service to find her child a French-speaking playmate.

In several cities, children home alone can call a number for “Grandma, Please!” and reach an adult who has the time to talk with them, sing to them or help them with their homework. An ad for Kindercare Learning Centers, a for-profit childcare chain, pitches its appeal this way: “You want your child to be active, tolerant, smart, loved, emotionally stable, self-aware, artistic and get a two-hour nap. Anything else?” It goes on to note that Kindercare accepts children 6 weeks to 12 years old and provides a number to call for the Kindercare nearest you. Another typical service organizes children’s birthday parties, making out invitations (“sure hope you can come”) and providing party favors, entertainment, a decorated cake and balloons. Creative Memories is a service that puts ancestral photos into family albums for you.

An overwhelming majority of the working mothers I spoke with recoiled from the idea of buying themselves out of parental duties. A bought birthday party was “too impersonal,” a 90-second breakfast “too fast.” Yet a surprising amount of lunchtime conversation between female friends at Amerco was devoted to expressing complex, conflicting feelings about the lure of trading time for one service or another. The temptation to order flash-frozen dinners or to call a local number for a homework helper did not come up because such services had not yet appeared at Spotted Deer Child-Care Center. But many women dwelled on the question of how to decide where a mother’s job began and ended, especially with regard to babysitters and television. One mother said to another in the breakroom of an Amerco plant: “Damon doesn’t settle down until 10 at night, so he hates me to wake him up in the morning and I hate to do it. He’s cranky. He pulls the covers



up. I put on cartoons. That way I can dress him and he doesn't object. I don't like to use TV that way. It's like a drug. But I do it."

The other mother countered: "Well, Todd is up before we are, so that's not a problem. It's after dinner, when I feel like watching a little television, that I feel guilty, because he gets too much TV at the sitter's."

As task after task falls into the realm of time-saving goods and services, questions rise about the moral meanings attached to doing or not doing such tasks. Is it being a good mother to bake a child's birthday cake (alone or together with one's partner)? Or can we gratefully save time by ordering it, and be good mothers by planning the party? Can we save more time by hiring a planning service, and be good mothers simply by watching our children have a good time? "Wouldn't that be nice!" one Amerco mother exclaimed. As the idea of the "good mother" retreats before the pressures of work and the expansion of motherly services, mothers are in fact continually reinventing themselves.

The final way working parents tried to evade the time bind was to develop what I call "potential selves." The potential selves that I discovered in my Amerco interviews were fantasy creations of time-poor parents who dreamed of living as time millionaires.

One man, a gifted 55-year-old engineer in research and development at Amerco, told how he had dreamed of taking his daughters on a camping trip in the Sierra Mountains: "I bought all the gear three years ago when they were 5 and 7, the tent, the sleeping bags, the air mattresses, the backpacks, the ponchos. I got a map of the area. I even got the freeze-dried food. Since then the kids and I have talked about it a lot, and gone over what we're going to do. They've been on me to do it for a long time. I feel bad about it. I keep putting it off, but we'll do it, I just don't know when."

Banished to garages and attics of many Amerco workers were expensive electric saws, cameras, skis and musical instruments, all bought with wages it took time to earn. These items were to their owners what Cassie's fudge bar was to her—a substitute for time, a tailsman, a reminder of the potential self.

Obviously, not everyone, not even a majority of Americans, is making a home out of work and a workplace out of home. But in the working world, it is a growing reality, and one we need to face. Increasing numbers of women are discovering a great male secret—that work can be an escape from the pressures of home, pressures that the changing nature of work itself are only intensifying. Neither men nor women are going to take up "family-friendly" policies, whether corporate or governmental, as long as the current realities of work and home remain as they are. For a substantial number of

time-bound parents, the stripped-down home and the neighborhood devoid of community are simply losing out to the pull of the workplace.

There are several broader, historical causes of this reversal of realms. The last 30 years have witnessed the rapid rise of women in the workplace. At the same time, job mobility has taken families farther from relatives who might lend a hand, and made it harder to make close friends of neighbors who could help out. Moreover, as women have acquired more education and have joined men at work, they have absorbed the views of an older, male-oriented work world, its views of a “real career,” far more than men have taken up their share of the work at home. One reason women have changed more than men is the world of “male” work seems more honorable and valuable than the “female” world of home and children.

So where do we go from here? There is surely no going back to the mythical 1950s family that confined women to the home. Most women don’t wish to return to a full-time role at home—and couldn’t afford it even if they did. But equally troubling is a workaholic culture that strands both men and women outside the home.

For a while now, scholars on work-family issues have pointed to Sweden, Norway and Denmark as better models of work-family balance. Today, for example, almost all Swedish fathers take two paid weeks off from work at the birth of their children, and about half of fathers and most mothers take additional “parental leave” during the child’s first or second year. Research shows that men who take family leave when their children are very young are more likely to be involved with their children as they grow older. When I mentioned this Swedish record of paternity leave to a focus group of American male managers, one of them replied, “Right, we’ve already heard about Sweden.” To this executive, paternity leave was a good idea not for the U.S. today, but for some “potential society” in another place and time.

Meanwhile, children are paying the price. In her book *When the Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children*, the economist Sylvia Hewlett claims that “compared with the previous generation, young people today are more likely to underperform at school; commit suicide; need psychiatric help; suffer a severe eating disorder; bear a child out of wedlock; take drugs; be the victim of a violent crime.” But we needn’t dwell on sledgehammer problems like heroin and suicide to realize that children like those at

Spotted Deer need more of our time. If other advanced nations with two-job families can give children the time they need, why can't we?



## *Thinking Critically*

As you read this selection, ask yourself:

1. Do you think you will prefer work to family life? Why or why not?
2. Hochschild says that there are two sides of the same family: the rushed family that they actually are, and the relaxed family that they imagine they might be if only they had time. How does this apply to your own family life?
3. What does Hochschild mean when she says that the corporate world is creating a sense of “neighborhood” and a “feminine culture”? How does this development pertain to family life?

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# *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS

*Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' Communist Manifesto laid the theoretical foundation for what sociologists have since labeled the "conflict" perspective. This work details the nature of social relations between the bourgeoisie (the middle and upper classes) and the proletariat (the working class), paying particular attention to the role that the means of production play. The work clearly outlines the nature of the political economy and the process by which class inequality emerges and is maintained.*

## ☉ *Bourgeois and Proletarians*<sup>1</sup>

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-mas-

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*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Part I, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1848.

ters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the [colonization] of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by close guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand, ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the worldmarket, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the mediaeval commune,<sup>2</sup> here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up

that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid [wage-laborers].

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigour in the Middle Ages, which Reactionists so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish [connections] everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from

under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world-literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of



property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together in one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then: The means of production and of exchange on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their places stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against

modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed, a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These

laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous and most easily acquired knack that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and also of labor, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase of the work enacted in a given time, or by increased speed of the machinery, etc.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they the slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State, they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion or strength implied in manual labor, in other words the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex.

No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far, at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set

upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shop-keeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests

and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the Ten-Hours-Bill in England was carried.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the

aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class-struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movements as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower-middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so, only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but

their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.

The “dangerous class,” the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

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Hitherto, every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. Wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their involuntary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore

produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>By *bourgeoisie* is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor. By *proletariat*, the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live.

<sup>2</sup>“Commune” was the name taken, in France, by the nascent towns even before they had conquered from their feudal lords and masters, local self-government and political rights as “the Third Estate.” Generally speaking, for the economical development of the bourgeoisie, England is here taken as the typical country, for its political development, France.



## Questions

1. How do Marx and Engels define class conflict? What is the basis of this conflict?
2. According to Marx and Engels, which class can be considered the “most revolutionary”? Which class most supports the status quo?
3. How do the bourgeoisie help undermine their own status as the ruling class?
4. According to Marx and Engels, how does capitalism benefit the proletariat? How does capitalism benefit the bourgeoisie?



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# *Final Note on a Case of Extreme Isolation*

KINGSLEY DAVIS

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*Kingsley Davis's work is a classic examination of early socialization and the effect of delayed human contact. In this piece, he briefly reviews the story of a girl named Anna, who was virtually isolated from all human contact and affection until she was six years old. Davis then compares Anna's life history and subsequent development to that of another young girl who experienced similar circumstances. Davis concludes that socialization can occur at various stages of the lifecourse, a finding that stands in stark contrast to a more traditional psychological explanation.*

...

Early in 1940 there appeared in this *Journal* an account of a girl called Anna.<sup>1</sup> She had been deprived of normal contact and had received a minimum of human care for almost the whole of her first six years of life. At that time observations were not complete and the report had a tentative character. Now, however, the girl is dead, and, with more information available,<sup>2</sup> it is possible to give a fuller and more definitive description of the case from a sociological point of view.

Anna's death, caused by hemorrhagic jaundice, occurred on August 6, 1942. Having been born on March 1 or 6,<sup>3</sup> 1932, she was approximately ten and a half years of age when she died. The previ-

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"Final Note on a Case of Extreme Isolation," by Kingsley Davis, reprinted from *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 52, 1947. pp. 432-447.

ous report covered her development up to the age of almost eight years; the present one recapitulates the earlier period on the basis of new evidence and then covers the last two and a half years of life.

## ☉ *Early History*

The first few days and weeks of Anna's life were complicated by frequent changes of domicile. It will be recalled that she was an illegitimate child, the second such child born to her mother, and that her grandfather, a widowed farmer in whose house her mother lived, strongly disapproved of this new evidence of the mother's indiscretion. This fact led to the baby's being shifted about.

Two weeks after being born in a nurse's private home, Anna was brought to the family farm, but the grandfather's antagonism was so great that she was shortly taken to the house of one of her mother's friends. At this time a local minister became interested in her and took her to his house with an idea of possible adoption. He decided against adoption, however, when he discovered that she had vaginitis. The infant was then taken to a children's home in the nearest large city. This agency found that at the age of only three weeks she was already in a miserable condition, being "terribly galled and otherwise in very bad shape." It did not regard her as a likely subject for adoption but took her in for a while anyway, hoping to benefit her. After Anna had spent nearly eight weeks in this place, the agency notified her mother to come to get her. The mother responded by sending a man and his wife to the children's home with a view to their adopting Anna, but they made such a poor impression on the agency that permission was refused. Later the mother came herself and took the child out of the home and then gave her to this couple. It was in the home of this pair that a social worker found the girl a short time thereafter. The social worker went to the mother's home and pleaded with Anna's grandfather to allow the mother to bring the child home. In spite of threats, he refused. The child, by then more than four months old, was taken to another children's home in a nearby town.

A medical examination at this time revealed that she had impetigo, vaginitis, umbilical hernia, and a skin rash.

Anna remained in this second children's home for nearly three weeks, at the end of which time she was transferred to a private foster home. Since, however, the grandfather would not, and the mother could not, pay for the child's care, she was finally taken back as a last resort to the grandfather's house (at the age of five and a half months). There she remained, kept on the second floor in an attic-like room because her mother hesitated to incur the grandfather's wrath by bringing her downstairs.

The mother, a sturdy woman weighing about 180 pounds, did a man's work on the farm. She engaged in heavy work such as milking cows and tending hogs and had little time for her children. Sometimes she went out at night, in which case Anna was left entirely without attention. Ordinarily, it seems, Anna received only enough care to keep her barely alive. She appears to have been seldom moved from one position to another. Her clothing and bedding were filthy. She apparently had no instruction, no friendly attention.

It is little wonder that, when finally found and removed from the room in the grandfather's house at the age of nearly six years, the child could not talk, walk, or do anything that showed intelligence. . . .

Anna's condition when found, and her subsequent improvement, have been described in the previous report. It now remains to say what happened to her after that.

## ☉ *Later History*

In 1939, nearly two years after being discovered, Anna had progressed, as previously reported, to the point where she could walk, understand simple commands, feed herself, achieve some neatness, remember people, etc. But she still did not speak, and though she was much more like a normal infant of something over one year of age in mentality, she was far from normal for her age.

On August 30, 1939, she was taken to a private home for retarded children, leaving the country home where she had been for more than a year and a half. In her new setting she made some further progress, but not a great deal. In a report of an examination made November 6 of the same year, the head of the institution pictured the child as follows:

Anna walks about aimlessly, makes periodic rhythmic motions of her hands, and, at intervals, makes guttural and sucking noises. She regards her hands as if she had seen them for the first time. It was impossible to hold her attention for more than a few seconds at a time—not because of distraction due to external stimuli but because of her inability to concentrate. She ignored the task in hand to gaze vacantly about the room. Speech is entirely lacking. Numerous unsuccessful attempts have been made with her in the hope of developing initial sounds. I do not believe that this failure is due to negativism or deafness but that she is not sufficiently developed to accept speech at this time. . . . The prognosis is not favorable. . . .

More than five months later, on April 25, 1940, a clinical psychologist, the late Professor Francis N. Maxfield, examined Anna and reported the following: large for her age; hearing “entirely normal,” vision apparently normal; able to climb stairs; speech in the “babbling stage” and “promise for developing intelligible speech later seems to be good.” He said further that “on the Merrill-Palmer scale she made a mental score of 19 months. On the Vineland social maturity scale she made a score of 23 months.”<sup>4</sup>

. . . Professor Maxwell gave it as his opinion at that time that Anna would eventually “attain an adult mental level of six or seven years.”<sup>5</sup>

The school for retarded children, on July 1, 1941, reported that Anna had reached 46 inches in height and weighed 60 pounds. She could bounce and catch a ball and was said to conform to group socialization, though as a follower rather than a leader. Toilet habits

were firmly established. Food habits were normal, except that she still used a spoon as her sole implement. She could dress herself except for fastening her clothes. Most remarkable of all, she had finally begun to develop speech. She was characterized as being at about the two-year level in this regard. She could call attendants by name and bring in one when she was asked to. She had few complete sentences to express her wants. The report concluded that there was nothing peculiar about her, except that she was feeble-minded—"probably congenital in type."<sup>6</sup>

A final report from the school, made on June 22, 1942, and evidently the last report before the girl's death, pictured only a slight advance over that given above. It said that Anna could follow directions, string beads, identify a few colors, build with blocks, and differentiate between attractive and unattractive pictures. She had a good sense of rhythm and loved a doll. She talked mainly in phrases but would repeat words and try to carry on a conversation. She was clean about clothing. She habitually washed her hands and brushed her teeth. She would try to help other children. She walked well and could run fairly well, though clumsily. Although easily excited, she had a pleasant disposition.

## ☉ Interpretation

Such was Anna's condition just before her death. It may seem as if she had not made much progress, but one must remember the condition in which she had been found. One must recall that she had no glimmering of speech, absolutely no ability to walk, no sense of gesture, not the least capacity to feed herself even when the food was put in front of her, and no comprehension of cleanliness. She was so apathetic that it was hard to tell whether or not she could hear. And all this at the age of nearly six years. Compared with this condition, her capacities at the time of her death seem striking indeed, though they do not amount to much more than a two-and-a-half-year mental level. One conclusion therefore seems safe, namely, that her isolation prevented a considerable amount of mental development that was

undoubtedly part of her capacity. Just what her original capacity was, of course, is hard to say; but her development after her period of confinement (including the ability to walk and run, to play, dress, fit into a social situation, and, above all, to speak) shows that she had at least this much capacity—capacity that never could have been realized in her original condition of isolation.

A further question is this: What would she have been like if she had received a normal upbringing from the moment of birth? A definitive answer would have been impossible in any case, but even an approximate answer is made difficult by her early death. If one assumes, as was tentatively surmised in the previous report, that it is “almost impossible for any child to learn to speak, think, and act like a normal person after a long period of early isolation,” it seems likely that Anna might have had a normal or near-normal capacity, genetically speaking. On the other hand, it was pointed out that Anna represented “a marginal case, [because] she was discovered before she had reached six years of age,” an age “young enough to allow for some plasticity.”<sup>7</sup> While admitting, then, that Anna’s isolation *may* have been the major cause (and was certainly a minor cause) of her lack of rapid mental progress during the four and a half years following her rescue from neglect, it is necessary to entertain the hypothesis that she was congenitally deficient.

In connection with this hypothesis, one suggestive though by no means conclusive circumstance needs consideration, namely, the mentality of Anna’s forebears. Information on this subject is easier to obtain, as one might guess, on the mother’s than on the father’s side. Anna’s maternal grandmother, for example, is said to have been college educated and wished to have her children receive a good education, but her husband, Anna’s stern grandfather, apparently a shrewd, hard-driving, calculating farmowner, was so penurious that her ambitions in this direction were thwarted. Under the circumstances her daughter (Anna’s mother) managed, despite having to do hard work on the farm, to complete the eighth grade in a country school. Even so, however, the daughter was evidently not very smart. “A schoolmate of [Anna’s mother] stated that she was retarded in school work;

was very gullible at this age; and that her morals even at this time were discussed by other students.” Two tests administered to her on March 4, 1938, when she was thirty-two years of age, showed that she was mentally deficient. On the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale her performance was equivalent to that of a child of eight years, giving her an I.Q. of 50 and indicating mental deficiency of “middle-grade moron type.”<sup>8</sup>

As to the identity of Anna’s father, the most persistent theory holds that he was an old man about seventy-four years of age at the time of the girl’s birth. If he was the one, there is no indication of mental or other biological deficiency, whatever one may think of his morals. However, someone else may actually have been the father.

To sum up: Anna’s heredity is the kind that *might* have given rise to innate mental deficiency, though not necessarily.

## ☉ Comparison with Another Case

Perhaps more to the point than speculations about Anna’s ancestry would be a case for comparison. If a child could be discovered who had been isolated about the same length of time as Anna but had achieved a much quicker recovery and a greater mental development, it would be a stronger indication that Anna was deficient to start with.

Such a case does exist. It is the case of a girl found at about the same time as Anna and under strikingly similar circumstances. . . .

Born apparently one month later than Anna, the girl in question, who has been given the pseudonym Isabelle, was discovered in November, 1938, nine months after the discovery of Anna. At the time she was found she was approximately six and a half years of age. Like Anna, she was an illegitimate child and had been kept in seclusion for that reason. Her mother was a deaf-mute, having become so at the age of two, and it appears that she and Isabelle had spent most of their time together in a dark room shut off from the rest of the mother’s family. As a result Isabelle had no chance to develop speech; when she communicated with her mother, it was by means of ges-

tures. . . . Her behavior toward strangers, especially men, was almost that of a wild animal, manifesting much fear and hostility. In lieu of speech she made only a strange croaking sound. In many ways she acted like an infant. . . . At first it was even hard to tell whether or not she could hear, so unused were her senses. Many of her actions resembled those of deaf children.

It is small wonder that, once it was established that she could hear, specialists working with her believed her to be feeble-minded. . . .

In spite of this interpretation, the individuals in charge of Isabelle launched a systematic and skillful program of training. It seemed hopeless at first. The approach had to be through pantomime and dramatization, suitable to an infant. It required one week of intensive effort before she even made her first attempt to vocalization. Gradually she began to respond, however, and, after the first hurdles had at last been overcome, a curious thing happened. She went through the usual stages of learning characteristic of the years from one to six not only in proper succession but far more rapidly than normal. In a little over two months after her first vocalization she was putting sentences together. Nine months after that she could identify words and sentences on the printed page, could write well, could add to ten, and could retell a story after hearing it. Seven months beyond this point she had a vocabulary of 1,500–2,000 words and was asking complicated questions. Starting from an educational level of between one and three years (depending on what aspect one considers), she had reached a normal level by the time she was eight and a half years old. In short, she covered in two years the stages of learning that ordinarily require six. . . .<sup>9</sup>

When the writer saw Isabelle a year and a half after her discovery, she gave him the impression of being a very bright, cheerful, energetic little girl. She spoke well, walked and ran without trouble, and sang with gusto and accuracy. Today she is over fourteen years old and has passed the sixth grade in a public school. Her teachers say she participates in all school activities as normally as other children. . . .



Clearly the history of Isabelle's development is different from that of Anna's. In both cases there was an exceedingly low, or rather blank, intellectual level to begin with. In both cases it seemed that the girl might be congenitally feeble minded. In both a considerably higher level was reached later on. But the Ohio girl achieved a normal mentality within two years, whereas Anna was still marked inadequate at the end of four and a half years. This difference in achievement may suggest that Anna had less initial capacity. But an alternative hypothesis is possible.

One should remember that Anna never received the prolonged and expert attention that Isabelle received. The result of such attention, in the case of the Ohio girl, was to give her speech at an early stage, and her subsequent rapid development seems to have been a consequence of that. "Until Isabelle's speech and language development, she had all the characteristics of a feeble-minded child." Had Anna, who, from the standpoint of psychometric tests and early history, closely resembled this girl at the start, been given a mastery of speech at an earlier point by intensive training, her subsequent development might have been much more rapid. . . .

Consideration of Isabelle's case serves to show, as Anna's case does not clearly show, that isolation up to the age of six, with failure to acquire any form of speech and hence failure to grasp nearly the whole world of cultural meaning, does not preclude the subsequent acquisition of these. Indeed, there seems to be a process of accelerated recovery in which the child goes through the mental stages at a more rapid rate than would be the case in normal development. Just what would be the maximum age at which a person could remain isolated and still retain the capacity for full cultural acquisition is hard to say. Almost certainly it would not be as high as age fifteen; it might possibly be as low as age ten. Undoubtedly various individuals would differ considerably as to the exact age.

Anna's not an ideal case for showing the effects of extreme isolation, partly because she was possibly deficient to begin with, partly because she did not receive the best training available, and partly because she did not live long enough. Nevertheless, her case is

instructive when placed in the record with numerous cases of extreme isolation. This and the previous article about her are meant to place her in the record. It is to be hoped that other cases will be described in the scientific literature as they are discovered (as unfortunately they will be), for only in these rare cases of extreme isolation is it possible “to observe *concretely separated* two factors in the development of human personality which are always otherwise only analytically separated, the biogenic and the sociogenic factors.”<sup>10</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Davis, K. (1940, January). Extreme social isolation of a child, *American Journal of Sociology*, 45, 554–565.

<sup>2</sup>Sincere appreciation is due to the officials in the Department of Welfare, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for their kind co-operation in making available the records concerning Anna and discussing the case frankly with the writer. . . .

<sup>3</sup>The records are not clear as to which day.

<sup>4</sup>Letter to one of the state officials in charge of the case.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Progress report of the school.

<sup>7</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 564.

<sup>8</sup>The facts set forth here as to Anna’s ancestry are taken chiefly from a report of mental tests administered to Anna’s mother by psychologists at a state hospital where she was taken for this purpose after the discovery of Anna’s seclusion. This excellent report was not available to the writer when the previous paper on Anna was published.

<sup>9</sup>Mason, M. K. (1942). Learning to speak after six and one-half years of silence, *Journal of Speech Disorders*, 7, 295–304.

<sup>10</sup>Singh & Zingg, *op. cit.*, pp. xxi–xxii, in a foreword by the writer.



## *Questions*

1. How did the early experiences of the two young girls in the article differ prior to their discovery? How were they alike?
2. How did the two girls' experiences differ after their discovery? In other words, were there systematic differences in their training and education? If so, what were they, and how could these differences have affected the girls?
3. Anna had very little exposure to any human contact, while Isabelle likely had some contact with her mother, who was a deaf mute. To what degree could the developmental differences between Anna and Isabelle have stemmed from differences in mental ability? To what degree could these differences be explained by the varied contact that the girls had with other human beings?

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# Power and Class in the United States

WILLIAM DOMHOFF

*Why do laws tend to favor certain groups in society? If democracy works, why do the most popular laws fail to pass Congress? In this selection, William Domhoff investigates the power elite and its role in governmental decision-making.*

**P**ower and class are terms that make Americans a little uneasy, and concepts like *power elite* and *dominant class* immediately put people on guard. The idea that a relatively fixed group of privileged people might shape the economy and government for their own benefit goes against the American grain. Nevertheless, the owners and top-level managers in large income-producing properties are far and away the dominant power figures in the United States. Their corporations, banks, and agribusinesses come together as a *corporate community* that dominates the federal government in Washington. Their real estate, construction, and land development companies form *growth coalitions* that dominate most local governments. Granted, there is competition within both the corporate community and the local growth coalitions for profits and investment opportunities, and there are sometimes tensions between national corporations and local growth coalitions, but both are cohesive on policy issues affecting their general welfare, and in the face of demands by organized workers, liberals, environmentalists, and neighborhoods.

As a result of their ability to organize and defend their interests, the owners and managers of large income-producing properties have a very great share of all income and wealth in the United States,

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Excerpt from *Who Rules America Now?: Power and Politics in the Year 2000*, by William Domhoff, 1998, Mayfield Publishing. pp. 1–16.

greater than in any other industrial democracy. Making up at best 1 percent of the total population, by the early 1990s they earned 15.7 percent of the nation's yearly income and owned 37.2 percent of all privately held wealth, including 49.6 percent of all corporate stocks and 62.4 percent of all bonds.<sup>1</sup> Due to their wealth and the lifestyle it makes possible, these owners and managers draw closer as a common social group. They belong to the same exclusive social clubs, frequent the same summer and winter resorts, and send their children to a relatively handful of private schools. Members of the corporate community thereby become a *corporate* rich who create a nationwide *social upper class* through their social interaction. . . . Members of the growth coalitions, on the other hand, are *place entrepreneurs*, people who sell locations and buildings. They come together as local upper classes in their respective cities and sometimes mingle with the corporate rich in educational or resort settings.

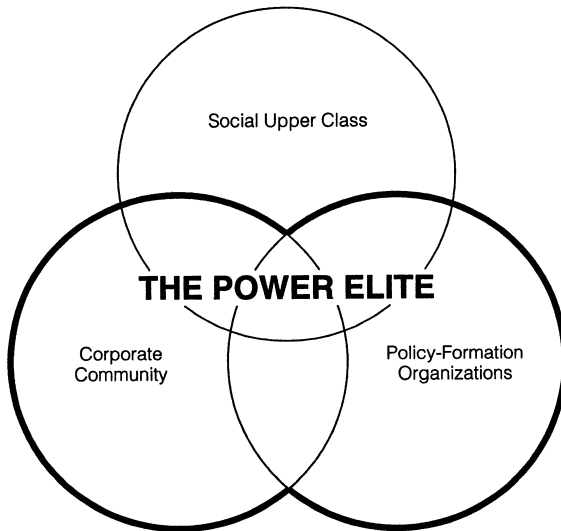
The corporate rich and the growth entrepreneurs supplement their small numbers by developing and directing a wide variety of nonprofit organizations, the most important of which are a set of tax-free charitable foundations, think tanks, and policy-discussion groups. These specialized nonprofit groups constitute a *policy-formation network* at the national level. Chambers of commerce and policy groups affiliated with them form similar policy-formation networks at the local level, aided by a few national-level city development organizations that are available for local consulting.

Those corporate owners who have the interest and ability to take part in general governance join with top-level executives in the corporate community and the policy-formation network to form the power elite, which is the leadership group for the corporate rich as a whole. The concept of a power elite makes clear that not all members of the upper class are involved in governance; some of them simply enjoy the lifestyle that their great wealth affords them. At the same time, the focus on a leadership group allows for the fact that not all those in the power elite are members of the upper class; many of them are high-level employees in profit and nonprofit organizations controlled by the corporate rich. The relationship between the power

elite and the three overlapping networks from which it is drawn is shown in Figure 1. The power elite, in other words, is based in both ownership and in organizational positions. . . .

The power elite is not united on all issues because it includes both moderate conservatives and ultraconservatives. Although both factions favor minimal reliance on government on all domestic issues, the moderate conservatives sometimes agree to legislation advocated by liberal elements of the society, especially in times of social upheaval like the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s. Except on defense spending, ultraconservatives are characterized by a complete distaste for any kind of government programs under any circumstances—even to the point of opposing government support for corporations on some issues.

**FIGURE 1** *A multinetwork view of how the power elite is drawn from three overlapping networks of people and institutions: the corporate community, the social upper class, and the policy-formation network. The power elite is defined by the thick lines.*



Moderate conservatives often favor foreign aid, working through the United Nations, and making attempts to win over foreign enemies through patient diplomacy, treaties, and trade agreements. Historically, ultraconservatives have opposed most forms of foreign involvement, although they have become more tolerant of foreign trade agreements over the past thirty or forty years. At the same time, their hostility to the United Nations continues unabated.

Members of the power elite enter into the electoral arena as the leaders within a *corporate-conservative coalition*, where they are aided by a wide variety of patriotic, antitax, and other single-issue organizations. These conservative advocacy organizations are funded in varying degrees by the corporate rich, direct-mail appeals, and middle-class conservatives. This coalition has played a large role in both political parties at the presidential level and usually succeeds in electing a conservative majority to both houses of Congress. Historically, the conservative majority in Congress was made up of most Northern Republicans and most Southern Democrats, but that arrangement has been changing gradually since the 1960s as the conservative Democrats of the South are replaced by even more conservative Southern Republicans. The corporate-conservative coalition also has access to the federal government in Washington through lobbying and the appointment of its members to top positions in the executive branch.

During the past twenty-five years the corporate-conservative coalition has formed an uneasy alliance within the Republican Party with what is sometimes called the “New Right” or “New Christian Right,” which consists for the most part of middle-level religious groups concerned with a wide range of “social issues,” such as teenage sexual and drinking behavior, abortion, and prayer in school. I describe the alliance as an “uneasy” one because the power elite and the New Right do not have quite the same priorities, except for a general hostility to government and liberalism, and because it is not completely certain that the New Right is helping the corporate-conservative coalition as much as its publicists and fund-raisers claim. Nevertheless, ultraconservatives within the power elite help to

finance some of the single-issue organizations and publications of the New Right.

Despite their preponderant power within the federal government and the many useful policies it carries out for them, members of the power elite are constantly critical of government as an alleged enemy of freedom and economic growth. Although their wariness toward government is expressed in terms of a dislike for taxes and government regulations, I believe their underlying concern is that government could change the power relations in the private sphere by aiding average Americans through a number of different avenues: (1) creating government jobs for the unemployed; (2) making health, unemployment, and welfare benefits more generous; (3) helping employees gain greater workplace rights and protections; and (4) helping workers organize unions. All of these initiatives are opposed by members of the power elite because they would increase wages and taxes, but the deepest opposition is toward any government support for unions because unions are a potential organizational base for advocating the whole range of issues opposed by the corporate rich.

## ☉ *Where Does Democracy Fit In?*

The argument I present, although contrary to some generally held beliefs, starts with the assumption that everyone is equal before the law and has opportunities for social mobility. I believe that there is freedom of expression, the possibility of political participation, and public conflict over significant issues. Furthermore, the class system is an open and changing one, and the political system is democratic. Thus, the challenge I face is to demonstrate that a dominant class and power elite can persist despite the political conflict and social change that are an inherent part of American society.

Moreover, to claim that the corporate rich have enough power to be considered a dominant class does not imply that lower social classes are totally powerless. *Domination* means the power to set the terms



under which other groups and classes must operate, not total control. Highly trained professionals with an interest in environmental and consumer issues have been able to couple their technical information and their understanding of the legislative and judicial processes with well-timed publicity, lobbying, and lawsuits to win governmental restrictions on some corporate practices. Wage and salary employees, when they are organized into unions and have the right to strike, have been able to gain pay increases, shorter hours, better working conditions, and social benefits such as health insurance. Even the most powerless of people—the very poor and those discriminated against—sometimes develop the capacity to influence the power structure through sit-ins, demonstrations, social movements, and other forms of social disruption, and there is evidence that such activities do bring about some redress of grievances, at least for a short time.<sup>2</sup>

More generally, the various challengers to the power elite sometimes work together on policy issues as a *liberal-labor coalition* that is based in unions, local environmental organizations, some minority group communities, university and arts communities, liberal churches, and small newspapers and magazines. Despite a decline in membership over the past twenty years, unions are the largest and best financed part of the coalition, and the largest organized social force in the country (aside from churches). They also cut across racial and ethnic lines more than any other institutionalized sector of American society. They have 16.3 million members, 80 percent of them in the seventy-eight unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (known as the AFL-CIO). They spend over \$5 billion a year on routine operations, most of it from membership dues, and have about \$10 billion in assets. During the 1990s they spent approximately \$50 million a year on political campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The twelve largest unions in the AFL-CIO and their membership figures for 1995 are listed in Table 1. Membership figures for 1975 and 1985 are also included, along with the percentage of increase or decrease, to show the decline in membership in traditional industrial unions and the rise in service and government employee unions.

The liberal-labor coalition also includes a few sons and daughters from well-to-do business and professional families who are critical of the power elite and the corporate-conservative coalition despite their comfortable financial upbringings. The presence of people from privileged social backgrounds in the liberal-labor camp suggests that religious and social values can sometimes be as important as class in shaping political orientations, and historically there are many examples of liberal, reformist, and even revolutionary leaders who come from high levels of the social ladder in their countries.

The liberal-labor coalition enters the electoral arena through the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Contrary to conservative political activists, liberal journalists, and some social scientists, this coalition never has had a major voice in the Democratic Party at the national level, although it probably had more impact from the late

**TABLE 1** *The 12 Largest AFL-CIO Unions and Their Membership Figures (in thousands)*

Union	1975	1985	1995	% Change
Teamsters	1,889	1,161	1,285	-32
State, county, and municipal employees (AFSCME)	647	997	1,183	+83
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)	480	688	1,027	+114
Food and commercial workers (UFCW)	1,150	989	983	-15
Automobile, aerospace, and agriculture workers (UAW)	1,358	974	751	-45
Electrical workers (IBEW)	856	971	679	-21
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)	396	470	613	+55
Communication workers (CWA)	476	524	478	+4
Machinists	780	520	448	-43
Steelworkers	1,062	572	403	-62
Carpenters	700	609	378	-46
Laborers	475	383	352	-26

Source: *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1978, p. 429; 1986, p. 423; 1996, p. 436.

1930s to the early 1970s than it has had since. It could, however, gain much greater influence in the party in the future due to social changes.

The policy conflicts between the corporate-conservative and liberal-labor coalitions are best described as *class conflicts* because they primarily concern the distribution of profits and wages, the rate and progressivity of taxation, the usefulness of labor unions, and the degree to which business should be regulated by government. The liberal labor coalition wants corporations to pay higher wages to employees and higher taxes to government. It wants government to regulate a wide range of business practices, including many that are related to the environment, and help employees to organize unions. The corporate conservative coalition resists all these policy objectives to a greater or lesser degree, claiming they endanger the freedom of individuals and the efficient workings of the economic marketplace. The conflicts these disagreements generate can manifest themselves in many different ways: workplace protests, industry wide boycotts, massive demonstrations in cities, pressure on Congress, and the outcome of elections.

Neither the corporate-conservative nor the liberal-labor coalition includes a very large percentage of the American population, although each has the regular support of about 25–30 percent of the voters. Both coalitions are made up primarily of financial donors, policy experts, political consultants, and party activists. Members of the rival coalitions share an intense interest in policy issues and elections, and both include individuals ambitious for political office, but the coalitions disagree greatly in their values, policy prescriptions, and general ideology.\*

The two coalitions are in constant competition for the allegiance of the general citizenry, most of whom pay little attention to politics, or hold views somewhere between those of the two coalitions, or

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\*An ideology is the complex set of rationales and rationalizations through which a group, class, or nation interprets the world and justifies its actions within it. An ideology usually is fervently believed by those who espouse it.

entertain a mixture of views that seem “contradictory” to activists on both sides of the fence. This means that as many as 40–50 percent of the electorate may be open to an attractive candidate or well-crafted policy appeal from one coalition or the other. More often than not, however, the corporate-conservative coalition triumphs in both the electoral and policy arenas. . . .

To help familiarize readers with the main differences among various political orientations in the United States, Table 2 presents a brief characterization of six groups on the issues that unite and divide them. The most central issues are the value of trade unions, greater government involvement in economic and environmental regulation, the usefulness of government social benefit programs like Social Security, and government support for a liberal agenda on social issues like affirmative action, abortion, and civil rights for gays and lesbians. Although those who now call themselves “leftists” or “progressives” make up only a few percent of the American population, the table also includes their views because they are highly vocal critics of both the corporate community and the liberal-labor coalition—especially

**TABLE 2** *The Policy Preferences on Several Key Issues for Six Political Orientations*

	<b>Anti-market Pro Plan- ning?</b>	<b>Pro Union?</b>	<b>For Environ- mental Regula- tion?</b>	<b>Pro Social Benefits?</b>	<b>Pro Social Issues?</b>
New right	No	No	No	No	No
Ultraconservatives	No	No	No	No	Sometimes
Moderate Conservatives	No	No	Some- what	Some- what	Often
Trade unionists*	No	Yes	Some- times	Yes	Maybe
Liberals	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Leftists/socialists	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*Some trade unionists are also liberals or leftists.

in university and literary settings—and often have their greatest appeal to college students and readers of books such as this one.

Historically, leftists differed sharply from liberals in that most of them wanted to replace the market economy and private business ownership with a comprehensive system of government ownership and planning called “socialism,” in which citizens would participate through involvement in the planning process and the election of government officials. At the same time, they held a range of views on how much planning and government ownership was necessary, and on how objectives might be obtained. More recently, the differences between leftists and liberals have narrowed as more leftists have come to advocate a mixture of private and public ownership, and the use of planning within a system of markets. However, many leftists still work in opposition to the liberal-labor coalition, and most of them favor one or another of several socialist or progressive third parties, arguing vigorously among themselves about which party has the best analysis and strategy.

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## ☉ *There Are No Conspiracies*

Few social scientists would agree, but there are some people who believe that power in the United States is exercised from behind the scenes by a small secretive group of private citizens who want to change the government system or put the country under the control of a world government. In the past, the conspirators were usually said to be secret Communist sympathizers who were intent on bringing the United States under a common world government in conjunction with the Soviet Union, but the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 changed the focus to the United Nations as the likely controlling force in a “new world order.” For a smaller group of conspiratorial thinkers, a secret group of operatives located in the government itself, especially the CIA, has been responsible for many terrible tragedies since the 1960s, including the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

From my standpoint, no conspiracy theory is credible on any issue. If there is anything to the theory presented here, the leaders in visible positions in the corporate community, the policy-formation network, and the government are the real leaders, and the processes that lead to class domination are the same mundane ones that social scientists have documented for other levels of the socioeconomic system. The group said by some conspiratorial thinkers to be at the center of the alleged conspiracy in the United States, the Council on Foreign Relations, is in fact a mere policy discussion forum (with nearly 3,000 members) that issues annual reports, allows access to its historical archives, and has a very different role in the overall power structure than what is claimed by conspiratorial theorists. . . .

The conspiratorial view is different in several ways from the theory presented [here]. First, it is based on psychological assumptions, not sociological ones. The main version assumes that some wealthy and highly educated private citizens develop an extreme psychological desire for power that takes precedence over their normal economic and political interests. In my theory, on the other hand, leaders act for understandable sociological reasons, such as profit-seeking motives and institutional roles. Second, the conspiratorial view assumes that the behind-the-scenes leaders are extremely clever and knowledgeable, whereas I assume that leaders often make shortsighted or ill-informed decisions due to the limits placed on their thinking by their social backgrounds and institutional roles. Third, the conspiratorial view places power in the hands of only a few dozen or so people, often guided by one strong leader, whereas I believe there is a leadership group of many thousands for a corporate rich that numbers several million. Finally, the conspiratorial view assumes that illegal plans to change the government or assassinate people can be kept secret for long periods of time, but all evidence shows that secret groups in the United States are uncovered by civil liberties groups, infiltrated by reporters or government officials, and written about in the press.<sup>4</sup> Assassinations and bombings in the United States have been the acts of individuals or small groups with no power.

All this said, it is also true that government officials sometimes take illegal actions or try to deceive the public. During the 1960s, for example, government leaders claimed that the Vietnam War was easily winnable, even though they knew otherwise. In the 1980s the Reagan Administration defied a Congressional ban on support for antigovernment rebels in Nicaragua (the “contras”) through a complicated scheme that raised money from foreign countries for the rebels. The plan included an illegal delivery of armaments to Iran in exchange for money and hostages. But deceptions and illegal actions are usually uncovered, if not immediately, then in historical records.

In the case of the Vietnam War deception, the unauthorized release in 1971 of government documents (*The Pentagon Papers*) revealing the true state of affairs caused the government great embarrassment and turned more people against the war. It also triggered the creation of a secret White House operation to plug leaks, which led in turn to an illegal entry into Democratic Party headquarters during the 1972 elections, an attempted cover-up of high-level approval of the operation, and the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon in the face of impeachment charges. As for the Reagan Administration’s illegal activities, they were unraveled in widely viewed congressional hearings that led to a six-month imprisonment for the president’s national security adviser for his part in an unsuccessful cover-up, along with convictions or guilty pleas for several others for obstruction of justice or lying to Congress. The secretary of defense was indicted for his part in the cover-up but was spared a trial when he was pardoned by President George Bush on Christmas Eve, 1992.<sup>5</sup>

It is also true that the CIA has been involved in espionage, sabotage, and the illegal overthrow of foreign governments and that the FBI spied on and attempted to disrupt Marxist third parties, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Ku Klux Klan. But careful studies show that all these actions were authorized by top government officials, which is the critical point here. There was no “secret team” or “shadow government” committing illegal acts or ordering government officials to deceive the public and disrupt social movements. Such a

distinction is crucial in differentiating all sociological theories of power from a conspiratorial one.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Wolff, E. (1996). *Top heavy*. New York: The New Press, pp. 64, 67.
- <sup>2</sup>Alford, R. R., & Friedland, R. (1975). Political participation and public policy. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1; Gamson, W. A. (1975). *The strategy of social protest*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press; Piven, F., & Cloward, R. (1993). *Regulating the poor* (Updated ed.). New York: Pantheon; Piven, F., & Cloward, R. (1977). *Poor people's movements*. New York: Random House.
- <sup>3</sup>Moberg, D. (1977). The resurgence of American unions: Small steps, long journey. *Working USA*, 1(1), 22.
- <sup>4</sup>For the most cogent and clear general statements of institutional elitism in its modern-day form, see Field, G. L., & Higley, J. (1980). *Elitism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; and Burton, M., & Higley, J. (1987). Invitation to elite theory: The basic contentions reconsidered. In G. W. Domhoff & T. R. Dye (Eds.), *Power elites and organizations* (pp. 219-238). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- <sup>5</sup>Dye, T. (1995). *Who's running America? The Clinton years* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.



## Questions

1. What three groups compose the power elite? How do they come together as a coherent group?
2. Does Domhoff think that democracy in America works? Why or why not?
3. What is the main challenger to the power elite in electoral politics?



4. Why does Domhoff argue that this theory is not a conspiracy theory?
5. If Domhoff is right, what are some changes that Americans could make to create more equality?

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# Of Our Spiritual Strivings

W.E.B. DU BOIS

*W.E.B. Du Bois's classic manuscript, The Souls of Black Folk, is often viewed as one of the earliest and most insightful works examining the plight of Black people in the United States. In this selection, Du Bois traces major developments between the emancipation proclamation and the early 1900s and discusses the concept of "double-consciousness" that Black people experience while trying to balance the notions of being "American" and "colored."*

## ☉ Double Consciousness

**B**etween me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain sud-

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"Double Consciousness" by W.E.B. Dubois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1905.

denness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination time, or beat them at a foot race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the worlds I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, “for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a coworker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx. Throughout history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagoguery; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black *savant* was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people—has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—liberty; in his tears and curses, the God he implored

had freedom in his right hand. At last it came—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences:

Shout, O children!  
 Shout, you're free!  
 For God has bought your liberty!

Years have passed away since then—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy specter sits in its accustomed seat at the nation's feast. In vain do we cry to this our vastest social problem.

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
 Shall never tremble!

The nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp—like a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku Klux Klan, the lies of carpetbaggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of *book-learning*: the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know.

Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn. It was weary work. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or someone had fallen. To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those somber forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself—darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another. For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. Nor was his burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home.

A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather a allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems. But alas! While sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defense of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the "higher" against the "lower" races. To

which the Negro cries *Amen!* and swears that to so much of this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows and meekly does obeisance. But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, dismayed, and well-nigh speechless; before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and the boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the Devil—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom *discouragement* is an unwritten word.

But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whisperings and portents came borne upon the four winds. Lo! We are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man's ballot, by force or fraud—and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good—the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes' social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

So dawned the time of *Sturm und Drang*: storm and stress today rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world-sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings. The bright ideals of the past—physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands—all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong, all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete—the dreams of a credulous race-childhood, or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power. To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need today more than ever—the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defense—else what shall save us from a second slavery? Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love

and aspire. Work, culture, liberty—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack. We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are today no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replaces her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? Or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? Or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

Merely a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic is the Negro Problem, and the spiritual striving of the freedmen's sons is the travail of souls whose burden is almost beyond the measure of their strength, but who bear it in the name of an historic race, in the name of this, the land of their fathers' fathers, and in the name of human opportunity.



## *Questions*

1. What does Du Bois mean by “double consciousness”?
2. Can double consciousness apply to other groups in the United States, historically or contemporarily?
3. Of the four major stages reviewed by Du Bois (i.e. physical freedom, political power, education, technical training), which do you think is currently most developed in contemporary America? Which is the least developed? Explain.
4. To what degree is it possible to apply Du Bois' transitions or stages to other minority groups in the United States? In other nations?



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# The Gender Blur

DEBORAH BLUM

University of Wisconsin–Madison

*This article examines the controversy over whether gender roles are biologically determined or the result of socialization. Journalism professor Deborah Blum contends that biology is the primary cause behind the differences in the behavior that we traditionally expect from boys and girls. She further argues that our responses to those behaviors amplify these differences. Sociologists do not ignore the role of biology in human behavior. However, they assume that cultural expectations also have a powerful influence on such behavior. Moreover, they believe that differences within a group are often more significant than differences between groups. That is, the differences among all men as a group and those among all women as a group are larger than the differences between men and women. This article challenges you to think about gender roles from these various perspectives.*

I was raised in one of those university-based, liberal elite families that politicians like to ridicule. In my childhood, every human being—regardless of gender—was exactly alike under the skin, and I mean exactly, barring his or her different opportunities. My parents wasted no opportunity to bring this point home. One Christmas, I received a Barbie doll and a softball glove. Another brought a green enamel stove, which baked tiny cakes by the heat of a lightbulb, and also a set of steel-tipped darts and competition-quality dartboard. Did I mention the year of the chemistry set and the ballerina doll?

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“The Gender Blur,” by Deborah Blum, reprinted from *Utne Reader*, September/October 1998. pp. 44–48.

It wasn't until I became a parent—I should say, a parent of two boys—that I realized I had been fed a line and swallowed it like a sucker (barring the part about opportunities, which I still believe). This dawned on me during my older son's dinosaur phase, which began when he was around 2 1/2. Oh, he loved dinosaurs, all right, but only the blood-swilling carnivores. Plant-eaters were wimps and losers, and he refused to wear a T-shirt marred by a picture of a stegosaur. I looked down at him one day, as he was snarling around my feet and doing his toddler best to gnaw off my right leg, and I thought: This goes a lot deeper than culture.

Raising a child tends to bring on this kind of politically incorrect reaction. Another friend came to the same conclusion watching a son determinedly bite his breakfast toast into the shape of a pistol he hoped would blow away—or at least terrify—his younger brother. Once you get past the guilt part—Did I do this? Should I have bought him that plastic allosaur with the oversized teeth?—such revelations can lead you to consider the far more interesting field of gender biology, where the questions take a different shape: Does love of carnage begin in culture or genetics, and which drives which? Do the gender roles of our culture reflect an underlying biology, and, in turn, does the way we behave influence that biology?

The point I'm leading up to—through the example of my son's innocent love of predatory dinosaurs—is actually one of the most straightforward in this debate. One of the reasons we're so fascinated by childhood behaviors is that, as the old saying goes, the child becomes the man (or woman, of course.) Most girls don't spend their preschool years snarling around the house and pretending to chew off their companion's legs. And they—mostly—don't grow up to be as aggressive as men. Do the ways that we amplify those early differences in childhood shape the adults we become? Absolutely. But it's worth exploring the starting place—the faint signal that somehow gets amplified.

“There's plenty of room in society to influence sex differences,” says Marc Breedlove, a behavioral endocrinologist at the University of California at Berkeley and a pioneer in defining how hormones can

help build sexually different nervous systems. “Yes, we’re born with predispositions, but it’s society that amplifies them, exaggerates them. I believe that—except for the sex differences in aggression. Those [differences] are too massive to be explained simply by society.”

Aggression does allow a straightforward look at the issue. Consider the following statistics: Crime reports in both the United States and Europe record between 10 and 15 robberies committed by men for every one by a woman. At one point, people argued that this was explained by size difference. Women weren’t big enough to intimidate, but that would change, they predicted, with the availability of compact weapons. But just as little girls don’t routinely make weapons out of toast, women—even criminal ones—don’t seem drawn to weaponry in the same way that men are. Almost twice as many male thieves and robbers use guns as their female counterparts do.

Or you can look at more personal crimes: domestic partner murders. Three-fourths of men use guns in those killings; 50 percent of women do. Here’s more from the domestic front: In conflicts in which a woman killed a man, he tended to be one who had started the fight—in 51.8 percent of the cases, to be exact. When the man was the killer, he again was the likely first aggressor, and by an even more dramatic margin. In fights in which women died, they had started the argument only 12.5 percent of the time. . . .

. . . We all know that there are extraordinarily gentle men and murderous women. Sex differences are always generalizations: They refer to a behavior, with some evolutionary rationale behind it. They never define, entirely, an individual. And that fact alone should tell us that there’s always—even in the most biologically dominated traits—some flexibility, an instinctive ability to respond, for better and worse, to the world around us.

This is true even with physical characteristics that we’ve often assumed are nailed down by genetics. Scientists now believe height, for instance, is only about 90 percent heritable. A person’s genes might code for a six-foot-tall body, but malnutrition could literally cut that short. And there’s also some evidence, in girls anyway, that

children with stressful childhoods tend to become shorter adults. So while some factors are predetermined, there's evidence that the prototypical male/female body design can be readily altered.

It's a given that humans, like most other species—bananas, spiders, sharks, ducks, any rabbit you pull out of a hat—rely on two sexes for reproduction. So basic is that requirement that we have chromosomes whose primary purpose is to deliver the genes that order up a male or a female. All other chromosomes are numbered, but we label the sex chromosomes with the letters X and Y. We get one each from our mother and our father, and the basic combinations are these: XX makes female, XY makes male.

There are two important—and little known—points about these chromosomal matches. One is that even with this apparently precise system, there's nothing precise—or guaranteed—about the physical construction of male and female. The other point makes that possible. It appears that sex doesn't matter in the early stages of embryonic development. We are unisex at the point of conception.

If you examine an embryo at about six weeks, you see that it has the ability to develop in either direction. The fledgling embryo has two sets of ducts—Wolffian for male, Mullerian for female—an either/or structure, held in readiness for further development. If testosterone and other androgens are released by hormone-producing cells, then the Wolffian ducts develop into the channel that connects penis to testes, and the female ducts wither away.

Without testosterone, the embryo takes on a female form; the male ducts vanish and the Mullerian ducts expand into oviducts, uterus, and vagina. In other words, in humans, anyway (the opposite is true in birds), the female is the default sex. Back in the 1950s, the famed biologist Alfred Jost showed that if you castrate a male rabbit fetus, choking off testosterone, you produce a completely feminized rabbit.

We don't do these experiments in humans—for obvious reasons—but there are naturally occurring instances that prove the same point. For instance: In the fetal testes are a group of cells, called Leydig cells, that make testosterone. In rare cases, the fetus doesn't

make enough of these cells (a defect known as Leydig cell hypoplasia). In this circumstance we see the limited power of the XY chromosome. These boys have the right chromosomes and the right genes to be boys; they just don't grow a penis. Obstetricians and parents often think they see a baby girl, and these children are routinely raised as daughters. Usually, the "mistake" is caught about the time of puberty, when menstruation doesn't start. A doctor's examination shows the child to be internally male; there are usually small testes, often tucked within the abdomen. As the researchers put it, if the condition had been known from the beginning, "the sisters would have been born as brothers."

Just to emphasize how tricky all this body-building can get, there's a peculiar genetic defect that seems to be clustered by heredity in a small group of villages in the Dominican Republic. The result of the defect is a failure to produce an enzyme that concentrates testosterone, specifically for building the genitals. One obscure little enzyme only, but here's what happens without it: You get a boy with undescended testes and a penis so short and stubby that it resembles an oversized clitoris.

In the mountain villages of this Caribbean nation, people are used to it. The children are usually raised as "conditional" girls. At puberty, the secondary tide of androgens rises and is apparently enough to finish the construction project. The scrotum suddenly descends, the phallus grows, and the child develops a distinctly male body—narrow hips, muscular build, and even slight beard growth. At that point, the family shifts the child over from daughter to son. The dresses are thrown out. He begins to wear male clothes and starts dating girls. People in the Dominican Republic are so familiar with this condition that there's a colloquial name for it: *guedoces*, meaning "eggs (or testes) at 12."

It's the comfort level with this slip-slide of sexual identity that's so remarkable and, I imagine, so comforting to the children involved. I'm positive that the sexual transition of these children is less traumatic than the abrupt awareness of the "sisters who would have been

brothers.” There’s a message of tolerance there, well worth repeating, and there are some other key lessons too.

These defects are rare and don’t alter the basic male-female division of our species. They do emphasize how fragile those divisions can be. Biology allows flexibility, room to change, to vary and grow. With that comes room for error as well. That it’s possible to live with these genetic defects, that they don’t merely kill us off, is a reminder that we, male and female alike, exist on a continuum of biological possibilities that can overlap and sustain either sex.

Marc Breedlove points out that the most difficult task may be separating how the brain responds to hormones from how the brain responds to the *results* of hormones. Which brings us back, briefly, below the belt: In this context, the penis is just a result, the product of androgens at work before birth. “And after birth,” says Breedlove, “virtually everyone who interacts with that individual will note that he has a penis, and will, in many instances, behave differently than if the individual was a female.”

Do the ways that we amplify physical and behavioral differences in childhood shape who we become as adults? Absolutely. But to understand that, you have to understand the differences themselves—their beginning and the very real biochemistry that may lie behind them.

Here is a good place to focus on testosterone—a hormone that is both well-studied and generally underrated. First, however, I want to acknowledge that there are many other hormones and neurotransmitters that appear to influence behavior. Preliminary work shows that fetal boys are a little more active than fetal girls. It’s pretty difficult to argue socialization at that point. There’s a strong suspicion that testosterone may create the difference. . . .

Is testosterone the only factor at work here? I don’t think so. But clearly we can argue a strong influence, and, interestingly, studies have found that girls with congenital adrenal hypoplasia—who run high in testosterone—tend to be far more fascinated by trucks and toy weaponry than most little girls are. They lean toward rough-and-tumble play, too. As it turns out, the strongest influence on this

“abnormal” behavior is not parental disapproval, but the company of other little girls, who tone them down and direct them toward more routine girl games.

And that reinforces an early point: If there is indeed a biology to sex differences, we amplify it. At some point—when it is still up for debate—we gain a sense of our gender, and with it a sense of “gender-appropriate” behavior.

Some scientists argue for some evidence of gender awareness in infancy, perhaps by the age of 12 months. The consensus seems to be that full-blown “I’m a girl” or “I’m a boy” instincts arrive between the ages of 2 and 3. Research shows that if a family operates in a very traditional, Beaver Cleaver kind of environment, filled with awareness of and association with “proper” gender behaviors, the “boys do trucks, girls do dolls” attitude seems to come very early. If a child grows up in a less traditional family, with an emphasis on partnership and sharing—“We all do the dishes, Joshua”—children maintain a more flexible sense of gender roles until about age 6.

In this period, too, relationships between boys and girls tend to fall into remarkably strict lines. Interviews with children find that 3-year-olds say that about half of their friendships are with the opposite sex. By the age of 5, that drops to 20 percent. By 7, almost no boys or girls have, or will admit to having, best friends of the opposite sex. They still hang out on the same playground, play on the same soccer teams. They may be friendly, but the real friendships tend to be boy-to-boy or girl-to-girl.

There’s some interesting science that suggests that the space between boys and girls is a normal part of development; there are periods during which children may thrive and learn from hanging out with peers of the same sex. Do we, as parents, as a culture at large, reinforce such separations? Is the pope Catholic? One of my favorite studies looked at little boys who asked for toys. If they asked for a heavily armed action figure, they got the soldier about 70 percent of the time. If they asked for a “girl” toy, like a baby doll or a Barbie, their parents purchased it maybe 40 percent of the time. Name a child who won’t figure out how to work *that* system.

How does all this fit together—toys and testosterone, biology and behavior, the development of the child into the adult, the way that men and women relate to one another?

Let me make a cautious statement about testosterone: It not only has some body-building functions, it influences some behaviors as well. Let's make that a little less cautious: These behaviors include rowdy play, sex drive, competitiveness, and an in-your-face attitude. Males tend to have a higher baseline of testosterone than females—in our species, about seven to ten times as much—and therefore you would predict (correctly, I think) that all of those behaviors would be more generally found in men than in women.

But testosterone is also one of my favorite examples of how responsive biology is, how attuned it is to the way we live our lives. Testosterone, it turns out, rises in response to competition and threat. In the days of our ancestors, this might have been hand-to-hand combat or high-risk hunting endeavors. Today, scientists have measured testosterone rise in athletes preparing for a game, in chess players awaiting a match, in spectators following a soccer competition.

If a person—or even just a person's favored team—wins, testosterone continues to rise. It falls with a loss. (This also makes sense in an evolutionary perspective. If one was being clobbered with a club, it would be extremely unhelpful to have a hormone urging one to battle on.) Testosterone also rises in the competitive world of dating, settles down with a stable and supportive relationship, climbs again if the relationship starts to falter.

It's been known for years that men in high-stress professions—say, police work or corporate law—have higher testosterone levels than men in the ministry. It turns out that women in the same kind of strong-attitude professions have higher testosterone than women who choose to stay home. What I like about this is the chicken-or-egg aspect. If you argue that testosterone influenced the behavior of those women, which came first? Did they have high testosterone and choose the law? Or did they choose the law, and the competitive environment ratcheted them up on the androgen scale? Or could both be at work?



And, returning to children for a moment, there's an ongoing study by Pennsylvania researchers, tracking that question in adolescent girls, who are being encouraged by their parents to engage in competitive activities that were once for boys only. As they do so, the researchers are monitoring, regularly, two hormones: testosterone and cortisol, a stress hormone. Will these hormones rise in response to this new, more traditionally male environment? What if more girls choose the competitive path; more boys choose the other? Will female testosterone levels rise, male levels fall? Will that wonderful, unpredictable, flexible biology that we've been given allow a shift, so that one day, we will literally be far more alike?

We may not have answers to all those questions, but we can ask them, and we can expect that the answers will come someday, because science clearly shows us that such possibilities exist. In this most important sense, sex differences offer us a paradox. It is only through exploring and understanding what makes us different that we can begin to understand what binds us together.



## *Questions*

1. Summarize the argument that biologists use to explain differences in the behavior of boys and girls.
2. What are “conditional girls”?
3. According to the article, what role do hormones play in human behavior?
4. How is the relationship between testosterone and occupational choice a “chicken-and-egg” phenomenon? Provide an example.
5. Ask several acquaintances or friends why most men seem to behave one way and most women another. Are the explanations you get biological or sociological in nature? Compare these explanations to those offered by your classmates.

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# *In Search of the Sacred*

BARBARA KANTROWITZ

*The author of this selection looks at the changing face of religion in the United States. She notes that baby boomers are especially more willing to pick and choose elements of various religions and then fuse them together to form a “personal spirituality.” As you read, notice the role that Eastern and other non-traditional religions play in this process.*

Rita McClain's spiritual journey began in Iowa, where she grew up in the fundamentalist world of the Pentecostal Church. What she remembers most about that time are tent meetings and an overwhelming feeling of guilt. In her 20s she tried less doctrinaire Protestantism. That, too, proved unsatisfying. By the age of 27, McClain had rejected all organized religion. “I really felt like a pretty wounded Christian,” she says. For the next 18 years, she sought inner peace only in nature, through rock climbing in the mountains or hiking in the desert. That seemed enough.

Then, six years ago, in the aftermath of an emotionally draining divorce, McClain's spiritual life blossomed. Just as she had once explored mountains, she began scouting the inner landscape. She started with Unity, a metaphysical church near her Marin County, Calif., home. It was a revelation, light-years away from the “Old Testament kind of thing I knew very well from my childhood.” The next stop was Native American spiritual practices. Then it was Buddhism at Marin County's Spirit Rock Meditation Center, where she has attended a number of retreats, including one that required eight days of silence.

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“In Search of the Sacred,” by Barbara Kantrowitz, reprinted from *Newsweek*, November 28, 1994, pp. 53–55. Copyright © 1994 Newsweek, Inc. [www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com)

These disparate rituals melded into a personal religion, which McClain, a 50-year-old nurse, celebrates at an ever-changing altar in her home. Right now the altar consists of an angel statue, a small bottle of “sacred water” blessed at a women’s vigil, a crystal ball, a pyramid, a small brass image of Buddha sitting on a brass leaf, a votive candle, a Hebrew prayer, a tiny Native American basket from the 1850s and a picture of her “most sacred place,” a madrone tree near her home.

Maybe it’s a critical mass of baby boomers in the contemplative afternoon of life. Or anxiety over the coming millennium. Or a general dissatisfaction with the materialism of the modern world. For these reasons and more, millions of Americans are embarking on a search for the sacred in their lives. Not all have a journey as extreme as Rita McClain’s. Some are returning to the religions of their childhoods, finding new meaning in old rituals. Others look for wisdom outside their own cultures, mixing different traditions in an individualistic stew.

The seekers fit no particular profile. They include Wall Street investment bankers who spend their lunch hours in Bible-study groups, artists rediscovering religious themes, fitness addicts who’ve traded aerobics classes for meditation and other spiritual exercises. No matter what path they take, the seekers are united by a sincere desire to find answers to profound questions, to understand their place in the cosmos. “Living in a secular world is like living in an astrodome with a roof over the top,” says Roy Larson of Northwestern University’s new Center for Religion and the News Media. “The temperature is always 70 degrees and the grass is always green. Even in a place that holds 70,000 people, you feel claustrophobic. You need to breathe some fresh air.” Americans have always been a religious people, of course. Even during the past several decades, when it seemed like the prevailing culture was overwhelmingly irreverent and secular, legions of the faithful filled pews every Sunday. But for baby boomers in particular, spirituality was off the radarscope. Instead, as a generation, boomers embraced political activism, careerism, even marathon running, with an almost religious zeal. Now it’s suddenly

OK, even chic, to use the S words—soul, sacred, spiritual, sin. In a *Newsweek* Poll, a majority of Americans (58 percent) say they feel the need to experience spiritual growth. And a third of all adults report having had a mystical or religious experience.

Check out the barometers in the cultural marketplace. Bookstores are lined with spiritual missives. Music stores feature best-selling Gregorian chants. Hollywood salts its scripts with divine references and afterlife experiences. Want to give that special seeker on your winter-solstice list a crystal? Be sure to wrap it in angels gift paper. These are amazing times: Pope John Paul II's new book, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope," tops the best-seller list, beating out Faye Resnick's raunchy tell-all about Nicole Brown Simpson. James Redfield's spiritual novel, "The Celestine Prophecy," is at the top of the fiction list. In the music world, Motown no longer has the monopoly on soul. Since March, Angel Records has sold 2.8 million copies of the CD "Chant" by the Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo de Silos. The Beastie Boys included a Buddhist rap on their last album; gospel rap is competing with the usual misogynistic fare.

Something's going on, and people want to talk about it. Celebrities as different as tennis star Andre Agassi and playwright David Mamet tell interviewers how they've found God in their lives. Kathleen Norris's 1993 book, "Dakota: A Spiritual Geography," is on the paperback best-seller list. She has received 3,000 letters from people wanting to share their spiritual lives—an amazing amount of mail for a book of reflective essays. *Newsweek* publishes a story about Czech President Vaclav Havel's speech on the search for meaning, and readers call for weeks, wanting to describe their own journeys.

Politicians, like Newt Gingrich, have pushed school prayer onto the national agenda. Talk shows, such as "Oprah," have featured spirituality. Physicists debate the spiritual significance of quantum mechanics. Attendance at religious retreats has skyrocketed. The Abbey of Gethsemani, 45 miles south of Louisville, Ky., is booked through the end of April. "For people who are really insistent," says Brother Patrick Hart, "we say we'll put you on standby, just like on the airlines."

Courses and lectures with spiritual themes are drawing standing-room-only crowds. Interface, a holistic-education center in Cambridge, Mass., offers 700 courses to 20,000 registrants this year, up from 13,000 just three years ago. This fall, 2,000 people showed up for a conference on body and soul featuring such heavy-hitting speakers as Dr. Dean Ornish, who advocates a diet-cum-spiritual cure for heart disease, and Dr. Bernie Siegel, author of "Love, Medicine and Miracles." "People are really hungry for this," says program planner Anne Arsenault. "They're hungry for meaning in life."

For entrepreneurs with a keen sense of the Zeitgeist, this is an obvious opportunity. Deja Vu Tours, based in Berkeley, Calif., specializes in "spiritual adventure" travel. It boasts that its clients have "seen the sun rise at Stonehenge, visited the 'Room of the Spirits' at the Dalai Lama's Monastery, participated in rituals led by a shaman at Machu Picchu, sung a greeting to the Kumari, the Living Goddess of Nepal, and received baptisms in the Jordan River." Susan Hull Bostwick, who started Deja Vu Tours 13 years ago, says her clients are people who have a sense that they've lived before and want to stand in the sacred places of their past.

There are spiritual seekers of all ages, but baby boomers are at the head of the march. Wade Clark Roof, a professor of religion at the University of California, Santa Barbara, says that as the boomers enter their 40s, they must face the inevitable: neither jogging nor liposuction nor all the brown rice in China can keep them young forever. "As our bodies fall apart, as they weaken and sag, it speaks of mortality," says Roof, author of "A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation." Boomers, says Roof, "are at a point in their lives where they sense the need for spirituality, but they don't know where to get it." Another trigger: parenthood, and the desire to give children a moral and spiritual foundation.

The boomers' search is eclectic, as befits children of a skeptical age. "Each generation is trained to look at spirituality differently," says Rabbi Robert N. Levine, 43, of Congregation Robert Sholom in Manhattan. "Our generation participated in civil-rights and Vietnam

marches. Now we want to have a dialogue.” That dialogue can take place within a traditional denomination. Yvette Perry, 39, a member of Rabbi Levine’s congregation, celebrated her adult bat mitzvah earlier this year. Perry says she needed to step off the fast track; her career, running a music-marketing firm, just wasn’t enough. Studying with Levine, she says, is “all about dealing with learning and growing and changing. . . . You can read something and the rabbi can read it and there are different viewpoints and you get to argue about it. It’s a quest for knowledge.”

While Perry is able to integrate her spiritual and professional lives, other seekers find their search means a radical new path. In 1989 Mary Helen Nugent was a 33-year-old hospital administrator in Michigan. She had a master’s degree, earned a healthy salary and was very career-minded. In her personal life, she says, “I thought what I wanted was marriage, family and all that.” But that year, she gradually began questioning all her assumptions about the direction of her life. No single experience brought this on, she says; rather, it was a slow process of self-discovery. “I came to the conclusion,” Nugent says, “that a religious life was something I wanted to try and needed to try.”

Today Nugent is a nun, living with two other nuns in a single-family home in Dallas, Pa. Her paycheck from Mercy Hospital in Scranton goes directly to the Sisters of Mercy. In return, she gets a small stipend for living expenses. “I’m not running away from anything,” she says. “I’m trying to share a life and a faith.”

At the other end of the spiritual spectrum are seekers who move beyond conventional boundaries, to a kind of cafeteria religion, a very American theology. In a pluralistic society, “one institution feels a little spiritually claustrophobic,” says James W. Jones, a religion professor at Rutgers University and the author of the upcoming book “In the Middle of This Road We Call Our Life: The Courage to Search for Something More.” Jones recalls deriding this kind of pick-and-choose religion as frivolous and narcissistic a decade ago. But now he believes that a person who has synthesized different traditions can

find a path that “may be as spiritually profound as traditional religions or even more spiritually profound.”

At the very least, adopting a cross-cultural spirituality brings an appreciation of very different worlds. As an English major at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1960s, Edward Bednar was on the usual college-career path. But after nearly dying in surgery, he dropped out of school and studied with a Zen master. Meditation helped him “find truth” in the details of everyday life, he says. Eventually, Bednar discovered he could also find truth in a place he had long abandoned, the Roman Catholic Church. He found new inspiration studying the mystics and the saints. Now 50 and living in Brooklyn, N.Y., Bednar teaches meditation to businessmen on Wall Street and goes to mass on Sundays. He also integrates spirituality into his everyday work at the New York Association for New Americans, an organization that resettles 20,000 refugees each year. After meeting the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, he helped bring 1,000 Tibetan families to this country and is helping them set up new communities here.

Inevitably, there’s a high-tech component to this phenomenon, too. On the Internet, devotees can find Bible-study groups, meditation instruction and screens of New Age philosophy. A self-described futurist in Amherst, Mass., who calls herself Doctress Neutopia, has created her own online religion. Anyone with a modem can join her congregation. In Sunnyvale, Calif., Jeff Manning, 37, has produced a CD-ROM version of the tarot—and taken up Siddha Yoga, which he considers the most spiritual tradition he has encountered. As his two young children grow older, Manning is considering “doing an organized-religion tour”—exposing them to major denominations the way wealthy parents once took their offspring on a tour of Europe.

As we approach the millennium, some theologians expect an increase in spiritual seeking. The calendar watershed itself inspires anxiety and soul-searching. At the same time, more baby boomers will be approaching dreaded middle age. Spirituality could be just another boomer passion, stuck in the closet next to the rowing machine—or it could be a powerful force for personal growth. “A lot

has changed in the last half century,” says Charles Nuckolls, an anthropologist at Emory University who studies religion and healing. “We’ve stripped away what our ancestors saw as essential—the importance of religion and family. . . . People feel they want something they’ve lost, and they don’t remember what it is they’ve lost. But it has left a gaping hole.” That, in essence, is the seeker’s quest: to fill the hole with a new source of meaning. Why are we here? What is the purpose of our existence? The answers change in each generation, but the questions are eternal.



## *Questions*

1. Why might Americans be searching for the sacred? Is there a particular profile for spiritual seekers?
2. The author quotes Wade Clark Roof, who gives reasons for why baby boomers are spiritual seekers. What sociological factors have influenced boomers’ desire for spirituality, according to Roof and the author?
3. Think about your views on religion and spirituality. What has influenced your views? Have your views changed over time? Why?
4. Why do you think people today are more able to synthesize elements from Eastern religions and traditional Western ones? Do you think this phenomenon will increase, decrease, or stabilize over time? Why?



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# Women in the Global Factory

ANNETTE FUENTES AND BARBARA EHRENREICH

*During the 1980s and 1990s, American business interests continually expanded overseas. The reasons for this expansion are clearly economic: Multinational firms face lower wages and less restrictive labor and environmental regulations. In this article, published in 1983, Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich address the role of women in developing nations. While their study was done at the beginning of the global expansion, little has changed for women working in various manufacturing enterprises.*

In Penang, Malaysia, Julie K. is up before the three other young women with whom she shares a room and starts heating the leftover rice from last night's supper. She looks good in the company's green-trimmed uniform and she's proud to work in a modern, U.S.-owned factory. Not quite so proud as when she started working three years ago, she thinks, as she squints out the door at a passing group of women. All day at work, she peers through a microscope, bonding hair-thin gold wires to silicon chips that will end up inside pocket calculators. At 21 years of age, she is afraid she can no longer see very clearly.

**I**n the 1890s, farm girls in England and the northeastern United States filled the textile mills of the first Industrial Revolution.

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"Women in the Global Factory," by Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, reprinted from *Women in the Global Factory*, 1983, South End Press. Copyright © by Institute for New Communications. pp. 5-15.

Today, from Penang to Ciudad Juarez, young Third World women have become the new “factory girls,” providing a vast pool of cheap labor for globetrotting corporations. Behind the labels “Made in Taiwan” and “assembled in Haiti” may be one of the most strategic blocs of womanpower of the 1980s. In the last 15 years, multinational corporations, such as Sears Roebuck and General Electric, have come to rely on women around the world to keep labor costs down and profits up. Women are the unseen assemblers of consumer goods such as toys and designer jeans, as well as the hardware of today’s “Microprocessor Revolution.”

Low wages are the main reason companies move to the Third World. A female assembly line worker in the U.S. is likely to earn between \$3.10 and \$5 an hour.\* In many Third World countries a woman doing the same work will earn \$3 to \$5 a *day*. Corporate executives with their eyes glued to the bottom line, wonder why they should pay someone in Massachusetts on an hourly basis what someone in the Philippines will earn in a day. And, for that matter, why pay a male worker anywhere to do what a female worker can be hired to do for 40 to 60% less?

...

We need female workers; older than 17, younger than 30; single and without children; minimum education primary school, maximum education one year of preparatory school [high school]; available for all shifts.

Advertisement from a Mexican newspaper

A nimble veteran seamstress, Miss Altagracia eventually began to earn as much as \$5.75 a day . . . “I was exceeding my piecework quota by a lot.” . . . But then, Altagracia said, her plant supervisor, a Cuban emigre, called her into his office. “He said I was doing a fine job, but that I and some

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\*Eds. Note—The wages are from 1983.

**FIGURE 1** *Cheap Labor Wages Per Hour in U.S. Dollars*

	Wage	Wage & Fringe Benefits
Hong Kong	\$1.15	\$1.20
Singapore	.79	1.25
South Korea	.63	2.00
Taiwan	.53	.80
Malaysia	.48	.60
Philippines	.48	.50
Indonesia	.19	.35

Source: *Semiconductor International*, February 1982.

other of the women were making too much money, and he was being forced to lower what we earned for each piece we sewed.” On the best days, she now can clear barely \$3, she said. “I was earning less, so I started working six and seven days a week. But I was tired and I could not work as fast as before.” Within a few months she was too ill to work at all.

Story of 23-year-old Basilia Altagracia, a seamstress in the Dominican Republic’s La Romana free trade zone, in the *AFL-CIO American Federalist*.<sup>1</sup>

There are over one million people employed in industrial free trade zones in the Third World. Millions more work outside the zones in multinational-controlled plants and domestically-owned subtracting factories. Eighty to 90% of the light-assembly workers are women. This is a remarkable switch from earlier patterns of foreign-controlled industrialization. Until recently, economic development involved heavy industries such as mining and construction and usually meant more jobs for men and—compared to traditional agricultural society—a diminished economic status for women. But multinationals consider light-assembly work, whether the product is Barbie dolls or computer components, to be women’s work.

Women everywhere are paid lower wages than men. Since multinationals go overseas to reduce labor costs, women are the natural choice for assembly jobs. Wage-earning opportunities for women are limited and women are considered only supplementary income earners for their families. Management uses this secondary status to pay women less than men and justify layoffs during slow periods, claiming that women don't need to work and will probably quit to get married.

Women are the preferred workforce for other reasons. Multinationals want a workforce that is docile, easily manipulated and willing to do boring, repetitive assembly work. Women, they claim, are the perfect employees, with their "natural patience" and "manual dexterity." As the personnel manager of an assembly plant in Taiwan says, "Young male workers are too restless and impatient to be doing monotonous work with no career value. If displeased they sabotage the machine and even threaten the foreman. But girls, at most they cry a little."<sup>2</sup>

Multinationals prefer single women with no children and no plans to have any. Pregnancy tests are routinely given to potential employees to avoid the issue of maternity benefits. In India, a woman textile worker reports that "they do take unmarried women but they prefer women who have had an operation," referring to her government's sterilization program.<sup>3</sup> In the Philippines' Bataan Export Processing Zone the Mattel toy company offers prizes to workers who undergo sterilization.<sup>4</sup>

Third World women haven't always been a ready workforce. Until two decades ago, young women were vital to the rural economy in many countries. They worked in the home, in agriculture, or in local cottage industries. But many Third World governments adopted development plans favoring large-scale industry and agribusiness as advocated by such agencies as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Traditional farming systems and communities are now crumbling as many families lose their land and local enterprises collapse. As a result of the breakdown of the rural

economy, many families now send their daughters to the cities or the free trade zones in an attempt to assure some income.

The majority of the new female workforce is young, between 16 and 25 years old. As one management consultant explains, “when seniority rises, wages rise”; so the companies prefer to train a fresh group of teenagers rather than give experienced women higher pay. Different industries have different age and skill standards. The youngest workers, usually under 23 years old, are found in electronics and textile factories where keen eyesight and dexterity are essential. A second, older group of women work in industries like food processing where nimble fingers and perfect vision aren’t required. Conditions in these factories are partially bad. Multinationals can get away with more because the women generally can’t find jobs elsewhere.

Not all companies want young women, although this is the exception rather than the rule. In Singapore, some companies had problems with young women workers who went “shopping for jobs from factory to factory.” Management consultants suggested “housewives-only” assembly lines. Older and too responsible for “transient glamour jobs,” housewives would make better candidates, they reasoned. One consultant recommended that “a brigade of housewives could run the factory from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and leave. Then a second brigade could come in [and] take over till 6 p.m. This way housewives need only work half a day. They will be able to earn and spend time with their families. The factories will get a full and longer day’s work. Deadlines will be met.”<sup>5</sup>

Corporate apologists are quick to insist that Third World women are absolutely thrilled with their newfound employment opportunities. “You should watch these kids going to work,” said Bill Mitchell, an American who solicits U.S. business for the Burmudez Industrial Park in Ciudad Juarez. “You don’t have any sullenness here. They smile.” A top-level management consultant who advises U.S. companies on where to relocate their factories said, “The girls genuinely enjoy themselves. They’re away from their families. They have spending money. They can buy motor bikes, whatever. Of course, it is a reg-

ulated experience, too—with dormitories to live in—so it’s a healthful experience.” Richard Meier, a professor of environment design believes that “earning power should do more for the women of these countries than any amount of organization, demonstration and protest. . . . The benefits and freedom to be gained by these women from their employment in these new industries are almost always preferred to the near slavery associated with the production of classical goods, such as batik.”<sup>6</sup>

Liberation or virtual slavery? What is the real experience of Third World women? A study of Brazilian women working in a textile factory drew positive conclusions: work “represents the widening of horizons, a means of confronting life, a source of individualization. The majority of women . . . drew a significant part of their identity from being wage-workers.”<sup>7</sup> By earning money and working outside the home, factory women may find a certain independence from their families. Meeting and working with other women lays the foundation for a collective spirit and, perhaps, collective action.

But at the same time, the factory system relies upon and reinforces the power of men in the traditional patriarchal family to control women. Cynthia Enloe, a sociologist who organized an international conference of women textile workers in 1982, says that in the Third World, “the emphasis on family is absolutely crucial to management strategy. Both old-time firms and multinationals use the family to reproduce and control workers. Even recruitment is a family process. Women don’t just go out independently to find jobs: it’s a matter of fathers, brothers and husbands making women available after getting reassurances from the companies. Discipline becomes a family matter since, in most cases, women turn their paychecks over to their parents. Factory life is, in general, constrained and defined by the family life cycle.”

One thing is certain: when multinational corporate-style development meets traditional patriarchal culture, women’s lives are bound to change.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Flannery, M. (1978, May). America's sweatshops in the sun. *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, 16.
- <sup>2</sup>Cantwell, B., Luce, D., & Weinglass, L. (1978). *Made in Taiwan*. New York: Asia Center, 14.
- <sup>3</sup>Chhachhi, A. (1981). The experiences of retrenchment: Women textile workers in India. Paper presented at textile worker conference of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, October 1981, p. 7.
- <sup>4</sup>From a slide show on women in the Philippines by the Philippine Solidarity Network, San Francisco, California.
- <sup>5</sup>Our fussy factory workers. (1978, June 18). *New Straits Times* (Singapore).
- <sup>6</sup>Meier, R. L. (1977, November). Multinationals as agents of social development. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 32.
- <sup>7</sup>Saffioti, H. I. B. (1981). The impact of industrialization on the structure of female employment. Paper presented at textile workers conference of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam.



## Questions

1. Why do multinational manufacturing firms prefer to employ women? Are the reasons simply economic? If not, what else affects this trend?
2. To what degree does age also play a role in the work conditions described in the article?
3. Do you agree with the “corporate apologists” that employment for women in the Third World is liberating?
4. In 1982, the minimum wage in the United States was \$3.10 per hour. What is the minimum wage now? If you look up today's standard wages for the countries listed in Table 1, how do they compare to the standard wages in 1982? Has the gap (i.e., profit) between U.S. labor rates and labor rates in various Asian nations

increased or decreased? What does this change imply for multinational companies?



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# *If Men Could Menstruate*

GLORIA STEINEM

*Despite its title, this tongue-in-cheek essay by Gloria Steinem is really about social inequality. Steinem illustrates how the powerful—in this case, men, can define reality and create an ideology that reflects their self-interests. As you read, think about power and its ability to maintain social inequality based not just on gender, but on sexual orientation, physical ability, race, and age.*

A white minority of the world has spent centuries conning us into thinking that a white skin makes people superior—even though the only thing it really does is make them more subject to ultraviolet rays and to wrinkles. Male human beings have built whole cultures around the idea that penis-envy is “natural” to women—though having such an unprotected organ might be said to make men vulnerable, and the power to give birth makes womb-envy at least as logical.

In short, the characteristics of the powerful, whatever they may be, are thought to be better than the characteristics of the powerless—and logic has nothing to do with it.

What would happen, for instance, if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not?

The answer is clear—menstruation would become an enviable, boast-worthy, masculine event:

Men would brag about how long and how much.

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“If Men Could Menstruate,” by Gloria Steinem, reprinted from *Ms*, Vol. VII, No. 4, October 1978, p. 110.

Boys would mark the onset of menses, that longed-for proof of manhood, with religious ritual and stag parties.

Congress would fund a National Institute of Dysmenorrhea to help stamp out monthly discomforts.

Sanitary supplies would be federally funded and free. (Of course, some men would still pay for the prestige of commercial brands such as John Wayne Tampons, Muhammad Ali's Rope-a-dope Pads, Joe Namath Jock Shields—"for Those Light Bachelor Days," and Robert "Baretta" Blake Maxi-Pads.)

Military men, right wing politicians, and religious fundamentalists would cite menstruation ("*men*-struation"), as proof that only men could serve in the Army ("you have to give blood to take blood"), occupy political office ("can women be aggressive without that steadfast cycle governed by the planet Mars?"), be priests and ministers ("how could a woman give her blood for our sins?"), or rabbis ("without the monthly loss of impurities, women remain unclean").

Male radicals, left-wing politicians, and mystics, however, would insist that women are equal, just different, and that any woman could enter their ranks if only she were willing to self-inflict a major wound every month ("You *must* give blood for the revolution"), recognize the preeminence of menstrual issues, or subordinate her selfness to all men in their Cycle of Enlightenment.

Street guys would brag ("I'm a three-pad man") or answer praise from a buddy ("Man, you lookin' *good!*") by giving fives and saying, "Yeah, man, I'm on the rag!"

TV shows would treat the subject at length. ("Happy Days": Richie and Potsie try to convince Fonzie that he is still "The Fonz," though he has missed two periods in a row.) So would newspapers. (SHARK SCARE THREATENS MENSTRUATING MEN. JUDGE CITES MONTHLY STRESS IN PARDONING RAPIST.) And movies (Newman and Redford in "Blood Brothers"!).

Men would convince women that intercourse was *more* pleasurable at "that time of the month." Lesbians would be said to fear blood

and therefore life itself—though probably only because they needed a good menstruating man.

Of course, male intellectuals would offer the most moral and logical arguments. How could a woman master any discipline that demanded a sense of time, space, mathematics, or measurement, for instance, without that in-built gift for measuring the cycles of the moon and planets—and thus for measuring anything at all? In the rarefied fields of philosophy and religion, could women compensate for missing the rhythm of the universe? Or for the lack of symbolic death-and-resurrection every month?

Liberal males in every field would try to be kind: the fact that “these people” have no gift for measuring life or connecting to the universe, the liberals would explain, should be punishment enough.

And how would women be trained to react? One can imagine traditional women agreeing to all these arguments with a staunch and smiling machochism. (“The ERA would force housewives to wound themselves every month”: Phyllis Schlafly. “Your husband’s blood is as sacred as that of Jesus—and so sexy, too!”: Marabel Morgan.) Reformers and Queen Bees would try to imitate men, and *pretend* to have a monthly cycle. All feminists would explain endlessly that men, too, needed to be liberated from the false idea of Martian aggressiveness, just as women needed to escape the bonds of menses-envy. Radical feminists would add that the oppression of the nonmenstrual was the pattern for all other oppressions. (“Vampires were our first freedom fighters!”) Cultural feminists would develop a bloodless imagery in art and literature. Socialist feminists would insist that only under capitalism would men be able to monopolize menstrual blood. . . .

In fact, if men could menstruate, the power justifications could probably go on forever.

If we let them.



## *Questions*

1. Why do most readers think that this article is funny? What is the advantage of using humor to address a serious topic like social inequality?
2. If men did menstruate, do you think that they would take it as a status symbol and brag about it, as Steinem suggests? Why or why not?
3. Steinem argues that “the characteristics of the powerful, whatever they may be, are thought to be better than the characteristics of the powerless—and logic has nothing to do with it.” Do you agree or disagree with her? Why?
4. Write your own version of this article by reversing the power relations in society. For example, imagine a world where gays and lesbians had social power over heterosexuals or where children had social power over adults.

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# *The Saints and the Roughnecks*

WILLIAM J. CHAMBLISS

*In this article, William Chambliss examines gang behavior in two groups of high school boys, the Saints and the Roughnecks. Though they engaged in similar behaviors, including drinking, theft, and vandalism, these two groups elicited different reactions from teachers and police. As you read the article, pay attention to the attributes and characteristics of the individual gang members, as well as the overall gangs themselves. Think about how these attributes might explain the contrasting responses each gang experienced from the surrounding community.*

Sight promising young men—children of good, stable, white upper-middle-class families, active in school affairs, good pre-college students—were some of the most delinquent boys at Hanibal High School. While community residents and parents knew that these boys occasionally sowed a few wild oats, they were totally unaware that sowing wild oats completely occupied the daily routine of these young men. The Saints were constantly occupied with truancy, drinking, wild driving, petty theft and vandalism. Yet not one was officially arrested for any misdeed during the two years I observed them.

This record was particularly surprising in light of my observations during the same two years of another gang of Hanibal High School students, six lower-class white boys known as the

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“The Saints and the Roughnecks,” by William J. Chambliss, reprinted from *Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1, November/December 1973. pp. 24–31.

Roughnecks. The Roughnecks were constantly in trouble with police and community even though their rate of delinquency was about equal with that of the Saints. What was the cause of this disparity? the result? The following consideration of activities, social class and community perceptions of both gangs may provide some answers.

## ☉ *The Saints from Monday to Friday*

The Saints' principal daily concern was with getting out of school as early as possible. The boys managed to get out of school with minimum danger that they would be accused of playing hookey through an elaborate procedure for obtaining "legitimate" release from class. The most common procedure was for one boy to obtain the release of another by fabricating a meeting of some committee, program or recognized club. Charles might raise his hand in his 9:00 chemistry class and asked to be excused—a euphemism for going to the bathroom. Charles would go to Ed's math class and inform the teacher that Ed was needed for a 9:30 rehearsal of the drama club play. The math teacher would recognize Ed and Charles as "good students" involved in numerous school activities and would permit Ed to leave at 9:30. Charles would return to his class, and Ed would go to Tom's English class to obtain his release. Tom would engineer Charles' escape. The strategy would continue until as many of the Saints as possible were freed. After a stealthy trip to the car (which had been parked in a strategic spot), the boys were off for a day of fun.

Over the two years I observed the Saints, this pattern was repeated nearly every day. There were variations on the theme, but in one form or another, the boys used this procedure for getting out of class and then off the school grounds. Rarely did all eight of the Saints manage to leave school at the same time. The average number avoiding school on the days I observed them was five.

Having escaped from the concrete corridors the boys usually went either to a pool hall on the other (lower-class) side of town or to a cafe in the suburbs. Both places were out of the way of people

the boys were likely to know (family or school officials), and both provided a source of entertainment. The pool hall entertainment was the generally rough atmosphere, the occasional hustler, the sometimes drunk proprietor and, of course, the game of pool. The cafe's entertainment was provided by the owner. The boys would "accidentally" knock a glass on the floor or spill cola on the counter—not all the time, but enough to be sporting. They would also bend spoons, put salt in sugar bowls and generally tease whoever was working in the cafe. The owner had opened the cafe recently and was dependent on the boys' business which was, in fact, substantial since between the horsing around and the teasing they bought food and drinks.

## ☉ *The Saints on Weekends*

On weekends the automobile was even more critical than during the week, for on weekends the Saints went to Big Town—a large city with a population of over a million 25 miles from Hanibal. Every Friday and Saturday night most of the Saint would meet between 8:00 and 8:30 and would go into Big Town. Big Town activities included drinking heavily in taverns or nightclubs, driving drunkenly through the streets, and committing acts of vandalism and playing pranks.

By midnight on Fridays and Saturdays the Saints were usually thoroughly high, and one or two of them were often so drunk they had to be carried to the cars. Then the boys drove around town, calling obscenities to women and girls; occasionally trying (unsuccessfully so far as I could tell) to pick girls up; and driving recklessly through red lights and at high speeds with their lights out. Occasionally they played "chicken." One boy would climb out the back window of the car and across the roof to the driver's side of the car while the car was moving at high speed (between 40 and 50 miles an hour); then the driver would move over and the boy who had just crawled across the car roof would take the driver's seat.

Searching for "fair game" for a prank was the boys' principal activity after they left the tavern. The boys would drive alongside a foot patrolman and ask directions to some street. If the policeman

leaned on the car in the course of answering the question, the driver would speed away, causing him to lose his balance. The Saints were careful to play this prank only in an area where they were not going to spend much time and where they could quickly disappear around a corner to avoid having their license plate number taken.

Construction sites and road repair areas were the special province of the Saints' mischief. A soon-to-be repaired hole in the road inevitably invited the Saints to remove lanterns and wooden barricades and put them in the car, leaving the hole unprotected. The boys would find a safe vantage point and wait for an unsuspecting motorist to drive into the hole. Often, though not always, the boys would go up to the motorist and commiserate with him about the dreadful way the city protected its citizenry.

Leaving the scene of the open hole and the motorist, the boys would then go searching for an appropriate place to erect the stolen barricade. An "appropriate place" was often a spot on a highway near a curve in the road where the barricade would not be seen by an oncoming motorist. They boys would wait to watch an unsuspecting motorist attempt to stop and (usually) crash into the wooden barricade. With saintly bearing the boys might offer help and understanding. . . .

Abandoned houses, especially if they were located in out-of-the-way places, were fair game for destruction and spontaneous vandalism. The boys would break windows, remove furniture to the yard and tear it apart, urinate on the walls and scrawl obscenities inside.

Through all the pranks, drinking and reckless driving the boys managed miraculously to avoid being stopped by police. Only twice in two years was I aware that they had been stopped by a Big City policeman. Once was for speeding (which they did every time they drove whether they were drunk or sober), and the driver managed to convince the policemen that it was simply an error. The second time they were stopped they had just left a nightclub and were walking through an alley. Aaron stopped to urinate and the boys began making obscene remarks. A foot patrolman came into the alley, lectured the boys and sent them home. Before the boys got to the car one



began talking in a loud voice again. The policeman, who had followed them down the alley, arrested this boy for disturbing the peace and took him to the police station where the other Saints gathered. After paying a \$5.00 fine, and with the assurance that they would be no permanent record of the arrest, the boy was released.

The boys had a spirit of frivolity and fun about their escapades. They did not view what they were engaged in as “delinquency,” though it surely was by any reasonable definition of that word. They simply viewed themselves as having a little fun and who, they would ask, was really hurt by it? The answer had to be no one, although this fact remains one of the most difficult things to explain about the gang’s behavior. Unlikely though it seems, in two years of drinking, driving, carousing and vandalism no one was seriously injured as a result of the Saints’ activities.

## ☉ *The Saints in School*

The Saints were highly successful in school. The average grade for the group was “B,” with two of the boys having close to a straight “A” average. Almost all of the boys were popular and many of them held offices in the school. One of the boys was vice-president of the student body one year. Six of the boys played on athletic teams.

At the end of their senior year, the student body selected ten seniors for special recognition as the “school wheels”; four of the ten were Saints. Teachers and school officials saw no problem with any of these boys and anticipated that they would all “make something of themselves.”

How the boys managed to maintain this impression is surprising in view of their actual behavior while in school. Their technique for covering truancy was so successful that teachers did not even realize that the boys were absent from school much of the time. Occasionally, of course, the system would backfire and then the boy was on his own. A boy who was caught would be most contrite, would plead guilty and ask for mercy. He inevitably got the mercy he sought.

Cheating on examinations was rampant, even to the point of orally communicating answers to exams as well as looking at one another's papers. Since none of the group studied, and since they were primarily dependent on one another for help, it is surprising that grades were so high. Teachers contributed to the deception in their admitted inclination to give these boys (and presumably others like them) the benefit of the doubt. When asked how the boys did in school, and when pressed on specific examinations, teachers might admit that they were disappointed in John's performance, but would quickly add that they "knew that he was capable of doing better," so John was given a higher grade than he had actually earned. How often this happened is impossible to know. During the time that I observed the group, I never saw any of the boys take homework home. Teachers may have been "understanding" very regularly.

One exception to the gang's generally good performance was Jerry, who had a "C" average in his junior year, experienced disaster the next year and failed to graduate. Jerry had always been a little more nonchalant than the others about the liberties he took in school. Rather than wait for someone to come get him from class, he would offer his own excuse and leave. Although he probably did not miss any more classes than most of the others in the group, he did not take the requisite pains to cover his absences. Jerry was the only Saint whom I ever heard talk back to a teacher. Although teachers often called him a "cut up" or a "smart kid," they never referred to him as a troublemaker or as a kid headed for trouble. It seems likely, then, that Jerry's failure his senior year and his mediocre performance his junior year were consequences of his not playing the game the proper way (possibly because he was disturbed by his parents' divorce). His teachers regarded him as "immature" and not quite ready to get out of high school.

## ☉ *The Police and the Saints*

The local police saw the Saints as good boys who were among the leaders of the youth in the community. Rarely, the boys might be

stopped in town for speeding or for running a stop sign. When this happened the boys were always polite, contrite and pled for mercy. As in school, they received the mercy they asked for. None ever received a ticket or was taken in to the precinct by the local police.

The situation in Big City, where the boys engaged in most of their delinquency, was only slightly different. The police there did not know the boys at all, although occasionally the boys were stopped by a patrolman. Once they were caught taking a lantern from a construction site. Another time they were stopped for running a stop sign, and on several occasions they were stopped for speeding. Their behavior was as before: contrite, polite and penitent. The urban police, like the local police, accepted their demeanor as sincere. More important, the urban police were convinced that these were good boys just out for a lark.

## ☉ *The Roughnecks*

Hanibal townspeople never perceived the Saints' high level of delinquency. The Saints were good boys who just went in for an occasional prank. After all, they were well dressed, well mannered and had nice cars. The Roughnecks were a different story. Although the two gangs of boys were the same age, and both groups engaged in an equal amount of wild-oat sowing, everyone agreed that the not-so-well-dressed, not-so-well-mannered, not-so-rich boys were heading for trouble. Townspeople would say, "You can see the gang members at the drugstore, night after night, leaning against the storefront (sometimes drunk) or slouching around inside buying cokes, reading magazines, and probably stealing old Mr. Wall blind. When they are outside and girls walk by, even respectable girls, these boys make suggestive remarks. Sometimes their remarks are downright lewd."

From the community's viewpoint, the real indication that these kids were in for trouble was that they were constantly involved with the police. Some of them had been picked up for stealing, mostly small stuff, of course, "but still it's stealing small stuff that leads to big time crimes." "Too bad," people said. "Too bad that these boys could-

n't behave like the other kids in town; stay out of trouble, be polite to adults, and look to their future."

The community's impression of the degree to which this group of six boys (ranging in age from 16 to 19) engaged in delinquency was somewhat distorted. In some ways the gang was more delinquent than the community thought; in other ways they were less.

The fighting activities of the group were fairly readily and accurately perceived by almost everyone. At least once a month, the boys would get into some sort of fight, although most fights were scraps between members of the group or involved only one member of the group and some peripheral hanger-on. Only three times in the period of observation did the group fight together: once against a gang from across town, once against two blacks and once against a group of boys from another school. For the first two fights the group went out "looking for trouble"—and they found it both times. The third fight followed a football game and began spontaneously with an argument on the football field between one of the Roughnecks and a member of the opposition's football team. . . .

More serious than fighting, had the community been aware of it, was theft. Although almost everyone was aware that the boys occasionally stole things, they did not realize the extent of the activity. Petty stealing was a frequent event for the Roughnecks. Sometimes they stole as a group and coordinated their efforts; other times they stole in pairs. Rarely did they steal alone.

The thefts ranged from very small things like paperback books, comics and ballpoint pens to expensive items like watches. The nature of the thefts varied from time to time. The gang would go through a period of systematically shoplifting items from automobiles or school lockers. Types of thievery varied with the whim of the gang. Some forms of thievery were more profitable than others, but all thefts were for profit, not just thrills.

Roughnecks siphoned gasoline from cars as often as they had access to an automobile, which was not very often. Unlike the Saints, who owned their own cars, the Roughnecks would have to borrow their parents' cars, an event which occurred only eight or nine times

a year. The boys claimed to have stolen cars for joy rides from time to time. . . .

The Roughnecks, then, engaged mainly in three types of delinquency: theft, drinking and fighting. Although community members perceived that this gang of kids was delinquent, they mistakenly believed that their illegal activities were primarily drinking, fighting and being a nuisance by passersby. Drinking was limited among the gang members, although it did occur, and theft was much more prevalent than anyone realized. . . .

The community's perception of drinking as prevalent stemmed from the fact that it was the most obvious delinquency the boys engaged in. When one of the boys had been drinking, even a causal observer seeing him on the corner would suspect that he was high.

There was a high level of mutual distrust and dislike between the Roughnecks and the police. The boys felt very strongly that the police were unfair and corrupt. Some evidence existed that the boys were correct in their perception.

The main source of the boys' dislike for the police undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that the police would sporadically harass the group. From the standpoint of the boys, these acts of occasional enforcement of the law were whimsical and uncalled for. It made no sense to them, for example, that the police would come to the corner occasionally and threaten them with arrest for loitering when the night before the boys had been out siphoning gasoline from cars and the police had been nowhere in sight. To the boys, the police were stupid on the one hand, for not being where they should have been and catching the boys in a serious offense, and unfair on the other hand, for trumping up "loitering" charges against them.

From the viewpoint of the police, the situation was quite different. They knew, with all the confidence necessary to be a policeman, that these boys were engaged in criminal activities. They knew this partly from occasionally catching them, mostly from circumstantial evidence ("the boys were around when those tires were slashed"), and partly because the police shared the view of the community in general that this was a bad bunch of boys. The best the police could hope

to do was to be sensitive to the fact that these boys were engaged in illegal acts and arrest them whenever there was some evidence that they had been involved. Whether or not the boys had in fact committed a particular act in a particular way was not especially important. The police had a broader view: their job was to stamp out these kids' crimes; the tactics were not as important as the end result.

Over the period that the group was under observation, each member was arrested at least once. Several of the boys were arrested a number of times and spent at least one night in jail. While most were never taken to court, two of the boys were sentenced to six months' incarceration in boys' schools.

## ☉ *The Roughnecks in School*

The Roughnecks' behavior in school was not particularly disruptive. During school hours they did not all hang around together, but tended instead to spend most of their time with one or two other members of the gang who were their special buddies. Although every member of the gang attempted to avoid school as much as possible, they were not particularly successful and most of them attended school with surprising regularity. They considered school a burden—something to be gotten through with a minimum of conflict. If they were “bugged” by a particular teacher, it could lead to trouble. One of the boys, Al, once threatened to beat up a teacher and, according to the other boys, the teacher hid under a desk to escape him.

Teachers saw the boys the way the general community did, as heading for trouble, as being uninterested in making something of themselves. Some were also seen as being incapable of meeting the academic standards of the school. Most of the teachers expressed concern for this group of boys and were willing to pass them despite poor performance, in the belief that failing them would only aggravate the problem.

The group of boys had a grade point average just slightly above “C.” No one in the group failed either grade, and no one had better than a “C” average. They were very consistent in their achievement

or, at least, the teachers were consistent in their perception of the boys' achievement.

Two of the boys were good football players. Herb was acknowledged to be the best player in the school and Jack was almost as good. Both boys were criticized for their failure to abide by training rules, for refusing to come to practice as often as they should, and for not playing their best during practice. What they lacked in sportsmanship they made up for in skill, apparently, and played every game no matter how poorly they had performed in practice or how many practice sessions they had missed.

## ☉ Two Questions

Why did the community, the school and the police react to the Saints as though they were good, upstanding, nondelinquent youths with bright futures but to the Roughnecks as though they were tough, young criminals who were headed for trouble? Why did the Roughnecks and the Saints in fact have quite different careers after high school—careers which, by and large, lived up to the expectations of the community?

The most obvious explanation for the differences in the community's and law enforcement agencies' reactions to the two gangs is that one group of boys was "more delinquent" than the other. Which group *was* more delinquent? The answer to this question will determine in part how we explain the differential responses to these groups by the members of the community and, particularly, by law enforcement and school officials.

In sheer number of illegal acts, the Saint were the more delinquent. They were truant from school for at least part of the day almost every day of the week. In addition, their drinking and vandalism occurred with surprising regularity. The Roughnecks, in contrast, engaged sporadically in delinquent episodes. While these episodes were frequent, they certainly did not occur on a daily or even a weekly basis.

The difference in frequency of offenses was probably caused by the Roughnecks' inability to obtain liquor and to manipulate legitimate excuses from school. Since the Roughnecks had less money than the Saints, and teachers carefully supervised their school activities, the Roughnecks' hearts may have been as black as the Saints', but their misdeeds were not nearly as frequent.

There are really no clear-cut criteria by which to measure qualitative differences in antisocial behavior. The most important dimension of the difference is generally referred to as the "seriousness" of the offenses.

If seriousness encompasses the relative economic costs of delinquent acts, then some assessment can be made. The Roughnecks probably stole an average of about \$5.00 worth of goods a week. Some weeks the figure was considerably higher, but these times must be balanced against long periods when almost nothing was stolen.

The Saints were more continuously engaged in delinquency but their acts were not for the most part costly to property. Only their vandalism and occasional theft of gasoline would so qualify. Perhaps once or twice a month they would siphon a tankful of gas. The other costly items were street signs, construction lanterns and the like. All of these acts combined probably did not quite average \$5.00 a week, partly because much of the stolen equipment was abandoned and presumably could be recovered. The difference in cost of stolen property between the two groups was trivial, but the Roughnecks probably had a slightly more expensive set of activities than did the Saints.

Another meaning of seriousness is the potential threat of physical harm to members of the community and to the boys themselves. The Roughnecks were more prone to physical violence; they not only welcomed an opportunity to fight; they went seeking it. In addition, they fought among themselves frequently. Although the fighting never included deadly weapons, it was still a menace, however, minor, to the physical safety of those involved.

The Saints never fought. They avoided physical conflict both inside and outside the group. At the same time, though, the Saints frequently endangered their own and other people's lives. They did so



almost every time they drove a car, especially if they had been drinking. Sober, their driving was risky; under the influence of alcohol, it was horrendous. In addition, the Saints endangered the lives of others with their pranks. Street excavations left unmarked were a very serious hazard.

Evaluating the relative seriousness of the two gangs' activities is difficult. The community reacted as though the behavior of the Roughnecks was a problem, and they reacted as though the behavior of the Saint was not. But the members of the community were ignorant of the array of delinquent acts that characterized the Saints' behavior. Although concerned citizens were unaware of much of the Roughnecks' behavior as well, they were much better informed about the Roughnecks' involvement in delinquency than they were about the Saints".

## ☉ Visibility

Differential treatment of the two gangs resulted in part because one gang was infinitely more visible than the other. This differential visibility was a direct function of the economic standing of the families. The Saints had access to automobiles and were able to remove themselves from the sight of the community. In as routine a decision as to where to go to have a milkshake after school, the Saints stayed away from the mainstream of community life. Lacking transportation, the Roughnecks could not make it to the edge of town. The center of town was the only practical place for them to meet since their home were scattered throughout the town and any noncentral meeting place put an undue hardship on some members. Through necessity the Roughnecks congregated in a crowded area where everyone in the community passed frequently, including teachers and law enforcement officers. They could easily see the Roughnecks hanging around the drugstore.

The Roughnecks, of course, made themselves even more visible by making remarks to passersby and by occasionally getting into fights on the corner. Meanwhile, just as regularly, the Saints were

either at the cafe on one edge of town or in the pool hall at the other edge of town. Without any particular realization that they were making themselves inconspicuous, the Saints were able to hide their time-wasting. Not only were they removed from the mainstream of traffic, but they were almost always inside a building.

On their escapades the Saints were also relatively invisible, since they left Hanibal and travelled to Big City. Here, too, they were mobile, roaming the city, rarely going to the same area twice.

## ☉ Demeanor

To the notion of visibility must be added the difference in the responses of group members to outside intervention with their activities. If one of the Saints was confronted with an accusing policeman, even if he felt he was truly innocent of a wrongdoing, his demeanor was apologetic and penitent. A Roughneck's attitude was almost the polar opposite. When confronted with a threatening adult authority, even one who tried to be pleasant, the Roughneck's hostility and disdain were clearly observable. Sometimes he might attempt to put up a veneer of respect, but it was thin and was not accepted as sincere by the authority.

School was no different from the community at large. The Saints could manipulate the system by feigning compliance with the school norms. The availability of cars at school meant that once free from the immediate sight of the teacher, the boys could disappear rapidly. And this escape was well enough planned that no administrator or teacher was nearby when the boys left. A Roughneck who wished to escape for a few hours was in a bind. If it were possible to get free from class, downtown was still a mile away, and even if he arrived there, he was still very visible. Truancy for the Roughnecks meant almost certain detection, while the Saints enjoyed almost complete immunity from sanctions.

## ☉ Bias

Community members were not aware of the transgressions of the Saints. Even if the Saints had been less discreet, their favorite delinquencies would have been perceived as less serious than those of the Roughnecks.

In the eyes of the police and school officials, a boy who drinks in an alley and stands intoxicated on the street corner is committing a more serious offense than is a boy who drinks to inebriation in a nightclub or a tavern and drives around afterwards in a car. Similarly, a boy who steals a wallet from a store will be viewed as having committed a more serious offense than a boy who steals a lantern from a construction site.

Perceptual bias also operates with respect to the demeanor of the boys in the two groups when they are confronted by adults. It is not simply that adults dislike the posture affected by boys of the Roughneck ilk; more important is the conviction that the posture adopted by the Roughnecks is an indication of their devotion and commitment to deviance as a way of life. The posture becomes a cue, just as the type of the offense is a cue, to the degree to which the known transgressions are indicators of the youths' potential for other problems.

Visibility, demeanor and bias are surface variables which explain the day-to-day operations of the police. Why do these surface variables operate as they do? Why did the police choose to disregard the Saints' delinquencies while breathing down the backs of the Roughnecks?

The answer lies in the class structure of American society and the control of legal institutions by those at the top of the class structure. Obviously, no representative of the upper class drew up the operational chart for the police which led them to look in the ghettos and on streetcorners—which led them to see the demeanor of lower-class youth as troublesome and that of upper-middle-class youth as tolerable. Rather, the procedure simply developed from experience—experience with irate and influential upper-middle-class parents

insisting that their son's vandalism was simply a prank and his drunkenness only a momentary "sowing of wild oats"—experience with cooperative or indifferent, powerless, lower-class parents who acquiesced to the laws definition of their son's behavior.

## ☉ *Adult Careers of the Saints* and the *Roughnecks*

The community's confidence in the potential of the Saints and the Roughnecks apparently was justified. If anything, the community members underestimated the degree to which these youngster would turn out "good" or "bad."

Seven of the eight members of the Saint went on to college immediately after high school. Five of the boys graduated from college in four years. The sixth one finished college after two years in the army, and the seventh spent four years in the air force before returning to college and receiving a B.A. degree. Of these seven college graduates, three went on for advanced degrees. One finished law school and is now active in state politics, one finished medical school and is practicing near Hanibal, and one boy is now working for a Ph.D. The other four college graduates entered submanagerial, managerial or executive training positions with larger firms.

The only Saint who did not complete college was Jerry. Jerry had failed to graduate from high school with the other Saints. During his second senior year, after the other Saints had gone on to college, Jerry began to hang around with what several teachers described as a "rough crowd"—the gang that was heir apparent to the Roughnecks. At the end of his second senior year, when he did graduate from high school, Jerry took a job as a used-car salesman, got married and quickly had a child. Although he made several abortive attempts to go to college by attending night school, when I last saw him (ten years after high school) Jerry was unemployed and had been living on unemployment for almost a year. His wife worked as a waitress.

Some of the Roughnecks have lived up to community expectations. A number of them were headed for trouble. A few were not.

Jack and Herb were the athletes among the Roughnecks and their athletic prowess paid off handsomely. Both boys received unsolicited athletic scholarships to college. After Herb received his scholarship (near the end of his senior year), he apparently did an about-face. His demeanor became very similar to that of the Saints. Although he remained a member in good standing of the Roughnecks, he stopped participating in most activities and did not hang on the corner as often.

Jack did not change. If anything, he became more prone to fighting. He even made excuses for accepting the scholarship. He told the other gang members that the school had guaranteed him a “C” average if he would come to play football—an idea that seems far-fetched, even in this day of highly competitive recruiting.

During the summer after graduation from high school, Jack attempted suicide by jumping from a tall building. The jump would certainly have killed most people trying it, but Jack survived. He entered college in the fall and played four years of football. He and Herb graduated in four years, and both are teaching and coaching in high schools. They are married and have stable families. If anything, Jack appears to have a more prestigious position in the community than does Herb, though both are well respected and secure in their positions.

Two of the boys never finished high school. Tommy left at the end of his junior year and went to another state. That summer he was arrested and placed on probation on a manslaughter charge. Three years later he was arrested for murder; he pleaded guilty to second degree murder and is serving a 30-year sentence in the state penitentiary.

Al, the other boy who did not finish high school, also left the state in his senior year. He is serving a life sentence in a state penitentiary for first degree murder.

Wes is a small-time gambler. He finished high school and “bummed around.” After several years he made contact with a bookmaker who employed him as a runner. Later he acquired his own area and has been working it ever since. His position among the book-

makers is almost identical to the position he had in the gang; he is always around but no one is really aware of him. He makes no trouble and he does not get into any. Steady, reliable, capable of keeping his mouth closed, he plays the game by the rules, even though the game is an illegal one.

That leaves only Ron. Some of his former friends reported that they had heard he was “driving a truck up north,” but no one could provide any concrete information.

## ☉ Reinforcement

The community responded to the Roughnecks as boys in trouble, and the boys agreed with the perception. Their pattern of deviancy was reinforced, and breaking away from it became increasingly unlikely. Once the boys acquired an image of themselves as deviants, they elected new friends who affirmed that self-image. As that self-conception became more firmly entrenched, they also became willing to try new and more extreme deviances. With their growing alienation came freer expression of disrespect and hostility for representatives of the legitimate society. This disrespect increased the community’s negativism, perpetuating the entire process of commitment to deviance. Lack of a commitment to deviance works the same way. In either case, the process will perpetuate itself unless some event (like a scholarship to college or a sudden failure) external to the established relationship intervenes. For two of the Roughnecks (Herb and Jack), receiving college athletic scholarships created new relations and culminated in a break with the established pattern of deviance. In the case of one of the Saints (Jerry), his parents’ divorce and his failing to graduate from high school changed some of his other relations. Being held back in school for a year and losing his place among the Saints had sufficient impact on Jerry to alter his self-image and virtually to assure that he would not go on to college as his peers did. Although the experiments of life can rarely be reversed, it seems likely in view of the behavior of the other boys who did not enjoy this special treatment by the school that Jerry, too, would have “become something”

had he graduated as anticipated. For Herb and Jack outside intervention worked to their advantage; for Jerry it was his undoing.

Selective perception and labelling—finding, processing and punishing some kinds of criminality and not others—means that visible, poor, nonmobile, outspoken, undiplomatic “tough” kids will be noticed, whether their actions are seriously delinquent or not. Other kids, who have established a reputation for being bright (even though underachieving), disciplined and involved in respectable activities, who are mobile and monied, will be invisible when they deviate from sanctioned activities. They’ll sow their wild oats—perhaps even wider and thicker than their lower-class cohorts—but they won’t be noticed. When it’s time to leave adolescence most will follow the expected path, settling into the ways of the middle class, remembering fondly the delinquent but unnoticed fling of their youth. The Roughnecks and others like them may turn around, too. It is more likely that their noticeable deviance will have been so reinforced by police and community that their lives will be effectively channelled into careers consistent with their adolescent background.



## *Questions*

1. What role did affluence play in the responses of teachers and police to the Saints’ and Roughnecks’ behavior?
2. To what degree did the labels applied to these boys affect their later lives? How might you separate the effect of the label from the effect of social class?
3. To what degree did the Saints’ mobility, as well as the visibility of their behavior, contribute to the treatment and labeling they received? How might teachers and police have responded differently to the two gangs if the only difference between them was socioeconomic status?

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# The McDonaldization of Society

GEORGE RITZER

*According to George Ritzer, our society has become increasingly McDonaldized. That is, we constantly search for ways to maximize efficiency in diverse social settings. In this article, Ritzer explains how organizations like McDonald's have influenced other aspects of our social structure through their emphasis on rationality, efficiency, control, and predictability. As you read this article, think about the ways in which your own life has become McDonaldized.*

*M*cdonaldization implies a search for maximum efficiency in increasingly numerous and diverse social settings. *Efficiency* means choosing the optimum means to a given end. Let me clarify this definition. First, the truly optimum means to an end is rarely found. Rather, optimum in this definition implies the attempt to find and use the *best possible* means. . . .

In a McDonaldized society, people rarely search for the best means to an end on their own. Rather, they rely on the optimum means that have been previously discovered and institutionalized in a variety of social settings. Thus, the best means may be part of a technology, written into an organization's rules and regulations, or taught to employees during the process of occupational socialization. It would be inefficient if people always had to discover for themselves the optimum means to ends. . . .

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## ☉ *The Fast-Food Industry: We Do It All for Them*

Although the fast-food restaurant did not create the yearning for efficiency, it has helped turn it into a nearly universal desire. Many sectors of society have had to change in order to operate in the efficient manner demanded by those accustomed to life in the fast lane of the fast-food restaurant. . . .

In the early 1950s, the dawn of the era of the fast-food restaurant, the major alternative to fast food was the home-cooked meal made mostly from ingredients previously purchased at various markets. . . .

But the home-cooked meal was, and still is, a relatively inefficient way to eat. It requires going to the market, preparing the ingredients, cooking the food, eating it, and cleaning up afterward. The restaurant has long been a more efficient alternative in terms of effort.

But restaurants can also be inefficient—it may take several hours to go to a restaurant, consume a meal, and then return home. The desire for more efficient restaurants led to the rise of some of the ancestors of the fast-food restaurants—diners, cafeterias, and early drive-through or drive-in restaurants. . . .

Above all else, Ray Kroc was impressed by the efficiency of the McDonald brothers' operation, as well as the enormous profit potential of such a system applied at a large number of sites. Here is how Kroc described his initial reactions to the McDonald's system:

I was fascinated by the simplicity and effectiveness of the system.

. . . each step in producing the limited menu was stripped down to its essence and accomplished with a minimum of effort. They sold hamburgers and cheeseburgers only. The burgers were . . . all fried the same way.<sup>1</sup>

. . .

Kroc and his associates experimented with each component of the hamburger to increase the efficiency of producing and serving it.

For example, they started with only partially sliced buns that arrived in cardboard boxes. The griddle workers had to spend time opening the boxes, separating the buns, slicing them in half, and discarding the leftover paper and cardboard. Eventually, they found that buns sliced completely in half could be used more efficiently. In addition, buns were made efficient by having them separated and shipped in reusable boxes. The meat patty received similar attention. For example, the paper between the patties had to have just the right amount of wax so that the patties would readily slide off the paper and onto the grill. Kroc made it clear that he aimed at greater efficiency:

The purpose of all these refinements, and we never lost sight of it, was to make our griddle man's job easier to do quickly and well. And the other considerations of cost cutting, inventory control, and so forth were important to be sure, but they were secondary to the critical detail of what happened there at the smoking griddle. This was the vital passage of our *assembly-line*, and the product had to flow through it smoothly or the whole plant would falter.<sup>2</sup> (Italics added.)

• • •

Getting diners into and out of the fast-food restaurant has also been streamlined. As three observers put it, McDonald's has done "everything to speed the way from secretion to excretion."<sup>3</sup> Parking lots adjacent to the restaurant offer readily available parking spots. It's a short walk to the counter, and although there is sometimes a line, food is usually quickly ordered, obtained, and paid for. The highly limited menu makes the diner's choice easy in contrast to the many choices available in other restaurants. With the food obtained, it is but a few steps to a table and the beginning of the "dining experience." Because there is little inducement to linger, the diners generally gather the leftover paper, styrofoam, and plastic, discard them in a nearby trash receptacle, and get back in their cars to drive to the next (often McDonaldized) activity.

Not too many years ago, those in charge of fast-food restaurants discovered that the drive-through window made this whole process far more efficient. McDonald's opened its first drive-through in 1975

in Oklahoma City; within four years, almost half its restaurants had one. Instead of the “laborious” and “inefficient” process of parking the car, walking to the counter, waiting in line, ordering, paying, carrying the food to the table, eating, and disposing of the remnants, the drive-through window offered diners the option of driving to the window (perhaps waiting in a line of cars), ordering, paying, and driving off with the meal. You could eat while driving if you wanted to be even more efficient. The drive-through window is also efficient for the fast-food restaurant. As more and more people use the drive-through window, fewer parking spaces, tables, and employees are needed. Further, consumers take their debris with them as they drive away, thereby eliminating the need for additional trash receptacles and employees to empty those receptacles periodically.

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## ☺ Higher Education: *Just Fill in the Box*

In the educational system, specifically the university (now being dubbed “McUniversity”<sup>4</sup>), you can find many examples of the pressure for greater efficiency. One is the machine-graded, multiple-choice examination. In a much earlier era, students were examined individually by their professors. This may have been a good way to find out what students knew, but it was highly labor-intensive and inefficient. Later, the essay examination became very popular. While grading a set of essays was more efficient than giving individual oral examinations, it was still relatively inefficient and time-consuming. Enter the multiple-choice examination, the grading of which was a snap. In fact, graduate assistants could grade it, making it even more efficient for the professor. Now there are computer-graded examinations that maximize efficiency for both professors and graduate assistants. They even offer advantages to students, such as making it easier to study and limiting the effect of the subjective views of the grader on the grading process.

The multiple-choice examination still left the professor saddled with the inefficient task of composing the necessary sets of questions.

Furthermore, at least some of the questions had to be changed each semester because new students were likely to gain possession of old exams. The solution: Textbook companies provided professors with books (free of charge) full of multiple-choice questions to accompany textbooks required for use in large classes. However, the professor still had to retype the questions or have them retyped. Recently, publishers have begun to provide these sets of questions on computer disks. Now all the professor needs to do is select the desired questions and let the printer do the rest. With these great advances in efficiency, professors now can choose to have very little to do with the entire examination process, from question composition to grading.

Publishers have provided other services to make teaching more efficient for those professors who adopt their textbooks. With the adoption of a textbook, a professor may receive many materials with which to fill class hours—lecture outlines, computer simulations, discussion questions, videotapes, movies, even ideas for guest lecturers and student projects. Professors who choose to use all these devices need do little or nothing on their own for their classes. A highly efficient means of teaching, this approach frees up time for other much more valued activities (by professors, but not students) such as writing and research.

Finally, worth noting is the development of a relatively new type of “service” on college campuses. For a nominal fee, students are provided with lecture notes, from instructors, teaching assistants, and top-notch students, for their courses. No more inefficient note-taking, in fact, no more inefficient class attendance. Students are free to pursue more valuable activities such as poring over arcane journals in the graduate library or watching the “soaps.”

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### *Home Cooking (and Related Phenomena)*

Given the efficiency of the fast-food restaurant, the home kitchen has had to grow more efficient or face total extinction. Had the kitchen

not grown more efficient, a comedian could have envisioned a time when the kitchen would have been replaced by a large, comfortable telephone lounge used for calling Domino's for pizza delivery.

One key to the salvation of the kitchen is the microwave oven.<sup>5</sup> Far more efficient than conventional ovens for preparing a meal, the microwave has streamlined the process of cooking. Microwaves are usually faster than other ovens, and people can also prepare a wider array of foods in them. Perhaps most important, they spawned a number of microwavable foods (including soup, pizza, hamburgers, fried chicken, french fries, and popcorn) that permit the efficient preparation of the fare people usually find in fast-food restaurants. For example, one of the first microwavable foods produced by Hormel was an array of biscuit-based breakfast sandwiches "popularized in recent years by many of the fast-food chains," most notably McDonald's and its Egg McMuffin.<sup>6</sup> . . . In fact, many food companies now employ people who continually scout fast-food restaurants for new ideas. As one executive put it, "Instead of having a breakfast sandwich at McDonald's, you can pick one up from the freezer of your grocery store."<sup>7</sup> . . . Instead of getting into the car, driving to the restaurant, and returning home, people need only pop the desired foods in the microwave. . . .

Another reason efficiency in the kitchen has not damaged the fast-food business is that fast food offers many advantages over the "home-cooked" microwaved dinner. For one, people can have dinner out rather than just another meal at home. For another, as Stan Luxenberg has pointed out in *Roadside Empires*, McDonald's offers more than an efficient meal; it offers fun—brightly lit, colorful, and attractive settings, garish packaging, special inducements to children, giveaways, contests—in short, it offers a carnival-like atmosphere in which to buy and consume fast food.<sup>8</sup> Thus, faced with the choice of an efficient meal at home or one in a fast-food restaurant, many people will choose the latter.

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The McDonaldization of food preparation and consumption has also reached the booming diet industry. Diet books promising all sorts of shortcuts to weight loss are often at the top of the best-seller

lists. Losing weight is normally difficult and time-consuming, hence the lure of diet books that promise to make weight loss easier and quicker, that is, more efficient.

For those on a diet, and many people are on more or less perpetual diets, the preparation of low-calorie food has been streamlined. Instead of cooking diet foods from scratch, they may now purchase an array of prepared diet foods in frozen and/or microwavable form. For those who do not wish to go through the inefficient process of eating these diet meals, there are products even more streamlined such as diet shakes (Slim-Fast, for example) that can be “prepared” and consumed in a matter of seconds.

The issue of dieting points outside the home to the growth of diet centers such as Jenny Craig and Nutri/System. Nutri/System sells dieters, at substantial cost, prepackaged freeze-dried food. In what is close to the ultimate in streamlined cooking, all the dieter need do is add water. Freeze-dried foods are also efficient for Nutri/System, because they can be efficiently packaged, transported, and stored. Furthermore, the dieter’s periodic visits to a Nutri/System center are efficiently organized. A counselor is allotted ten minutes with each client. During that brief time, the counselor takes the client’s weight, blood pressure, and measurements, asks routine questions, fills out a chart, and devotes whatever time is left to “problem solving.” If the session extends beyond the allotted ten minutes and other clients are waiting, the receptionist will buzz the counselor’s room. Counselors learn their techniques at Nutri/System University where, after a week of training (no inefficient years of matriculation here), they earn certification and an NSU diploma.

## Shopping

Shopping has also grown more efficient. The department store obviously is a more efficient place in which to shop than a series of specialty shops dispersed throughout the city or suburbs. The shopping mall increases efficiency by bringing a wide range of department stores and specialty shops under one roof. Kowinski describes the

mall as “an extremely efficient and effective selling machine.”<sup>9</sup> It is cost-efficient for retailers because it is the collection of shops and department stores (“mail synergy”) that brings in throngs of people. And it is efficient for consumers because in one stop they can visit numerous shops, have lunch at a “food court” (likely populated by many fast-food chains), see a movie, have a drink, and go to an exercise or diet center.

The drive for shopping efficiency did not end with the malls. Seven-Eleven and its clones have become drive-up, if not drive-through, minimarkets. For those who need only a few items, it is far more efficient (albeit more costly) to pull up to a highly streamlined Seven-Eleven than to run to a supermarket. . . .

In recent years, catalogues (e.g., L.L. Bean, Lands’ End) have become more popular. They enable people to shop from the comfort of their homes. Still more efficient, though it may lead to many hours in front of the TV, is home-television shopping. A range of products are paraded before viewers, who can purchase them simply by phoning in and conveniently charging their purchases. The latest advance in home shopping is the “scanfone,” an at-home phone machine that includes “a pen-sized bar-code scanner, a credit card magnetic-strip reader, and a key pad.” The customer merely “scans items from a bar-coded catalogue and also scans delivery dates and payment methods. The orders are then electronically relayed to the various stores, businesses, and banks involved.”<sup>10</sup> Some mall operators fear that they will ultimately be put out of business because of the greater efficiency of shopping at home.

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## Entertainment

With the advent of videotapes and video-rental stores, many people no longer deem it efficient to drive to their local theater to see a movie. Movies can now be viewed, often more than one at a sitting, in people’s own dens. Those who wish even greater efficiency can buy one of the new television sets that enables viewers to see a movie while also watching a favorite TV show on an inset on the screen.

The largest video rental franchise in the United States, Blockbuster, predictably “considers itself the McDonald’s of the video business.”<sup>11</sup> . . . However, Blockbuster may already be in danger of replacement by even more efficient alternatives such as the pay-per-view movies offered by many cable companies. Instead of trekking to the video store, people just turn to the proper channel and phone the cable company. New small dishes allow people access to a wider range of video offerings. Now in the experimental stage, video-on-demand systems may some day allow people to order the movies available in video stores from the comfort of their homes. . . . Just as the video store replaced many movie theaters, video stores themselves may soon make way for even more efficient alternatives.

. . . Travel to exotic foreign locales has also grown more streamlined. The best example of this is the package tour. Take, for example, a thirty-day tour of Europe. To make it efficient, tourists visit only the major locales in Europe. Buses hurtle through cities, allowing tourists to glimpse the maximum number of sites in the time allowed. At particularly interesting or important sights, the bus may slow down or even stop to permit some picture taking. At the most important locales, a brief stopover is planned; there, a visitor can hurry through the site, take a few pictures, buy a souvenir, then hop back on the bus to head to the next attraction. The package tour can be seen as a mechanism that permits the efficient transport of people from one locale to another.

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## **Dehumanization of Customers and Employees**

. . . The fast-food restaurant offers its employees a dehumanizing work setting. Said Burger King workers, “A moron could learn this job, it’s so easy” and “Any trained monkey could do this job.”<sup>12</sup> Workers can use only a small portion of their skills and abilities. This is irrational from the organization’s viewpoint, because it could obtain much more from its employees for the money (however negligible) it pays them. . . .



The minimal skill demands of the fast-food restaurant are also irrational from the employee's perspective. Besides not using all their skills, employees are not allowed to think and be creative on the job. This leads to a high level of resentment, job dissatisfaction, alienation, absenteeism, and turnover among those who work in fast-food restaurants.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the fast-food industry has the highest turnover rate—approximately 300% a year—of any industry in the United States. That means that the average fast-food worker lasts only about four months; the entire work force of the fast-food industry turns over approximately three times a year. . . .

The fast-food restaurant also dehumanizes the customer. By eating on a sort of assembly line, the diner is reduced to an automaton made to rush through a meal with little gratification derived from the dining experience or from the food itself. The best that can usually be said is that it is efficient and it is over quickly.

Some customers might even feel as if they are being fed like livestock in a highly rationalized manner. This point was made on TV a number of years ago in a *Saturday Night Live* skit, "Trough and Brew," a parody of a small fast-food chain called "Burger and Brew." In the skit, some young executives learn that a new fast-food restaurant called Trough and Brew has opened, and they decide to try it for lunch. When they enter the restaurant, bibs are tied around their necks. Then, they discover what resembles a pig trough filled with chili and periodically refilled by a waitress scooping new supplies from a bucket. The customers bend over, stick their heads into the trough, and lap up the chili as they move along the trough making high-level business decisions. Every so often they come up for air and lap some beer from the communal "brew basin." After they have finished their "meal," they pay their bills "by the head." Since their faces are smeared with chili, they are literally "hosed off" before they leave the restaurant. The young executives are last seen being herded out of the restaurant, which is being closed for a half-hour so that it can be "hosed down." *Saturday Night Live* was clearly ridiculing the fact that fast-food restaurants tend to treat their customers like lower animals.

Customers are also dehumanized by scripted interactions, and other efforts to make interactions uniform. “Uniformity is incompatible when human interactions are involved. Human interactions that are mass-produced may strike consumers as dehumanizing if the routinization is obvious or manipulative if it is not.”<sup>14</sup> Dehumanization occurs when prefabricated interactions take the place of authentic human relationships.

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Another dehumanizing aspect of fast-food restaurants is that they minimize contact among human beings. For example, the nature of the fast-food restaurant makes the relationships between employees and customers fleeting at best. Because the average employee works part-time and stays only a few months, even the regular customer can rarely develop a personal relationship with him or her. All but gone are the days when one got to know well a waitress at a diner or the short order cook at a local greasy spoon. Few are the places where an employee knows who you are and knows what you are likely to order.

Contact between workers and customers is very short. It takes little time at the counter to order, receive the food, and pay for it. Both employees and customers are likely to feel rushed and to want to move on, customers to their dinner and employees to the next order. There is virtually no time for customer and counterperson to interact in such a context. This is even truer of the drive-through window, where thanks to the speedy service and the physical barriers, the server is even more distant.

These highly impersonal and anonymous relationships are heightened by the training of employees to interact in a staged, scripted, and limited manner with customers. Thus, the customers may feel that they are dealing with automatons rather than with fellow human beings. For their part, the customers are supposed to be, and often are, in a hurry, so they also have little to say to the McDonald’s employee. Indeed, it could be argued that one of the reasons the fast-food restaurants succeed is that they are in time with our fast-paced and impersonal society. . . . People in the modern world

want to get on with their business without unnecessary personal relationships. The fast-food restaurant gives them precisely what they want.

Not only the relationships between employee and customer, but other potential relationships are limited greatly. Because employees remain on the job for only a few months, satisfying personal relationships among employees are unlikely to develop. . . .

Relationships among customers are largely curtailed as well. Although some McDonald's ads would have people believe otherwise, gone for the most part are the days when people met in the diner or cafeteria for coffee or a meal and lingered to socialize. Fast-food restaurants clearly do not encourage such socializing. If nothing else, the chairs by design make people uncomfortable, so that they move on quickly. The drive-through windows completely eliminate the possibility of interaction with other customers.

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Fast-food restaurants also tend to have negative effects on other human relationships. There is, for example, the effect on the family, especially the so-called "family meal." The fast-food restaurant is not conducive to a long, leisurely, conversation-filled dinnertime. Furthermore, as the children grow into their teens, the fast-food restaurant can lead to separate meals as the teens go at one time with their friends, and the parents go at another time. Of course, the drive-through window only serves to reduce further the possibility of a family meal. The family that gobbles its food while driving on to its next stop can hardly enjoy "quality time." Here is the way one journalist describes what is happening to the family meal:

Do families who eat their suppers at the Colonel's, swinging on plastic seats, or however the restaurant is arranged, say grace before picking up a crispy brown chicken leg? Does dad ask junior what he did today as he remembers he forgot the piccalilli and trots through the crowds over to the counter to get some? Does mom find the atmosphere conducive to asking little Mildred about the problems she was having with

third conjugation French verbs, or would it matter since otherwise the family might have been at home chomping down precooked frozen food, warmed in the microwave oven and watching “Hollywood Squares”?<sup>15</sup>

There is much talk these days about the disintegration of the family, and the fast-food restaurant may well be a crucial contributor to that disintegration. In fact, as implied above, dinners at home may now not be much different from meals at the fast-food restaurant. Families tended to stop having lunch together by the 1940s and breakfast together by the 1950s. Today, the family dinner is following the same route. Even at home, the meal will probably not be what it once was. Following the fast-food model, people have ever more options to “graze,” “refuel” nibble on this, or snack on that, rather than sit down at a formal meal. Also, because it may seem inefficient to do nothing but just eat, families are likely to watch television while they are eating. Furthermore, the din, to say nothing of the lure, of dinnertime TV programs such as *Wheel of Fortune* is likely to make it difficult for family members to interact with one another.

A key technology in the destruction of the family meal is the microwave oven and the vast array of microwavable foods it helped generate.<sup>16</sup> More than 70% of American households have a microwave oven. A *Wall Street Journal* poll indicated that Americans consider the microwave their favorite household product. In fact, the microwave in a McDonaldizing society is seen as an advance over the fast-food restaurant. Said one consumer researcher, “It has made even fast-food restaurants not seem fast because at home you don’t have to wait in line.” As a general rule, consumers demand meals that take no more than ten minutes to microwave, whereas in the past people were more often willing to spend a half hour or even an hour cooking dinner. This emphasis on speed has, of course, brought with it lower quality, but people do not seem to mind this loss: “We’re just not as critical of food as we used to be.”<sup>17</sup>

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## *H*omogenization

Another dehumanizing effect of the fast-food restaurant is that it has increased homogenization in the United States and, increasingly, throughout the world. This decline in diversity is manifest in the extension of the fast-food model to all sorts of ethnic foods. People are hard-pressed to find an authentically different meal in an ethnic fast-food chain. The food has been rationalized and compromised so that it is acceptable to the tastes of virtually all diners. Paradoxically, while fast-food restaurants have permitted far more people to experience ethnic food, the food that they eat has lost many of its distinguishing characteristics. The settings are also all modeled after McDonald's in one way or another.

The expansion of these franchises across the United States means that people find little difference between regions and between cities. Tourists find more familiarity and less diversity as they travel around the nation, and this is increasingly true on a global scale. Exotic settings are increasingly likely sites for American fast-food chains. The McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken in Beijing are but two examples of this. . . . The spread of American and indigenous fast food throughout much of the world causes less and less diversity from one setting to another. The human craving for new and diverse experiences is being limited, if not progressively destroyed, by the spread of fast-food restaurants. The craving for diversity is being supplanted by the desire for uniformity and predictability.

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## ☺ *C*onclusion

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Although I have emphasized the irresistibility of McDonaldization, . . . my fondest hope is that I am wrong. . . . I hope that people can resist McDonaldization and create instead a more reasonable, more human world.

A few years ago, McDonald's was sued by the famous French chef, Paul Bocuse, for using his picture on a poster without his permission. Enraged, Bocuse said, "How can I be seen promoting this tasteless, boneless food in which everything is soft." Nevertheless, Bocuse seemed to acknowledge the inevitability of McDonaldization: "There's a need for this kind of thing . . . and trying to get rid of it seems to me to be as futile as trying to get rid of the prostitutes in the Bois de Bologne."<sup>18</sup> Lo and behold, two weeks later, it was announced that the Paris police had cracked down on prostitution in the Bois de Bologne. Said a police spokesperson, "There are none left." Thus, just as chef Bocuse was wrong about the prostitutes, perhaps I am wrong about the irresistibility of McDonaldization. Yet, before I grow overly optimistic, it should be noted that "everyone knows that the prostitutes will be back as soon as the operation is over. In the spring, police predict, there will be even more than before."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, it remains likely that no matter how intense the opposition, the future will bring with it more rather than less McDonaldization. Even if this proves to be the case, it is my hope that you will follow some of the advice outlined in this chapter for protesting and mitigating the worst effects of McDonaldization. Faced with Max Weber's iron cage and image of a future dominated by the polar night of icy darkness and hardness, I hope that if nothing else, you will consider the words of the poet Dylan Thomas: "Do not go gentle into that good night. . . . Rage, rage against the dying of the light."<sup>20</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Kroc, R. (1977). *Grinding it out*. New York: Berkeley Medallion Books, p. 8.
- <sup>2</sup>Kroc, R. (1977). *Grinding it out*. New York: Berkeley Medallion Books, pp. 96–97.
- <sup>3</sup>Kroker, A., Kroker, M., & Cook, D. (1989). *Panic encyclopedia: The definitive guide to the postmodern scene*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 119.
- <sup>4</sup>Parker, M., & Jary, D. (1995). The McUniversity: Organization, management and academic subjectivity. *Organization*, 2, 1–19.

- <sup>5</sup>“The microwave cooks up a new way of life. (1989, September 19). *Wall Street Journal*, p. B1; Microwavable foods—Industry’s response to consumer demands for convenience. (1987). *Food Technology*, 41, 52–63.
- <sup>6</sup>“Microwavable foods—Industry’s response to consumer demands for convenience. *Food Technology*, 41, 54.
- <sup>7</sup>Shapiro, E. (1991, October 14). A page from fast food’s menu. *New York Times*, pp. D1, D3.
- <sup>8</sup>Luxenberg, S. (1985). *Roadside empires: How the chains franchised America*. New York: Viking.
- <sup>9</sup>Kowinski, W. S. (1985). *The malling of America: An inside look at the great consumer paradise*. New York: Morrow, p. 61.
- <sup>10</sup>Swisher, K. (1992, April 16) Companies unveil “scanfone” shopping service. *Washington Post*, pp. B1, B15.
- <sup>11</sup>Potts, M. (1991, December 9). Blockbuster struggle with merger script. *Washington Post/Washington Business*, p. 24; Shapiro, E. (1992, February 21). Market place: A mixed outlook for Blockbuster. *New York Times*, p. D6.
- <sup>12</sup>Reiter, E. (1991). *Making fast food*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp. 150, 167.
- <sup>13</sup>Leidner disagrees with this, arguing that McDonald’s “workers expressed relatively little dissatisfaction with the extreme routinization.” See Leidner, R. (1993). *Fast food, fast talk: Service work and the routinization of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 134. One could ask, however, whether this indicates a McDonaldizing society in which people, accustomed to the process, simply accept it as an inevitable part of their work.
- <sup>14</sup>Leidner, R. (1993). *Fast food, fast talk: Service work and the routinization of everyday life*. Berkeley-University of California Press, p. 30.
- <sup>15</sup>von Hoffman, N. (1978, November 23). The fast-disappearing family meal. *Washington Post*, p. C4.
- <sup>16</sup>Visser, M. (1989, December). A meditation on the microwave. *Psychology Today*, pp. 38ff.
- <sup>17</sup>“The microwave cooks up a new way of life. (1989, September 19). *Wall Street Journal*, p. B1.

<sup>18</sup>Cohen, R. (1992, February 18). Faux pas by McDonald's in Europe. *New York Times*, p. D1.

<sup>19</sup>Two quotes from Waxman, S. (1992, March 2). Paris's sex change operation. *Washington Post*, p. B1.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas, D. (1952). *The collected poems of Dylan Thomas*. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." New York: New Directions, p. 128.



## Questions

1. What is McDonaldization?
2. What are some negative outcomes of McDonaldization? What are some of the positive outcomes?
3. How has McDonaldization resulted in social change? What effect has this change had on our culture? On the world?
4. Describe some ways in which your life has become McDonaldized. What can you do to fight McDonaldization in your life?
5. Have you ever worked for McDonald's or another McDonaldized business? If so, does the behind-the-scenes reality compare with what the customer sees? How do your experiences compare with those described in the article?



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# *The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All*

HERBERT J. GANS

*Of the several social classes in the United States, sociologists have concentrated their studies on the poor. The super-rich and, for the most part, the ordinarily wealthy are beyond the reach of researchers. Sociologists are not members of the wealthy classes or of the power elite, and members of these groups have the means to insulate themselves from the prying eyes (and questionnaires and tape recorders) of sociologists. When it comes to the middle classes, sociologists are likely to take their members for granted. The middle classes are part of their everyday life, and, like others, sociologists often overlook the things closest to them. The characteristics and situations of the poor, however, are different enough to strike the eye of sociologists. And the poor are accessible. People in poverty are generally willing to be interviewed. They are even a bit flattered that sociologists, for the most part members of the upper middle class, will take the time to talk to them. Hardly anyone else takes them seriously.*

*A couple of thousand years ago, Jesus said, "The poor you'll always have with you." In this selection, as Herbert Gans places the sociological lens yet again on people in poverty, he uses a functionalist perspective to explain why we always will have people in poverty. Simply put, from a functionalist perspective, we need poor people.*

*Some years ago Robert K. Merton applied the notion of functional analysis to explain the continuing though maligned existence of the urban political machine: If it continued to exist, perhaps it fulfilled latent—unintended or unrecognized—positive functions. Clearly it did. Merton pointed out how the political machine provided central authority to get things done when a decentralized local government could not act, humanized the services of the impersonal bureaucracy for fearful citizens, offered concrete help (rather than abstract law or justice) to the poor, and otherwise performed services needed or demanded by many people but considered unconventional or even illegal by formal public agencies.*

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Today, poverty is more maligned than the political machine ever was; yet it, too, is a persistent social phenomenon. Consequently, there may be some merit in applying functional analysis to poverty, in asking whether it also has positive functions that explain its persistence.

Merton defined functions as “those observed consequences [of a phenomenon] which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given [social] system.” I shall use a slightly different definition; instead of identifying functions for an entire social system, I shall identify them for the interest groups, socioeconomic classes, and other population aggregates with shared values that “inhabit” a social system. I suspect that in a modern heterogeneous society, few phenomena are functional or dysfunctional for the society as a whole, and that most result in benefits to some groups and costs to others. Nor are any phenomena indispensable; in most instances, one can suggest what Merton calls “functional alternatives” or equivalents for them, i.e., other social patterns or policies that achieve the same positive functions but avoid the dysfunction. (In the following discussion, positive functions will be abbreviated as functions and negative functions as dysfunctions. Functions and dysfunctions, in the planner’s terminology, will be described as benefits and costs.)

Associating poverty with positive functions seems at first glance to be unimaginable. Of course, the slumlord and the loan shark are commonly known to profit from the existence of poverty, but they are viewed as evil men, so their activities are classified among the dysfunctions of poverty. However, what is less often recognized, at least by the conventional wisdom, is that poverty also makes possible the existence or expansion of respectable professions and occupations, for example, penology, criminology, social work, and public health. More recently, the poor have provided jobs for professional and para-professional “poverty warriors,” and for journalists and social scientists, this author included, who have supplied the information demanded by the revival of public interest in poverty.

Clearly, then, poverty and the poor may well satisfy a number of positive functions for many nonpoor groups in American society. I shall describe 13 such functions—economic, social and political—that seem to me most significant.

## ☉ The Functions of Poverty

*First*, the existence of poverty ensures that society’s “dirty work” will be done. Every society has such work: physically dirty or dangerous, temporary,

dead-end and underpaid, undignified, and menial jobs. Society can fill these jobs by paying higher wages than for “clean” work, or it can force people who have no other choice to do the dirty work—and at low wages. In America, poverty functions to provide a low-wage labor pool that is willing—or rather, unable to be *unwilling*—to perform dirty work at low cost. Indeed, this function of the poor is so important that in some Southern states, welfare payments have been cut off during the summer months when the poor are needed to work in the fields. Moreover, much of the debate about the Negative Income Tax and the Family Assistance Plan [welfare programs] has concerned their impact on the work incentive, by which is actually meant the incentive of the poor to do the needed dirty work if the wages therefrom are no larger than the income grant. Many economic activities that involve dirty work depend on the poor for their existence: restaurants, hospitals, parts of the garment industry, and “truck farming,” among others, could not persist in their present form without the poor.

*Second*, because the poor are required to work at low wages, they subsidize a variety of economic activities that benefit the affluent. For example, domestics subsidize the upper-middle and upper classes, making life easier for their employers and freeing affluent women for a variety of professional, cultural, civic, and partying activities. Similarly, because the poor pay a higher proportion of their income in property and sales taxes, among others, they subsidize many state and local governmental services that benefit more affluent groups. In addition, the poor support innovation in medical practice as patients in teaching and research hospitals and as guinea pigs in medical experiments.

*Third*, poverty creates jobs for a number of occupations and professions that serve or “service” the poor, or protect the rest of society from them. As already noted, penology would be minuscule without the poor, as would the police. Other activities and groups that flourish because of the existence of poverty are the numbers game, the sale of heroin and cheap wines and liquors, Pentecostal ministers, faith healers, prostitutes, pawn shops, and the peacetime army, which recruits its enlisted men mainly from among the poor.

*Fourth*, the poor buy goods others do not want and thus prolong the economic usefulness of such goods—day-old bread, fruit and vegetables that otherwise would have to be thrown out, secondhand clothes, and deteriorating automobiles and buildings. They also provide incomes for doctors, lawyers, teachers, and others who are too old, poorly trained or incompetent to attract more affluent clients.

In addition to economic functions, the poor perform a number of social functions.

*Fifth*, the poor can be identified and punished as alleged or real deviants in order to uphold the legitimacy of conventional norms. To justify the desirability of hard work, thrift, honesty, and monogamy, for example, the defenders of these norms must be able to find people who can be accused of being lazy, spendthrift, dishonest, and promiscuous. Although there is some evidence that the poor are about as moral and law-abiding as anyone else, they are more likely than middle-class transgressors to be caught and punished when they participate in deviant acts. Moreover, they lack the political and cultural power to correct the stereotypes that other people hold of them and thus continue to be thought of as lazy, spendthrift, etc., by those who need living proof that moral deviance does not pay.

*Sixth*, and conversely, the poor offer vicarious participation to the rest of the population in the uninhibited sexual, alcoholic, and narcotic behavior in which they are alleged to participate and which, being freed from the constraints of affluence, they are often thought to enjoy more than the middle classes. Thus many people, some social scientists included, believe that the poor not only are more given to uninhibited behavior (which may be true, although it is often motivated by despair more than by lack of inhibition) but derive more pleasure from it than affluent people (which research by Lee Rainwater, Walter Miller and others shows to be patently untrue). However, whether the poor actually have more sex and enjoy it more is irrelevant; so long as middle-class people believe this to be true, they can participate in it vicariously when instances are reported in factual or fictional form.

*Seventh*, the poor also serve a direct cultural function when culture created by or for them is adopted by the more affluent. The rich often collect artifacts from extinct folk cultures of poor people; and almost all Americans listen to the blues, Negro spirituals, and country music, which originated among the Southern poor. Recently they have enjoyed the rock styles that were born, like the Beatles, in the slums, and in the last year, poetry written by ghetto children has become popular in literary circles. The poor also serve as culture heroes, particularly, of course, to the left; but the hobo, the cowboy, the hipster, and the mythical prostitute with a heart of gold have performed this function for a variety of groups.

*Eighth*, poverty helps to guarantee the status of those who are not poor. In every hierarchical society, someone has to be at the bottom; but in American society, in which social mobility is an important goal for many

and people need to know where they stand, the poor function as a reliable and relatively permanent measuring rod for status comparisons. This is particularly true for the working class, whose politics is influenced by the need to maintain status distinctions between themselves and the poor, much as the aristocracy must find ways of distinguishing itself from the *nouveaux riches*.

*Ninth*, the poor also aid the upward mobility of groups just above them in the class hierarchy. Thus a goodly number of Americans have entered the middle class through the profits earned from the provision of goods and services in the slums, including illegal or nonrespectable ones that upper-class and upper-middle-class businessmen shun because of their low prestige. As a result, members of almost every immigrant group have financed their upward mobility by providing slum housing, entertainment, gambling, narcotics, etc., to later arrivals—most recently to blacks and Puerto Ricans.

*Tenth*, the poor help to keep the aristocracy busy, thus justifying its continued existence. “Society” uses the poor as clients of settlement houses and beneficiaries of charity affairs; indeed, the aristocracy must have the poor to demonstrate its superiority over other elites who devote themselves to earning money.

*Eleventh*, the poor, being powerless, can be made to absorb the costs of change and growth in American society. During the nineteenth century, they did the back-breaking work that built the cities; today, they are pushed out of their neighborhoods to make room for “progress.” Urban renewal projects to hold middle-class taxpayers in the city and expressways to enable suburbanites to commute downtown have typically been located in poor neighborhoods, since no other group will allow itself to be displaced. For the same reason, universities, hospitals, and civic centers also expand into land occupied by the poor. The major costs of the industrialization of agriculture have been borne by the poor, who are pushed off the land without recompense; and they have paid a large share of the human cost of the growth of American power overseas, for they have provided many of the foot soldiers Vietnam and other wars.

*Twelfth*, the poor facilitate and stabilize the American political process. Because they vote and participate in politics less than other groups, the political system is often free to ignore them. Moreover, since they can rarely support Republicans, they often provide the Democrats with a captive constituency that has no other place to go. As a result, the Democrats can count on their votes, and be more responsive to voters—for example, the white working class—who might otherwise switch to the Republicans.

*Thirteenth*, the role of the poor in upholding conventional norms (see the *fifth* point, above) also has a significant political function. An economy based on the ideology of laissez-faire requires a deprived population that is allegedly unwilling to work or that can be considered inferior because it must accept charity or welfare in order to survive. Not only does the alleged moral deviancy of the poor reduce the moral pressure on the present political economy to eliminate poverty but socialist alternatives can be made to look quite unattractive if those who will benefit most from them can be described as lazy, spendthrift, dishonest and promiscuous.

## ☉ The Alternatives

I have described 13 of the more important functions poverty and the poor satisfy in American society, enough to support the functionalist thesis that poverty, like any other social phenomenon, survives in part because it is useful to society or some of its parts. This analysis is not intended to suggest that because it is often functional, poverty *should* exist, or that it *must* exist. For one thing, poverty has many more dysfunctions than functions; for another, it is possible to suggest functional alternatives.

For example, society's dirty work could be done without poverty, either by automation or by paying "dirty workers" decent wages. Nor is it necessary for the poor to subsidize the many activities they support through their low-wage jobs. This would, however, drive up the costs of these activities, which would result in higher prices to their customers and clients. Similarly, many of the professionals who flourish because of the poor could be given other roles. Social workers could provide counseling to the affluent, as they prefer to do anyway; and the police could devote themselves to traffic and organized crime. Other roles would have to be found for badly trained or incompetent professionals now relegated to serving the poor, and someone else would have to pay their salaries. Fewer penologists would be employable, however. And Pentecostal religion could probably not survive without the poor—nor would parts of the second- and third-hand-goods market. And in many cities, "used" housing that no one else wants would then have to be torn down at public expense.

Alternatives for the cultural functions of the poor could be found more easily and cheaply. Indeed, entertainers and adolescents are already serving as the deviants needed to uphold traditional morality and as devotees of orgies to "staff" the fantasies of vicarious participation.

The status functions of the poor are another matter. In a hierarchical society, some people must be defined as inferior to everyone else with respect to a variety of attributes, but they need not be poor in the absolute sense. One could conceive of a society in which the “lower class,” though last in the pecking order, received 75 percent of the median income, rather than 15–40 percent, as is now the case. Needless to say, this would require considerable income redistribution.

The contribution the poor make to the upward mobility of the groups that provide them with goods and services could also be maintained without the poor’s having such low incomes. However, it is true that if the poor were more affluent, they would have access to enough capital to take over the provider role, thus competing with, and perhaps rejecting, the “outsiders.” . . . Similarly, if the poor were more affluent, they would make less willing clients for upper-class philanthropy, although some would still use settlement houses to achieve upward mobility, as they do now. Thus “Society” could continue to run its philanthropic activities.

The political functions of the poor would be more difficult to replace. With increased affluence the poor would probably obtain more political power and be more active politically. With higher incomes and more political power, the poor would be likely to resist paying the costs of growth and change. Of course, it is possible to imagine urban renewal and highway projects that properly reimbursed the displaced people, but such projects would then become considerably more expensive, and many might never be built. This, in turn, would reduce the comfort and convenience of those who now benefit from urban renewal and expressways.

In sum, then, many of the functions served by the poor could be replaced if poverty were eliminated, but almost always at higher costs to others, particularly more affluent others. Consequently, a functional analysis must conclude that poverty persists not only because it fulfills a number of positive functions but also because many of the functional alternatives to poverty would be quite dysfunctional for the affluent members of society. A functional analysis thus ultimately arrives at much the same conclusion as radical sociology, except that radical thinkers treat as manifest what I describe as latent: that social phenomena that are functional for affluent or powerful groups and dysfunctional for poor or powerless ones persist; that when the elimination of such phenomena through functional alternatives would generate dysfunctions for the affluent or powerful, they will continue to persist; and that phenomena like poverty can be eliminated only when they become dysfunctional for the

affluent or powerful, or when the powerless can obtain enough power to change society.

## ☉ *Postscript\**

Over the years, this article has been interpreted as either a direct attack on functionalism or a tongue-in-cheek satirical comment on it. Neither interpretation is true. I wrote the article for two reasons. First and foremost, I wanted to point out that there are, unfortunately, positive functions of poverty which have to be dealt with by antipoverty policy. Second, I was trying to show that functionalism is not the inherently conservative approach for which it has often been criticized, but that it can be employed in liberal and radical analyses.



## *Thinking Critically*

As you read this selection, ask yourself:

1. What functions (or uses) of poverty does Gans identify?
2. Of the functions of poverty that Gans identifies, which two do you think are the most important? Which two the least important? Why?
3. Do you think that Gans has gone overboard with his analysis? That he has stretched the functionalist perspective beyond reason? Or do you agree with him? Why or why not?

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\*A note from the author to the editor.



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# *Fighting Poverty in the Inner-City of New York City*

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*“In a modern state the actual ruler is necessarily and unavoidably the bureaucracy, since power is exercised neither through parliamentary speeches nor monarchical enunciations but through the routines of administration. Just as the so-called progress toward capitalism has been the unequivocal criterion for the modernization of the economy . . . the democratic state no less than the absolute state eliminates administration by feudal, patrimonial or other notables holding office in honorary or hereditary fashion, in favor of employed officials, who decide on all our everyday needs and problems.” Max Weber*

**I**n this paper I attempt to analyze the way a population of Puerto Ricans relate to the intrusion of bureaucracy in El Barrio, a low income community in New York City. Urban conditions limiting economic stability have been shaped by vast unemployment and the migration of manufacturing and retail job resources employing a considerable number of Hispanics. The effects of economic changes in the private sector has seen the rise of complex service agencies created by government funds to satisfy welfare needs of economically deprived groups. Although federal actions to reduce inequality in the 1970's is not a new idea (Whyte, 1943), what bearing do bureaucratic impingements have on minorities whose ethos is directed at human service exigencies in low income neighborhoods? Cloward and Piven (1972) point out, bureaucratic systems have altered community processes in problem solving and diminished the decision making ability of the poor Hamilton (1976) suggests the effects of independently funded agencies is a replacement of patron-client relations of agencies and party clubhouses with patron-recipient relations of agencies and residents in addressing social problems.

The analysis of community action and the economically disadvantage has paid minimal research attention to behaviors within the vortex of U.S. barrio communities. This paper will attempt to contribute to this neglected area of inquiry. A major empirical concern will be the extent bureaucratic and political apparatus function to remedy community disorganization in a Hispanic minority neighborhood. I shall refer to organizations formed by a minority group as a depiction of their economic status within American society.

The involvement of the public sector in low income environments has increased tremendously, with El Barrio census tracts receiving approximately 55% to 75% of the total area economy in various forms of government supplements. The stratification system of low income areas depend on substantial government allotments of food stamps, supplemental security income, Medicaid, welfare, federally financed housing, and public service employment. This increasing governmental role in the economic life of low status neighborhoods has lead one investigator to designate these areas as public sector communities. The growing dominance of publicly supported agencies in previous studies of Puerto Ricans suggests they play a major part in the expanding aspect of the public sector in communities. Rogler (1974) mentioned attempts to advance neighborhood services has shifted from the local system of political bossism to fit the distinctive bureaucratic qualities of Puerto Rican service agencies. Lopez (1973) argues that agency personnel have recognized the futility of community actions which last political support to mediate between funding bureaucracies and the extensive demands of community services. Others, Jennings (1977) suggest line of informal leadership and agency influence are developing and have thus far not fully developed in the New York Puerto Rican community. In what ways do the theoretical perspectives of Rogler, Hamilton, Cloward and others relate to conditions in our focal locality? I shall examine this question with observations of behaviors within service units which comprise a portion of the public sector character of El Barrio. Published historical data will supplement field observations.

The data in the study derive from fourteen months of research in a Puerto Rican community called East Harlem, but identified by Hispanics as El Barrio. I selected the community because of its historic role in attracting and acclimating Puerto Ricans to the rigors of American city life during the 1930–1950 migrating years. Today, the density and residential mobility of Puerto Ricans in the Greater New York Metropolis has resulted in numerous

other communities. Yet, many former residents continue to visit the “old block,” and current inhabitants place hope in the likelihood Barrio agencies will serve their social needs.

Primary data collection sites were the New York Experimental and Bilingual Institute (hereafter referred to as the Institute), and the Massive Economic Neighborhood Development, a community service bureaucracy created in 1965 (hereafter referred to as MEND). Field data was mainly collected through participant-observation for detailed case study. These units were selected because of their activism in local political affairs and MEND's rapid bureaucratic growth in funded programs. Field work was undertaken through the interlocking network of agency members and allied groups which comprise action units. Participant observation was the most efficient tool in collecting data in a study of an organizationally mobile group of community activists. This was the best method to illicit data from respondents who are unwilling to reveal the extent of contacts in agency referral systems or campaign strategies.

El Barrio has a historically changing function relative to other city neighborhoods during the past five decades. It provided a low rent residential area for Irish, Jewish, and Italian workers employed in large industrial plants and retail stores in the city. Currently the locale is increasingly inhabited by low income Puerto Ricans and to a smaller extent Blacks, a large proportion of whom are unemployed. In a sense, a community is what it does, and much of what it does can be grasped by studying episodes of action.

The aggravating unemployment condition of El Barrio lead to an episode of action in the creation of the Bilingual Institute, an adult school. It was established in 1971 by federal and city community development funds to service unemployed and underemployed adults in occupational training, higher education, and job placement. Later in 1973 the school's funding was augmented by federal CETA (government manpower training) monies. One indication of the differential importance of public funds in the formal differential of Barrio life may be reflected in the role of MEND in channeling the building process of new programs. Sponsorship for the Institute proceeded through an existing functional alternative, MEND's formally organized action channels which guided funding consideration. MEND's high level staffers have been involved in civic struggles as an organizing feature of urban life, and their representational capabilities in public bureaucracies are extensive.

Frequently they negotiate funding support, forming and preserving linkages with persons in positions of official authority through complex ties. Few groups in the community have personal access to vast reservoirs of funding resources. In 1976, MEND's formal structure had 14 organizations, and 19 funded programs comprising these units were created through ties to existing channels. Today the anti-poverty sector is the largest industry and employer of minorities in El Barrio. Thus, the formal eradication of poverty is big business, and Puerto Ricans are tacitly proceeding to build service institutions to subserve these functional requirements.

Cloward and Piven (1972:12) said community-based bureaucracies require control of expertise, and MEND's endorsement of the Institute was a crucial factor in extending the agency's control of internal affairs. MEND leaders used the school personnel framework as job placements or job training grounds for many unemployed political workers. In the building process of the bureaucracy, jobs were awarded to persons with technical skills, but most were dispensed due to the structure of power arrangements. MEND's structural constraints allowed little deviation, or allied political leaders would have imposed sanctions had they attempted to employ persons from non-affiliated groups. This principal was demonstrated by the action of clubhouse or agency chiefs once they had control of any funded program. Sponsorship in the creation of new programs translated into managerial domination by the sponsoring agent. The task of sifting job resources was directed by the New Era Democratic Club, the club of MEND and locally allied organizations which allocate jobs to dedicated campaign workers after electoral offensives. Managerial status in community action programs was usually preceded by a commitment for political involvement in the organization and external agency sponsored activism. School administrators in the Institute employed as environmental agents (Azumi, 1972), supplied and integrated school volunteers in coordinated actions dealing with dispose of environmental needs through employed subordinates. These agents considerably reduce the autonomy of units to select priorities, procedural methods, and limit the range of variation in Institute functioning to the dictates of the "agency family."

The main conception of agency and political interplay is explained by a Barrio activist in saying "organizational efforts in community action were meant as patronage opportunities for the cadres of ghetto political groups and we are capitalizing on that circumstance in this community." Government anti-poverty funds sustain this organizational character and the overlapping

structure of power relations among groups. Since 1971, MEND's political apparatus has greatly developed its ability to displace elective leaders of political clubs which lack the manpower resources and supportive alliances. From 1972 to 1976 they were able to elect two district leaders, one state assemblyman, and seize control of local institutional bodies (local school board, community planning board, and health planning board) of El Barrio. Since the formation of the New Era Club (originally it consisted of a unified coalition of groups), members have been appointed to a multitude of municipal and state positions in human service offices. The club acquired these placements by locally endorsing city, state, and national Democratic aspirants to elective office. Government appointees were able to influence allocation decisions of funding budgets in favor of Puerto Ricans in the MEND alliance. The merging of political forces has coalesced a range of groups and ideologies. The East Harlem Community Corporation (an anti-poverty agency) has a leadership composed of registered Republicans, have a clubhouse latently allied with the New Era, and use Republican Party routes to bring funded programs to the community. MEND is a delegate agency of the Community Corporation, receiving over on third of its funding budget. Party loyalty is emphasized to extra-community political groups, but internally party labels are insignificant and sharing of agency job resources are distributed to individuals regardless of party affiliation. Thus, for Puerto Ricans in this political network of organizations, it made no difference in Democrats or Republicans were elected to office in Washington, Albany, or city hall because either they would benefit economically. Party label in these allied groups function to the extent their capacity to broaden government anti-poverty allocation is politically maximized.

Elective, government appointees, and party contacts have referred vast sums of monies in funded programs to El Barrio. The viability of these support mechanisms prompted a program planner of MEND to comment "man, we're up to our ears in projects and programs, at times being obliged to turn down informal offers by the reps of funding sources. The Neighborhood Crisis Center of the Human Resources Administration has often been offered, but we don't see that service as a major concern," at a later date they did take the offer! Great success in seizing service funds in the Barrio has encouraged Puerto Ricans to be increasingly directed toward local influentials (Merton, 1968). In acting as locals, funding rewards comprising the major element in the economic structure of El Barrio has guided agency efforts in service issues as locals.

Local patterns of influence were oriented toward quantitative aspects (meet and service more recipients) in programs as an important precondition for agency growth.

Often, some clubhouse members were viewed by leaders as “rising stars” in the political horizon of El Barrio’s future. The struggle of “rising stars” was not limited to external arenas, but intense competition for positions of authority occurred between subordinant “rising stars” and chiefs of agency formal structures. MEND leaders encourage these struggles to keep intermediate and lower level administrators at top efficiency performance. At any point agency operations are subject to the pressure of political groups and therefore it is difficult to separate administrative affairs from politics. Inter-agency conflicts over leadership representation were controlled by informal structural rules which require they exercise challenges within the “organizational family” and preserve positive external behaviors. Thus, controls mediate the degree competing members comply in endorsing their elective and appointee candidacies for external positions, exchange awards for local service achievements at civic affairs, and publicly court media coverage. These constraints yielded MEND and its affiliate’s great advantage in managing threats by rival community service and political groups.

Community-wide challenges have usually come from the New World Democratic Club, the political arm of the East Harlem Tenant’s Council (a local service agency) and the Caribbean Democratic Club, two Puerto Rican community foes. MEND had conflicts with the Tenant’s Council over competition for local anti-poverty funds, and conflicts with the Caribbean Club (a clubhouse created over 50 years ago) over MEND’s intrusion in the electoral and institutional political affairs of the area. These conflicts are symbolic of the political cleavages between competing non-aligned organizations. The East Harlem Tenant’s Council usually receive support from public sectors where the reform wing of the Democratic Party and Liberal Party candidates are in positions. Also, major corporations (Chemical Bank and ITT) or social welfare agencies (Urban League or Community Service Society) allocate grants to finance Tenant Council programs. The chief distinction between a small bureaucracy (Tenant’s Council) and a large bureaucracy (MEND), both locally based, in ethnic activism is power. Through the factor of program acquisition, both organizational groups may rise or fall in the community status system. The Caribbean Club had no noticeable programs and held vested interests in running electoral candidates and administering campaign offensives, being the oldest Puerto Rican club in the community, if not the city. This club lost

considerable status and political ground when MEND repeatedly defeated a member who was veteran district leader and controller of party patronage.

Local foes of MEND conduct Quixotic voter registration drives and run candidate slates in electoral and institutional body campaigns. They compete to gain institutional body positions and greater status as territorial service agents, or regain a political reputation. These groups possess less "pulling power" in distributing economic rewards to members and mainly mobilize for the purpose of protesting the deficiencies in community services of "over politicized agencies." If Blau's (1964) view of the incentive of organizational behavior are "voluntary actions of individuals which are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring in return," meager economic rewards by the Tenant's Council and the Caribbean Club has not induced members to maintain the high group activism as MEND in local affairs. This process of exchange contribute to the degree agencies survive or expand control of locally relevant tasks in service programs.

In these exchanges and conflicts community action agencies and environmental operatives have instituted new power relations in the deployment of economic benefits within the competitive organizational milieu of El Barrio. Variant types of relations, each serving different functional requirements sustain local bureaucratic systems. Patron-recipients relations, demanding people subscribe to agency services, replenish the economic benefits of programs by bridging the gulf between service accomplishments and refunding objectives. Some resident's ender recipient pools as favored members of the "MEND family" seeking community services as a retribution for past political work. Moreover, the need for a sufficient number of recipients by programs, is more efficiently met by administrators through exchange with other MEND subunits or allied agencies than through independent recipient finding methods. One unanticipated consequence of patron-recipient ties was the recruitment of interested recipients to volunteer in community-wide civic and political involvement.

Patron-client relations, requiring allegiance and agency actions in the group's interest, was the primary means by which MEND preserved the growth and cohesion of working parts within the bureaucratic apparatus. The basic course of action in inter-agency behaviors between MEND and allied groups is patron-client, and services to agencies is patron recipient. Both processes play a vital role in linking the furthering of local agency programs and political goals.

## ☉ Summary and Conclusion

In El Barrio bureaucratic systems were based primarily on differential control of jobs and government funded resources by political groups working through local service agencies. Three important mechanisms which continued control of the majority of public funding agencies in the hands of a few political bureaucrats were domination of elective offices, institutional bodies, and extensive contacts in funding sources. This dominant position severely restricted the outflow of funds to rival organizational groups based in the community.

I have been dealing with a limited number of aspects in this inquiry. My concern has been to analyze the major interorganizational relations which account for the way a population of ethnic minorities treat economic conditions in a low income neighborhood. While the community activism of the 1960's in the inner-city centered on protests and demands for economic equality, the 1970's appear to assume a reform and conformist position. Service to the community and service to the dominant political structure are the value orientation of members of this Puerto Rican community. Roglers (1974:66) statement that ethnic activism focuses on minority collective problems, not discrete personal problems; seeks to bridge the gulf by extending agency services into the ethnic community, not piecemeal favors; and its aim to mobilize the ethnic community into broader coalitions of civic involvement, is correct, even in the larger urban milieu of El Barrio.

Few residents of El Barrio underestimate MEND's power in lining up support for campaigns in addressing service issues, or political conflict. This perspective however, stems in great part from the inability of local competitors to triumph politically in the community arena. Otherwise, the MEND alliance will continue its territorial coverage of services by exploiting the economically deteriorating character of a neighborhood for their own expansionist interests.

This inquiry has essentially taken the view of the relationship of community service organizations and its structure of inter-bureaucratic and political arrangements. In future research, of particular promise is comparative inquiries in the political and bureaucratic ties of different although interacting classes or organizations. How different are the degrees of control, cooperation, or conflicts between economic, cultural, religious or governmental complex organizations and satellite units? And what are the consequences of variations



in organizational groups for the internal structure, decision-making, and exchange processes of different types of agencies? A participant-observer, although under other conditions other methods are useful, could examine the organizational interrelationships of large hospital and subordinant neighborhood health clinics, or health outreach programs? Systematic research into the interactions among divergent formal organizations and ethnic groups may unearth detailed knowledge about the nature of relations within and between the vast assortment of institutions in society.

## ☉ Privatization

The neoconservatives during the 1980's until today have elevated the roll that community based organizations play in meeting the needs of the urban poor. During the period of Ronald Regan and George Bush Presidencies, many great programs were eliminated or severely slashed. In many ways these self help local efforts by grass root groups changed the patron-recipient relations or what Ferdinand Townies would call serving the "public interest." Serving the public interest meant providing child care, health care and housing rehabilitation functions that also relied on a political role know as patron-client relationships which were common among political machines of both the Democratic and Republican parties in American communities and towns.

The new guidelines from Neoncons from Washington, D.C. and Albany, New York emphasized a move toward privatization which charged the consumers of county self help services to paying customers. Using job related or public sector health plans (i.e. Blue Cross & Blue Shield, Medicaid & Medicare, etc) to pay for health services at local clinics or hospital outreach programs. In the case of child care centers, privatization stipulated local people pay for day care enrollment. The charter school movement to a high extent of probability followed this fee paying behavior for the families of charter school students. In many ways this behavioral change reflects the view of a transition to Ferdinand Townie's conception of "Self Interest." In other words, the organizational view of self help groups now require that we will help you if you become available to be served, and we will now charge money and profit from this service interaction.

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# *Millions for Viagra, Pennies for Diseases of the Poor*

KEN SILVERSTEIN

*Why are pharmaceutical companies willing to invest millions of dollars on drugs that reduce wrinkles or that eliminate our pets' anxiety—and not on drugs that would eradicate life-threatening illness afflicting Third World populations? The answer is related to how global economic stratification affects the availability of health care—those who can pay get what they need and want from the medical institution, and those who can't may not.*

*Put another way, the lure of high profits encourages pharmaceutical companies to place a priority on developing “lifestyle” drugs like Viagra, Rogaine, or even antidepressants for pets over developing drugs for infectious diseases such as malaria or river blindness. And, as Ken Silverstein argues, until it is profitable for them to do so, pharmaceutical companies are unlikely to change their priorities to research, develop, and introduce affordable drugs to disadvantaged populations.*

**A**lmost three times as many people, most of them in tropical countries of the Third World, die of preventable, curable diseases as die of AIDS. Malaria, tuberculosis, acute lower-respiratory infections—in 1998, these claimed 6.1 million lives. People died because the drugs to treat those illnesses are nonexistent or are no longer effective. They died because it doesn't pay to keep them alive.

Only 1 percent of all new medicines brought to market by multinational pharmaceutical companies between 1975 and 1997 were designed specifically to treat tropical diseases plaguing the Third World. In numbers, that means thirteen out of 1,223 medications. Only four of those thirteen resulted from research by the industry that was designed specifically to combat tropical ailments. The others, according to a study by the French group Doctors

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“Millions for Viagra, Pennies for Diseases of the Poor” by Ken Silverstein from *The Nation* 7/19/99. Copyright © 1999 by The Nation. Reprinted by permission.

Without Borders, were either updated versions of existing drugs, products of military research, accidental discoveries made during veterinary research or, in one case, a medical breakthrough in China.

Certainly, the majority of the other 1,210 new drugs help relieve suffering and prevent premature death, but some of the hottest preparations, the ones that, as the *New York Times* put it, drug companies “can’t seem to roll . . . out fast enough,” have absolutely nothing to do with matters of life and death. They are what have come to be called lifestyle drugs—remedies that may one day free the world from the scourge of toenail fungus, obesity, baldness, face wrinkles and impotence. The market for each drug is worth billions of dollars a year and is one of the fastest-growing product lines in the industry.

The drug industry’s calculus in apportioning its resources is cold-blooded, but there’s no disputing that one old, fat, bald, fungus-ridden rich man who can’t get it up counts for more than half a billion people who are vulnerable to malaria but too poor to buy the remedies they need.

Western interest in tropical diseases was historically linked to colonization and war, specifically the desire to protect settlers and soldiers. Yellow fever became a target of biomedical research only after it began interfering with European attempts to control parts of Africa. “So obvious was this deterrence . . . that it was celebrated in song and verse by people from Sudan to Senegal,” Laurie Garrett recounts in her extraordinary book *The Coming Plague*. “Well into the 1980s schoolchildren in Ibo areas of Nigeria still sang the praises of mosquitoes and the diseases they gave to French and British colonialists.”

US military researchers have discovered virtually all important malaria drugs. Chloroquine was synthesized in 1941 after quinine, until then the primary drug to treat the disease, became scarce following Japan’s occupation of Indonesia. The discovery of Mefloquine, the next advance, came about during the Vietnam War, in which malaria was second only to combat wounds in sending US troops to the hospital. With the end of a ground-based US military strategy came the end of innovation in malaria medicine.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) claimed in newspaper ads early this year that its goal is to “set every last disease on the path to extinction.” Jeff Trewhitt, a PhRMA spokesman, says US drug companies will spend \$24 billion on research this year and that a number of firms are looking for cures for tropical diseases. Some companies also

provide existing drugs free to poor countries, he says. “Our members are involved. There’s not an absolute void.”

The void is certainly at hand. Neither PhRMA nor individual firms will reveal how much money the companies spend on any given disease—that’s proprietary information, they say—but on malaria alone, a recent survey of the twenty-four biggest drug companies found that not a single one maintains an in-house research program, and only two expressed even minimal interest in primary research on the disease. “The pipeline of available drugs is almost empty,” says Dyann Wirth of the Harvard School of Public Health, who conducted the study. “It takes five to ten years to develop a new drug, so we could soon face [a strain of] malaria resistant to every drug in the world.” A 1996 study presented in *Cahiers Santé*, a French scientific journal, found that of forty-one important medicines used to treat major tropical diseases, none were discovered in the nineties and all but six were discovered before 1985.

Contributing to this trend is the wave of mergers that has swept the industry over the past decade. Merck alone now controls almost 10 percent of the world market. “The bigger they grow, the more they decide that their research should be focused on the most profitable diseases and conditions,” one industry watcher says. “The only thing the companies think about on a daily basis is the price of their stocks; and announcing that you’ve discovered a drug [for a tropical disease] won’t do much for your share price.”

That comment came from a public health advocate, but it’s essentially seconded by industry. “A corporation with stockholders can’t stoke up a laboratory that will focus on Third World diseases, because it will go broke,” says Roy Vagelos, the former head of Merck. “That’s a social problem, and industry shouldn’t be expected to solve it.”

Drug companies, however, are hardly struggling to beat back the wolves of bankruptcy. The pharmaceutical sector racks up the largest legal profits of any industry, and it is expected to grow by an average of 16 to 18 percent over the next four years, about three times more than the average for the Fortune 500. Profits are especially high in the United States, which alone among First World nations does not control drug prices. As a result, prices here are about twice as high as they are in the European Union and nearly four times higher than in Japan.

“It’s obvious that some of the industry’s surplus profits could be going into research for tropical diseases,” says a retired drug company executive, who wishes to remain anonymous. “Instead, it’s going to stockholders.” Also to promotion: In 1998, the industry unbuckled \$10.8 billion on advertising.

And to politics: In 1997, American drug companies spent \$74.8 million to lobby the federal government, more than any other industry; last year they spent nearly \$12 million on campaign contributions.

Just forty-five years ago, the discovery of new drugs and pesticides led the World Health Organization (WHO) to predict that malaria would soon be eradicated. By 1959, Garrett writes in *The Coming Plague*, the Harvard School of Public Health was so certain that the disease was passé that its curriculum didn't offer a single course on the subject.

Resistance to existing medicines—along with cutbacks in healthcare budgets, civil war and the breakdown of the state—has led to a revival of malaria in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and, most recently, Armenia and Tajikistan. The WHO describes the disease as a leading cause of global suffering and says that by “undermining the health and capacity to work of hundreds of millions of people, it is closely linked to poverty and contributes significantly to stunting social and economic development.”

Total global expenditures for malaria research in 1993, including government programs, came to \$84 million. That's paltry when you consider that one B-2 bomber costs \$2 billion, the equivalent of what, at current levels, will be spent on all malaria research over twenty years. In that period, some 40 million Africans alone will die from the disease. In the United States, the Pentagon budgets \$9 million per year for malaria programs, about one-fifth the amount it set aside this year to supply the troops with Viagra. For the drug companies, the meager purchasing power of malaria's victims leaves the disease off the radar screen. As Neil Sweig, an industry analyst at Southeast Research Partners, puts it wearily, “It's not worth the effort or the while of the large pharmaceutical companies to get involved in enormously expensive research to conquer the *Anopheles* mosquito.”

The same companies that are indifferent to malaria are enormously troubled by the plight of dysfunctional First World pets. John Keeling, a spokesman for the Washington, DC-based Animal Health Institute, says the “companion animal” drug market is exploding, with US sales for 1998 estimated at about \$1 billion. On January 5, the FDA approved the use of Clomicalm, produced by Novartis, to treat dogs that suffer from separation anxiety (warning signs: barking or whining, “excessive greeting” and chewing on furniture). “At Last, Hope for Millions of Suffering Canines Worldwide,” reads the company's press release announcing the drug's rollout. “I can't emphasize enough how dogs are suffering and that their behavior is not

tolerable to owners,” says Guy Tebbitt, vice president for research and development for Novartis Animal Health.

Also on January 5 the FDA gave the thumbs up to Pfizer’s Anipryl, the first drug approved for doggie Alzheimer’s. Pfizer sells a canine pain reliever and arthritis treatment as well, and late last year it announced an R&D program for medications that help pets with anxiety and dementia.

Another big player in the companion-animal field is Heska, a biotechnology firm based in Colorado that strives to increase the “quality of life” for cats and dogs. Its products include medicines for allergies and anxiety, as well as an antibiotic that fights periodontal disease. The company’s Web site features a “spokesdog” named Perio Pooch and, like old “shock” movies from high school driver’s-ed classes, a photograph of a diseased doggie mouth to demonstrate what can happen if teeth and gums are not treated carefully. No one wants pets to be in pain, and Heska also makes drugs for animal cancer, but it is a measure of priorities that US companies and their subsidiaries spend almost nothing on tropical diseases while, according to an industry source, they spend about half a billion dollars for R&D on animal health.

Although “companion animal” treatments are an extreme case—that half-billion-dollar figure covers “food animals” as well, and most veterinary drugs emerge from research on human medications—consider a few examples from the brave new world of human lifestyle drugs. Here, the pharmaceutical companies are scrambling to eradicate:

*Impotence.* Pfizer invested vast sums to find a cure for what Bob Dole and other industry spokesman delicately refer to as “erectile dysfunction.” The company hit the jackpot with Viagra, which racked up more than \$1 billion in sales in its first year on the market. Two other companies, Schering-Plough and Abbott Laboratories, are already rushing out competing drugs.

*Baldness.* The top two drugs in the field, Merck’s Propecia and Pharmacia & Upjohn’s Rogaine (the latter sold over the counter), had combined sales of about \$180 million in 1998. “Some lifestyle drugs are used for relatively serious problems, but even in the best cases we’re talking about very different products from penicillin,” says the retired drug company executive. “In cases like baldness therapy, we’re not even talking about healthcare.”

*Toenail fungus.* With the slogan “Let your feet get naked!” as its battle cry, pharmaceutical giant Novartis recently unveiled a lavish advertising campaign for Lamisil, a drug that promises relief for sufferers of this unsightly malady. It’s a hot one, the war against fungus, pitting Lamisil against Janssen

Pharmaceutical's Sporanox and Pfizer's Diflucan for shares in a market estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

*Face wrinkles.* Allergan earned \$90 million in 1997 from sales of its "miracle" drug Botox. Injected between the eyebrows at a cost of about \$1,000 for three annual treatments, Botox makes crow's feet and wrinkles disappear. "Every 7½ seconds someone is turning 50," a wrinkle expert told the *Dallas Morning News* in an article about Botox last year. "You're looking at this vast population that doesn't want frown lines."

Meanwhile, acute lower respiratory infections go untreated, claiming about 3.5 million victims per year, overwhelmingly children in poor nations. Such infections are third on the chart of the biggest killers in the world; the number of lives they take is almost half the total reaped by the number-one killer, heart disease, which usually strikes the elderly. "The development of new antibiotics," wrote drug company researcher A.J. Slater in a 1989 paper published in the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene's *Transactions*, "is very costly and their provision to Third World countries alone can never be financially rewarding."

In some cases, older medications thought to be unnecessary in the First World and commercially unviable in the Third have simply been pulled from the market. This created a crisis recently when TB re-emerged with a vengeance in US inner cities, since not a single company was still manufacturing Streptomycin after mid-1991. The FDA set up a task force to deal with the situation, but it was two years before it prodded Pfizer back into the field.

In 1990 Marion Merrell Dow (which was bought by German giant Hoechst in 1995) announced that it would manufacture Ornidyl, the first new medicine in forty years that was effective in treating African sleeping sickness. Despite the benign sounding name, the disease leads to coma and death, and kills about 40,000 people a year. Unlike earlier remedies for sleeping sickness, Ornidyl had few side effects. In field trials, it saved the lives of more than 600 patients, most of whom were near death. Yet Ornidyl was pulled from production; apparently company bean-counters determined that saving lives offered no return.

Because AIDS also plagues the First World, it is the one disease ravaging Third World countries that is the object of substantial drug company research. In many African countries, AIDS has wiped out a half-century of gains in child survival rates. In Botswana—a country that is not at war and has a relatively stable society—life expectancy rates fell by twenty years over a period of just five. In South Africa, the Health Ministry recently issued a report saying that 1,500 of the country's people are infected with HIV every

day and predicting that the annual deathrate will climb to 500,000 within the next decade.

Yet available treatments and research initiatives offer little hope for poor people. A year's supply of the highly recommended multi-drug cocktail of three AIDS medicines costs about \$15,000 a year. That's exorbitant in any part of the world, but prohibitive in countries like Uganda, where per capita income stands at \$330. Moreover, different viral "families" of AIDS, with distinct immunological properties, appear in different parts of the world. About 85 percent of people with HIV live in the Third World, but industry research to develop an AIDS vaccine focuses only on the First World. "Without research dedicated to the specific viral strains that are prevalent in developing countries, vaccines for those countries will be very slow in coming," says Dr. Amir Attaran, an international expert who directs the Washington-based Malaria Project.

All the blame for the neglect of tropical diseases can't be laid at the feet of industry. Many Third World governments invest little in healthcare, and First World countries have slashed both foreign aid and domestic research programs. Meanwhile, the US government aggressively champions the interests of the drug industry abroad, a stance that often undermines healthcare needs in developing countries.

In one case where a drug company put Third World health before profit—Merck's manufacture of Ivermectin—governmental inertia nearly scuttled the good deed. It was the early eighties, and a Pakistani researcher at Merck discovered that the drug, until then used only in veterinary medicine, performed miracles in combating river blindness disease. With one dose per year of Ivermectin, people were fully protected from river blindness, which is carried by flies and, at the time, threatened hundreds of millions of people in West Africa.

Merck soon found that it would be impossible to market Ivermectin profitably, so in an unprecedented action the company decided to provide it free of charge to the WHO. (Vagelos, then chairman of Merck, said the company was worried about taking the step, "as we feared it would discourage companies from doing research relevant to the Third World, since they might be expected to follow suit.") Even then, the program nearly failed. The WHO claimed it didn't have the money needed to cover distribution costs, and Vagelos was unable to win financial support from the Reagan Administration. A decade after Ivermectin's discovery, only 3 million of 120 million people at risk of river blindness had received the drug. During the past few years, the WHO, the World Bank and private philanthropists have finally put up the



money for the program, and it now appears that river blindness will become the second disease, after smallpox, to be eradicated.

Given the industry's profitability, it's clear that the companies could do far more. It's equally clear that they won't unless they are forced to. The success of ACT UP\* in pushing drug companies to respond to the AIDS crisis in America is emblematic of how crucial but also how difficult it is to get the industry to budge. In late 1997, a coalition of public health organizations approached a group of major drug companies, including Glaxo-Wellcome and Roche, and asked them to fund a project that would dedicate itself to developing new treatments for major tropical diseases. Although the companies would have been required to put up no more than \$2 million a year, they walked away from the table. Since there's no organized pressure—either from the grassroots or from governments—they haven't come back. "There [were] a number of problems at the business level," Harvey Bale, director of the Geneva-based International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association, told *Science* magazine. "The cost of the project is high for some companies."

While the industry's political clout currently insures against any radical government action, even minor reforms could go a long way. The retired drug company executive points to public hospitals, which historically were guaranteed relatively high profit margins but were obligated to provide free care to the poor in return. There's also the example of phone companies, which charge businesses higher rates in order to subsidize universal service. "Society has tolerated high profit levels up until now, but society has the right to expect something back," he says. "Right now, it's not getting it."

The US government already lavishly subsidizes industry research and allows companies to market discoveries made by the National Institute of Health and other federal agencies. "All the government needs to do is start attaching some strings," says the Malaria Project's Attaran. "If a company wants to market another billion-dollar blockbuster, fine, but in exchange it will have to push through a new malaria drug. It will cost them some money, but it's not going to bankrupt them."

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\*Eds. Note: AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power

Another type of “string” would be a “reasonable pricing” provision for drugs developed at federal laboratories. By way of explanation, Attaran recounted that the vaccine for hepatitis A was largely developed by researchers at the Walter Reed Army Institute. At the end of the day, the government gave the marketing rights to SmithKline Beecham and Merck. The current market for the vaccine, which sells for about \$60 per person, is \$300 million a year. The only thing Walter Reed’s researchers got in exchange for their efforts was a plaque that hangs in their offices. “I’ll say one thing for the companies,” says Attaran. “They didn’t skimp on the plaque; it’s a nice one. But either the companies should have paid for part of the government’s research, or they should have been required to sell the vaccine at a much lower price.”

At the beginning of this year, Doctors Without Borders unveiled a campaign calling for increased access to drugs needed in Third World countries. The group is exploring ideas ranging from tax breaks for smaller firms engaged in research in the field, to creative use of international trade agreements, to increased donations of drugs from the multinational companies. Dr. Bernard Pécoul, an organizer of the campaign, says that different approaches are required for different diseases. In the case of those plaguing only the Southern Hemisphere—sleeping sickness, for example—market mechanisms won’t work because there simply is no market to speak of. Hence, he suggests that if multinational firms are not willing to manufacture a given drug, they transfer the relevant technology to a Third World producer that is.

Drugs already exist for diseases that ravage the North as well as the South—AIDS and TB, for example—but they are often too expensive for people in the Third World. For twenty-five years, the WHO has used funding from member governments to purchase and distribute vaccines to poor countries; Pécoul proposes a similar model for drugs for tropical diseases. Another solution he points to: In the event of a major health emergency, state or private producers in the South would be allowed to produce generic versions of needed medications in exchange for a small royalty paid to the multinational license holder. “If we can’t change the markets, we have to humanize them,” Pécoul says. “Drugs save lives. They can’t be treated as normal products.”



## *Questions*

1. Why have drug companies focused almost exclusively on lifestyle drugs? What are some potential negative outcomes of this on the health of people throughout the world?
2. According to Silverstein, is it appropriate to put the blame solely on drug companies for their neglect of vaccines that would help people in Third World nations? Why, or why not?
3. Pretend that you have ten minutes to talk to the president of a major pharmaceutical company. What would you say to him or her about developing treatments for tropical diseases that afflict people in Third World countries?
4. Visit the Doctors Without Borders website ([www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)) and the World Health Organization website ([www.who.int/home-page](http://www.who.int/home-page)). What can one learn from these websites about world health problems and priorities? Is what you learned consistent with the claims made by Silverstein in this article? Explain.

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# *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*

JONATHAN KOZOL

*What is the state of America's public schools? How much inequality exists between schools? To what degree are school conditions reflected in the surrounding communities? What effects do these conditions have on the students who attend these schools? In this selection, Jonathan Kozol provides a vivid portrayal of the deplorable conditions in many of America's public schools. Specifically, he contrasts the conditions in East St. Louis (inner-city) with those in suburban New York. While the conditions themselves may surprise you, the views of the students may prove even more alarming.*

“*S*ast of anywhere,” writes a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, “often evokes the other side of the tracks. But, for a first-time visitor suddenly deposited on its eerily empty streets, East St. Louis might suggest another world.” The city, which is 98% black, has no obstetric services, no regular trash collection, and few jobs. Nearly a third of its families live on less than \$7,500 a year; 75% of its population lives on welfare of some form. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development describes it as “the most distressed small city in America.”

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Only three of the 13 buildings on Missouri Avenue, one of the city's major thoroughfares, are occupied. A 13-story office building, tallest in the city, has been boarded up. Outside, on the sidewalk, a pile of garbage fills a ten-foot crater.

The city, which by night and day is clouded by the fumes that pour from vents and smokestacks at the Pfizer and Monsanto chemical plants, has one of the highest rates of child asthma in America.

It is, according to a teacher at the University of Southern Illinois, "a repository for a nonwhite population that is now regarded as expendable." The *Post-Dispatch* describes it as "America's Soweto."

Fiscal shortages have forced the layoff of 1,170 of the city's 1,400 employees in the past 12 years. The city, which is often unable to buy heating fuel or toilet paper for the city hall, recently announced that it might have to cashier all but 10% of the remaining work force of 230. In 1989 the mayor announced that he might need to sell the city hall and all six fire stations to raise needed cash. Last year the plan had to be scrapped after the city lost its city hall in a court judgment to a creditor. East St. Louis is mortgaged into the next century but has the highest property-tax rate in the state.

Since October 1987, when the city's garbage pickups ceased, the backyards of residents have been employed as dump sites. In the spring of 1988 a policeman tells a visitor that 40 plastic bags of trash are waiting for removal from the backyard of his mother's house. Public health officials are concerned the garbage will attract a plague of flies and rodents in the summer. The policeman speaks of "rats as big as puppies" in his mother's yard. They are known to the residents, he says, as "bull rats." Many people have no cars or funds to cart the trash and simply burn it in their yards. The odor of smoke from burning garbage, says the *Post-Dispatch*, "has become one of the scents of spring" in East St. Louis.

Railroad tracks still used to transport hazardous chemicals run through the city. "Always present," says the *Post-Dispatch*, "is the threat of chemical spills. . . . The wail of sirens warning residents to evacuate after a spill is common." The most recent spill, the paper says, "was at the Monsanto Company plant. . . . Nearly 300 gallons

of phosphorus trichloride spilled when a railroad tank was overfilled. About 450 residents were taken to St. Mary's Hospital. . . . The frequency of the emergencies has caused Monsanto to have a 'standing account' at St. Mary's." . . .

The dangers of exposure to raw sewage, which backs up repeatedly into the homes of residents in East St. Louis, were first noticed in the spring of 1989 at a public housing project, Villa Griffin. Raw sewage, says the *Post-Dispatch*, overflowed into a playground just behind the housing project, which is home to 187 children, "forming an oozing lake of . . . tainted water." Two schoolgirls, we are told, "experienced hair loss since raw sewage flowed into their homes."

While local physicians are not certain whether loss of hair is caused by the raw sewage, they have issued warnings that exposure to raw sewage can provoke a cholera or hepatitis outbreak. A St. Louis health official voices her dismay that children live with waste in their backyards. "The development of working sewage systems made cities livable a hundred years ago," she notes. "Sewage systems separate us from the Third World." . . .

The Daughters of Charity, whose works of mercy are well known in the Third World, operate a mission at the Villa Griffin homes. On an afternoon in early spring of 1990, Sister Julia Huiskamp meets me on King Boulevard and drives me to the Griffin homes.

As we ride past blocks and blocks of skeletal structures, some of which are still inhabited, she slows the car repeatedly at railroad crossings. A seemingly endless railroad train rolls past us to the right. On the left: a blackened lot where garbage has been burning. Next to the burning garbage is a row of 12 white cabins, charred by fire. Next: a lot that holds a heap of auto tires and a mountain of tin cans. More burnt houses. More trash fires. The train moves almost imperceptibly across the flatness of the land.

Fifty-years-old, and wearing a blue suit, white blouse, and blue head-cover, Sister Julia points to the nicest house in sight. The sign on the front reads MOTEL. "It's a whorehouse," Sister Julia says.

When she slows the car beside a group of teen-age boys, one of them steps out toward the car, then backs away as she is recognized.

The 99 units of the Villa Griffin homes—two-story structures, brick on the first floor, yellow wood above—form one border of a recessed park and playground that were filled with fecal matter last year when the sewage mains exploded. The sewage is gone now and the grass is very green and looks inviting. When nine-year-old Serena and her seven-year-old brother take me for a walk, however, I discover that our shoes sink into what is still a sewage marsh. An inch-deep residue of fouled water still remains.

Serena's brother is a handsome, joyous little boy, but troublingly thin. Three other children join us as we walk along the marsh: Smokey, who is nine years old but cannot yet tell time; Mickey, who is seven; and a tiny child with a ponytail and big brown eyes who talks a constant stream of words that I can't always understand.

"Hush, Little Sister," says Serena. I ask for her name, but "Little Sister" is the only name the children seem to know.

"There go my cousins," Smokey says, pointing to two teen-age girls above us on the hill.

The day is warm, although we're only in the second week of March; several dogs and cats are playing by the edges of the marsh. "It's a lot of squirrels here," says Smokey. "There go one!"

"This here squirrel is a friend of mine," says Little Sister.

None of the children can tell me the approximate time that school begins. One says five o'clock. One says six, another says that school begins at noon.

When I ask what song they sing after the flag pledge, one says "Jingle Bells."

Smokey cannot decide if he is in the second or third grade.

Seven-year-old Mickey sucks his thumb during the walk.

The children regale me with a chilling story as we stand beside the marsh. Smokey says his sister was raped and murdered and then dumped behind his school. Other children add more details: Smokey's sister was 11-years-old. She was beaten with a brick until she died. The murder was committed by a man who knew her mother.

The narrative begins when, without warning, Smokey says, "My sister has got killed."

"She was my best friend," Serena says.

"They had beat her in the head and raped her," Smokey says.

"She was hollering out loud," says Little Sister.

I ask them when it happened. Smokey says, "Last year." Serena then corrects him as she says, "Last week."

"It scared me because I had to cry," says Little Sister.

"The police arrested one man but they didn't catch the other," Smokey says.

Serena says, "He was some kin to her."

But Smokey objects, "He weren't no kin to me. He was my momma's friend."

"Her face was busted," Little Sister says.

Serena describes this sequence of events: "They told her go behind the school. They'll give her a quarter if she do. Then they knock her down and told her not to tell what they had did."

I ask, "Why did they kill her?"

"They was scared that she would tell," Serena says.

"One is in jail," says Smokey. "They can't find the other."

"Instead of raping little bitty children, they should find themselves a wife," says Little Sister.

"I hope," Serena, "her spirit will come back and get that man."

"And *kill* that man," says Little Sister.

"Give her another chance to live," Serena says.

"My teacher came to the funeral," says Smokey.

"When a little child dies, my momma say a star go straight to Heaven," says Serena.

"My grandma was murdered," Mickey says out of the blue. "Somebody shot two bullets in her head."

I ask him, "Is she really dead?"

"She dead all right," says Mickey. "She was layin' there, just dead."

"I love my friends," Serena says. "I don't care if they no kin to me. I care for them. I hope his mother have another baby. Name her for my friend that's dead."



"I have a cat with three legs," Smokey says.

"Snakes hate rabbits," Mickey says, again for no apparent reason.

"Cats hate fishes," Little Sister says.

"It's a lot of hate," says Smokey.

Later, at the mission, Sister Julia tells me this: "The Jefferson School, which they attend, is a decrepit hulk. Next to it is a modern school, erected two years ago, which was to have replaced the one that they attend. But the construction was not done correctly. The roof is too heavy for the walls, and the entire structure has begun to sink. It can't be occupied. Smokey's sister was raped and murdered and dumped between the old school and the new one."

As the children drift back to their homes for supper, Sister Julia stands outside with me and talks about the health concerns that trouble people in the neighborhood. In the setting sun, the voices of the children fill the evening air. Nourished by the sewage marsh, a field of wild daffodils is blooming. Standing here, you wouldn't think that anything was wrong. The street is calm. The poison in the soil can't be seen. The sewage is invisible and only makes the grass a little greener. Bikes thrown down by children lie outside their kitchen doors. It could be an ordinary twilight in a small suburban town.

Night comes on and Sister Julia goes inside to telephone a cab. In another hour, the St. Louis taxis will not come into the neighborhood. . . .

East St. Louis—which the local press refers to as "an inner city without an outer city"—has some of the sickest children in America. Of 66 cities in Illinois, East St. Louis ranks first in fetal death, first in premature birth, and third in infant death. Among the negative factors listed by the city's health director are the sewage running in the streets, air that has been fouled by the local plants, the high lead levels noted in the soil, poverty, lack of education, crime, dilapidated housing, insufficient health care, unemployment. Hospital care is deficient too. There is no place to have a baby in East St. Louis. The maternity ward at the city's Catholic hospital, a 100-year-old structure, was shut down some years ago. The only other hospital in town was forced by lack of funds to close in 1990. The closest obstetrics

service open to the women here is seven miles away. The infant death rate is still rising. . . .

Compounding these problems is the poor nutrition of the children here—average daily food expenditure in East St. Louis is \$2.40 for one child—and the underimmunization of young children. Of every 100 children recently surveyed in East St. Louis, 55 were incompletely immunized for polio, diphtheria, measles and whooping cough. In this context, health officials look with all the more uneasiness at those lagoons of sewage outside public housing.

On top of all else is the very high risk of death by homicide in East St. Louis. In a recent year in which three cities in the state of roughly the same size as East St. Louis had an average of four homicides a piece, there were 54 homicides in East St. Louis. But it is the heat of summer that officials here particularly dread. The heat that breeds the insects bearing polio or hepatitis in raw sewage also heighten asthma and frustration and reduced patience. “The heat,” says a man in public housing, “can bring out the beast. . . .”

The fear of violence is very real in East St. Louis. The CEO of one of the large companies out on the edge of town has developed an “evacuation plan” for his employees. State troopers are routinely sent to East St. Louis to put down disturbances that the police cannot control. If the misery of this community explodes someday in a real riot (it has happened in the past), residents believe that state and federal law-enforcement agencies will have no hesitation in applying massive force to keep the violence contained. . . .

The problems of the streets in urban areas, as teachers often note, frequently spill over into public schools. In the public schools of East St. Louis this is literally the case.

“Martin Luther King Junior High School,” notes the *Post-Despatch* in a story published in the early spring of 1989, “was evacuated Friday afternoon after sewage flowed into the kitchen. . . . The kitchen was closed and students were sent home.” On Monday, the paper continues, “East St. Louis Senior High School was awash in sewage for the second time this year.” The school had to be shut because of “fumes and backed-up toilets.” Sewage flowed into the

basement, through the floor, then up into the kitchen and the students' bathrooms. The backup, we read, "occurred in the food preparation areas."

School is resumed the following morning at the high school, but a few days later the overflow recurs. This time the entire system is affected, since the meals distributed to every student in the city are prepared in the two schools that have been flooded. School is called off for all 16,500 students in the district. The sewage backup, caused by the failure of two pumping stations, forces officials at the high school to shut down the furnaces.

At Martin Luther King, the parking lot and gym are also flooded. "It's a disaster," says a legislator. "The streets are underwater; gaseous fumes are being emitted from the pipes under the schools," she says, "making people ill."

In the same week, the schools announce the layoff of 280 teachers, 166 cooks and cafeteria workers, 25 teacher aides, 16 custodians and 18 painters, electricians, engineer and plumbers. The president of the teachers' union says the cuts, which will bring the size of kindergarten and primary classes up to 30 students, and the size of 4th to 12th grade classes up to 35, will have "an unimaginable impact" on the students. "If you have a high school teacher with five classes each day and between 150 and 175 students. . . , it's going to have a devastating effect." The school system, it is also noted, has been using more than 70 "permanent substitute teachers," who are paid only \$10,000 yearly, as a way of saving money.

Governor Thompson, however, tells the press that he will not pour money into East St. Louis to solve long-term problems. East St. Louis residents, he says, must help themselves. "There is money in the community," the governor insists. "It's just not being spent for what it should be spent for."

The governor, while acknowledging that East St. Louis faces economic problems, nonetheless refers dismissively to those who live in East St. Louis. "What in the community," he asks, "is being done right?" He takes the opportunity of a visit to the area to announce a fiscal grant for sewer improvement to a relatively wealthy town nearby.

In East St. Louis, meanwhile, teachers are running out of chalk and paper, and their paychecks are arriving two weeks late. The city warns its teachers to expect a cut of half of their pay until the fiscal crisis has been eased.

The threatened teacher layoffs are mandated by the Illinois Board of Education, which, because of the city's fiscal crisis, has been given supervisory control of the school budget. Two weeks later the state superintendent partially relents. In a tone very different from that of the governor, he notes that East St. Louis does not have the means to solve its education problems on its own. "There is no natural way," he says, that "East St. Louis can bring itself out of this situation." Several cuts will be required in any case—one quarter of the system's teachers, 75 teacher aides, and several dozen others will be given notice—but, the state board notes, sports and music programs will not be affected.

East St. Louis, says the chairman of the state board, "is simply the worst possible place I can imagine to have a child brought up. . . . The community is in desperate circumstances." Sports and music, he observes, are, for many children here, "the only avenues of success." Sadly enough, no matter how it ratifies the stereotype, this is the truth; and there is a poignant aspect to the fact that, even with the class size soaring and one quarter of the system's teachers being given their dismissal, the state board of education demonstrates its genuine but skewed compassion by attempting to leave sports and music untouched by the overall austerity.

Even sports facilities, however, are degrading by comparison with those found and expected at most high schools in America. The football field at East St. Louis High is missing almost everything—including goalposts. There are a couple of metal pipes—no crossbar, just the pipes. Bob Shannon, the football coach, who has to use his personal funds to purchase footballs and has had to cut and rake the football field himself, has dreams of having goalposts someday. He'd also like to let his students have new uniforms. The ones they wear are nine years old and held together somehow by a patchwork of repairs. Keeping them clean is a problem, too. The school cannot afford a

washing machine. The uniforms are carted to a corner laundromat with fifteen dollars' worth of quarters. . . .

In the wing of the school that holds vocational classes, a damp, unpleasant odor fills the halls. The school has a machine shop, which cannot be used for lack of staff, and a woodworking shop. The only shop that's occupied this morning is the auto-body class. A man with long blond hair and wearing a white sweat suit swings a paddle to get children in their chairs. "What we need the most is new equipment," he reports. "I have equipment for alignment, for example, but we don't have money to install it. We also need a better form of egress. We bring the cars in through two other classes." Computerized equipment used in most repair shops, he reports, is far beyond the high school's budget. It looks like a very old gas station in an isolated rural town.

The science labs in East St. Louis High are 30 to 50 years outdated. John McMillan, a soft-spoken man, teaches physics at the school. He shows me his lab. The six lab stations in the room have empty holes where pipes were once attached. "It would be great if we had water," says McMillan. . . .

Leaving the chemistry labs, I pass a double-sized classroom in which roughly 60 kids are sitting fairly still but doing nothing. "This is supervised study hall," a teacher tells me in the corridor. But when we step inside, he finds there is no teacher. "The teacher must be out today," he says.

Irl Solomon's history classes, which I visit next, have been described by journalists who cover East St. Louis as the highlight of the school. Solomon, a man of 54 whose reddish hair is turning white, has taught in urban schools for almost 30 years. A graduate of Brandeis University in 1961, he entered law school but was drawn away by a concern with civil rights. "After one semester, I decided that the law was not for me. I said, 'Go and find the toughest place there is to teach. See if you like it.' I'm still here. . . ."

Teachers like Mr. Solomon, working in low-income districts such as East St. Louis, often tell me that they feel cut off from educational developments in modern public schools. "Well, it's amazing,"

Solomon says. "I have done without so much so long that, if I were assigned to a suburban school, I'm not sure I'd recognize what they are doing. We are utterly cut off."

"Very little education in the school would be considered academic in the suburbs. Maybe 10 to 15% of students are in truly academic programs. Of the 55% who graduate, 20% may go to four-year colleges: something like 10% of any entering class. Another 10 to 20% may get some other kind of higher education. An equal number join the military. . . .

"Sometimes I get worried that I'm starting to burn out. Still, I hate to miss a day. The department frequently can't find a substitute to come here, and my kids don't like me to be absent."

Solomon's advanced class, which soon comes into the room, includes some lively students with strong views.

"I don't go to physics class, because my lab has no equipment," says one student. "The typewriters in my typing class don't work. The women's toilets. . . ." She makes a sour face. "I'll be honest," she says. "I just don't use the toilets. If I do, I come back into class and I feel dirty."

"I wanted to study Latin," says another student. "But we don't have Latin in this school."

"We lost our only Latin teacher." Solomon says.

A girl in a white jersey with the messages DO THE RIGHT THING on the front raises her hand. "You visit other schools," she says. "Do you think the children in this school are getting what we'd get in a nice section of St. Louis?"

I note that we are in a different state and city.

"Are we citizens of East St. Louis or America?" she asks. . . .

Clark Junior High School is regarded as the top school in the city. I visit, in part, at the request of school officials, who would like me to see education in the city at its very best. Even here, however, there is a disturbing sense that one has entered a backwater of America.

"We spend the entire eighth grade year preparing for the state exams," a teacher tells me in a top-ranked English class. The teacher seems devoted to the children, but three students sitting near me

sleep through the entire period. The teacher rouses one of them, a girl in the seat next to me, but the student promptly lays her head back on her crossed arms and is soon asleep again. Four of the 14 ceiling lights are broken. The corridor outside the room is filled with voices. Outside the window, where I see no schoolyard, is an empty lot.

In a mathematics class of 30 children packed into a space that might be adequate for 15 kids, there is one white student. The first white student I have seen in East St. Louis, she is polishing her nails with bright red polish. A tiny black girl next to her is writing with a one-inch pencil stub.

In a seventh grade social studies class, the only book that bears some relevance to black concerns—its title is *The American Negro*—bears a publication date of 1967. The teacher invites me to ask the class some questions. Uncertain where to start, I ask the students what they've learned about the civil rights campaigns of recent decades.

A 14-year-old girl with short black curly hair says this: "Every year in February we are told to read the same old speech of Martin Luther King. We read it every year. 'I have a dream. . . .' It does begin to seem—what is the word?" She hesitates and then she finds the word: "perfunctory."

I ask her what she means.

"We have a school in East St. Louis named for Dr. King," she says. "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

It startles me to hear her words, but I am startled even more to think how seldom any press reporter has observed the irony of naming segregated schools for Martin Luther King. Children reach the heart of these hypocrisies much quicker than the grown-ups and the experts do.

## ☉ Public Education in New York

The train ride from Grand Central Station to suburban Rye, New York, takes 35 to 40 minutes. The high school is a short ride from the station. Built of handsome gray stone and set in a landscaped campus, it resembles a New England prep school. On a day in early June of 1990, I enter the school and am directed by a student to the office.

The principal, a relaxed, unhurried man who, unlike many urban principals, seems gratified to have me visit in his school, takes me in to see the auditorium, which, he says, was recently stored with private charitable funds (\$400,000) raised by parents. The crenellated ceiling, which is white and spotless, and the polished dark-wood paneling contrast with the collapsing structure of the auditorium at Morris High. The principal strikes his fist against the balcony: "They made this place extremely solid." Through a window, one can see the spreading branches of a beech tree in the central courtyard of the school.

In a student lounge, a dozen seniors are relaxing on a carpeted floor that is constructed with a number of tiers so that, as the principal explains, "they can stretch out and be comfortable while reading."

The library is wood-paneled, like the auditorium. Students, all of whom are white, are seated at private carrels, of which there are approximately 40. Some are doing homework; others are looking through the *New York Times*. Every student that I see during my visit to the school is white or Asian, though I later learn there are a number of Hispanic students and that 1 or 2% of students in the school are black.

According to the principal, the school has 96 computers for 546 children. The typical student, he says, studies a foreign language for four or five years, beginning in the junior high school, and a second foreign language (Latin is available) for two years. Of 140 seniors, 92 are not enrolled in AP classes. Maximum teacher salary will soon reach \$70,000. Per-pupil funding is above \$12,000 at the time I visit.



The students I meet include 11th and 12th graders. The teacher tells me that the class is reading Robert Coles, Studs Terkel, Alice Walker. He tells me I will find them more than willing to engage me in debate, and this turns out to be correct. Primed for my visit, it appears, they arrow in directly on the dual questions of equality and race.

Three general positions soon emerge and seem to be accepted widely. The first is that the fiscal inequalities “do matter very much” in shaping what a school can offer (“That is obvious,” one student says) and that any loss of funds in Rye, as a potential consequence of future equalizing, would be damaging to many things the town regards as quite essential.

The second position is that racial integration—for example, by the busing of black children from the city or a nonwhite suburb to this school—would meet with strong resistance, and the reason would not simply be the fear that certain standards might decline. The reason, several students say straightforwardly, is “racial” or, as others say it, “out-and-out racism” on the part of adults.

The third position voiced by many students, but not all, is that equity is basically a goal to be desired and should be pursued for moral reasons, but “will probably make no major difference” since poor children “still would lack the motivation” and “would probably fail in any case because of other problems.”

At this point, I ask if they can truly say “it wouldn’t make a difference” since it’s never been attempted. Several students then seem to rethink their views and say that “it might work, but it would have to start with preschool and the elementary grades” and “it might be 20 years before we’d see a difference.”

At this stage in the discussion, several students speak with some real feeling of the present inequalities, which, they say, are “obviously unfair,” and one student goes a little further and proposes that “we need to change a lot more than the schools.” Another says she’d favor racial integration “by whatever means—including busing—even if my parents disapprove.” But a contradictory opinion also is expressed with a good deal of fervor and is stated by one student in a rather bit-

ing voice: "I don't see why we should do it. How could it be of benefit to us?"

Throughout the discussion, whatever the views the children voice, there is a degree of unreality about the whole exchange. The children are lucid and their language is well chosen and their arguments well made, but there is a sense that they are dealing with an issue that does not feel very vivid, and that nothing that we say about it to each other really matters since it's "just a theoretical discussion." To a certain degree, the skillfulness and cleverness that they display seem to derive precisely from this sense of unreality. Questions of unfairness feel more like a geometric problem than a matter of humanity or conscience. A few of the students do break through the note of unreality, but, when they do, they cease to be so agile in their use of words and speak more awkwardly. Ethical challenges seem to threaten their effectiveness. There is the sense that they were skating over ice and that the issues we addressed were safely frozen underneath. When they stop to look beneath the ice they start to stumble. The verbal competence they have acquired here may have been gained by building walls around some regions of the heart.

"I don't think that busing students from their ghetto to a different school would do much good," one student says. "You can take them out of the environment, but you can't take the environment out of *them*. If someone grows up in the South Bronx, he's not going to be prone to learn." His name is Max and he has short black hair and speaks with confidence. "Busing didn't work when it was tried," he says. I ask him how he knows this and he says he saw a television movie about Boston.

"I agree that it's unfair the way it is," another student says. "We have AP courses and they don't. Our classes are much smaller." But, she says, "putting them in schools like ours is not the answer. Why not put some AP classes into *their* school? Fix the roof and paint the halls so it will not be so depressing."

The students know the term "separate but equal," but seem unaware of its historical associations. "Keep them where they are but make it equal," says a girl in the front row.

A student named Jennifer, whose manner of speech is somewhat less refined and polished than that of the others, tells me that her parents came here from New York. "My family is originally from the Bronx. Schools are hell there. That's one reason that we moved. I don't think it's our responsibility to pay our taxes to provide for *them*. I mean, my parents used to live there and they wanted to get out. There's no point in coming to a place like this, where schools are good, and then your taxes go back to the place where you begin."

I bait her a bit: "Do you mean that, now that you are not in hell, you have no feeling for the people that you left behind?"

"It has to be the people in the area who want an education. If your parents just don't care, it won't do any good to spend a lot of money. Someone else can't want a good life for you. You have got to want it for yourself." Then she adds, however, "I agree that everyone should have a chance at taking the same courses. . . ."

I ask her if she'd think it fair to pay more taxes so that this was possible.

"I don't see how that benefits me," she says.

It occurs to me how hard it would have been for anyone to make that kind of statement, even in the wealthiest suburban school, in 1968. Her classmates would have been unsettled by the voicing of such undisguised self-interest. Here in Rye, in 1990, she can say this with impunity. She's an interesting girl and I reluctantly admire her for being so straightforward.

Max raises a different point. "I'm not convinced," he says, "that AP courses would be valued in the Bronx. Not everyone is going to go to college."

Jennifer picks up on this and carries it a little further. "The point," she says, "is that you cannot give an equal chance to every single person. If you did it, you'd be changing the whole economic system. Let's be honest. If you equalize the money, someone's got to be short-changed. I don't doubt that children in the Bronx are getting a bad deal. But do we want *everyone* to get a mediocre education?"

"The other point," says Max, "is that you need to match the money that you spend to whether children in the school can profit

from it. We get twice as much as kids in the South Bronx, but our school is *more* than twice as good and that's because of who is here. Money isn't the whole story. . . ."

"In New York," says Jennifer, "rich people put their kids in private school. If we equalize between New York and Rye, you would see the same thing happen here. People would pull out their kids. Some people do it now. So it would happen a lot more."

An 11th grader shakes her head at this. "Poor children need more money. It's as simple as that," she says. "Money comes from taxes. If we have it, we should pay it."

It is at this point that a boy named David picks up on a statement made before. "Someone said just now that this is not our obligation, our responsibility. I don't think that that's the question. I don't think you'd do it, pay more taxes or whatever, out of obligation. You would do it just because . . . it is unfair the way it is." He falters on these words and looks a bit embarrassed. Unlike many of the other students who have spoken, he is somewhat hesitant and seems to choke up on his words. "Well, it's easy for me to be sitting here and say I'd spend my parents' money. I'm not working. I don't earn the money. I don't need to be conservative until I do. I can be as open-minded and unrealistic as I want to be. You can be a liberal until you have a mortgage."

I ask him what he'd likely say if he were ten years older. "Hopefully," he says, "my values would remain the same. But I know that having money does affect you. This, at least, is what they tell me."

Spurred perhaps by David's words, another student says, "The biggest tax that people pay is to the federal government. Why not take some money from the budget that we spend on armaments and use it for the children in these urban schools?"

A well-dressed student with a healthy tan, however, says that using federal taxes for the poor "would be like giving charity," and "charitable things have never worked. . . . Charity will not instill the poor with self-respect."

Max returns to something that he said before: “The environment is everything. It’s going to take something more than money.” He goes on to speak of inefficiency and of alleged corruption in the New York City schools. “Some years ago the chancellor was caught in borrowing \$100,000 from the schools. I am told that he did not intend to pay it back. These things happen too much in New York. Why should we pour money in, when they are wasting what they have?”

I ask him, “Have we *any* obligations to poor people?”

“I don’t think the burden is on us,” says Jennifer again. “Taxing the rich to help the poor—we’d be getting nothing out of it. I don’t understand how it would make a better educational experience for me.”



## Questions

1. How much overlap is there in the neighborhood and school experiences of the students portrayed in the article? What does this degree of overlap say about the relationship between communities and schools?
2. While the school board in East St. Louis mandated teacher layoffs, they simultaneously chose to keep all athletic, band, and other extracurricular activities. Why?
3. How does the “best” school in East St. Louis (Clark Junior High) compare to the typical junior high in suburban New York? While the differences are clear, can you see any similarities between these two school settings?
4. To what degree do the views of Governor Thompson of Missouri reflect those held by the students in the suburban New York school?
5. While the students in the suburban New York school hold diverse opinions on the potential solutions for the problems

experienced by poor, inner-city students, they also show some consensus. How would you characterize the consensus? How do their views correspond to those held by students in the inner-city school? How might these two sets of views be different if each group of students actually experienced the others' fortunes instead of just reading about them in a book?

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# *Buffy, Angel, and the Creation of Virtual Communities*

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*The Internet has provided a powerful medium for the creation of virtual communities. In the case of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel: the Series, the community is comprised of fans whose commonality is their love of the universe created by the producers, writers, cast and crew of these two television series. This paper will explore the current status of the major ongoing communities of Buffy and Angel fans, and the support that binds them into a “real” virtual community.*

“The Internet, you know . . . The bitch goddess that I love and worship and hate. You know, we found out we have a fan base on the Internet. They came together as a family on the Internet, a huge, goddamn deal. It’s so important to everything the show has been and everything the show has done—I can’t say enough about it.”  
(<http://filmforce.ign.com/articles/425/425492p10.html>: IGGN.)

This is the first of a projected series of short sociological studies dealing with the general subject of the Buffyverse fandom. Subsequent project topics include (1) canonical and non-canonical love in the Buffyverse (Bangels, Spuffies, Spangels, etc.), (2) fanfiction (writers and readers), (3) unpopular canonical decisions, (4) a review of the relevant literature on fandom, (5) the delineation of character loyalty, (6) the fancon, (7) the Buffyverse as entrepreneur, and (8) predictions about the Buffista and Angelista fandom over the next five years.

The general goal of the long-term project is to expand our learning, our understanding, and our explanations for fan behavior, oftentimes called fan love. Our study throughout the entire project will be limited to the fans known as Buffistas and Angelites. Both series were created by Joss Whedon, who is associated with the production company, Mutant Enemy.

This paper places special focus on the virtcom (a “virtual community” or, as its also called, a “fan board”) and the ways in which the virtcom maintains loyalty to the show, the characters, and, in some cases, extends beyond the boundaries of fandom into the creation of an actual community without borders—a virtual community (or “virtcom” as it’s referred to here). The Internet helps feed the multi-million dollar business enterprise that is *Buff* the Vampire Slayer and *Angel: the Series*. The hypothesis of this paper is that the virtcom can literally become a virtual community, by means of which Buffistas (and Angelites) can regularly interact.

## ☉ Reality and Television

Sociologists study “the things” which are produced by—and in turn produce—social life. Sociologists view “these things” with the assumption that people create, identify, use, and repeatedly use “those things” until they have created a pattern that creates our reality. Reality, then, is socially constructed, made up of “the things” we do repeatedly enough to create that pattern we call “reality.” (Hence, those phenomena we encounter rarely are often referred to as “unreal,” “surreal”—i.e., not “real” enough.)

The social phenomena that make up the reality of everyday life in the United States includes the popular culture medium of television. Television creates a significant impact on our society and our concept of reality. The average American spends four hours every day, almost 1,500 hours every year, 25% of her/his waking time, watching television. This is a significant amount of time. So much, that one might expect more research and studies on television’s impact in our lives. Indeed, it’s surprising how few sociological studies have been done on the subjects of popular culture and mass media, in comparison to its import in everyday life, and how relatively insignificant (in academia and in the larger society) is the regard of popular culture studies. Surprising too, how few studies have been done on the people who consume popular culture and mass media—the fans.

The current data on television viewing indicate that the average American television viewer is watching 6 hours of television every day. For viewers who are intensely interested in a particular kind of television program, (Let’s say sports or horror or fantasy shows) that 6 hours a day can serve as a mechanism for transporting the viewer to a reality where the television programs watched—their characters, actors, writers, directors, story arcs, etc., assume a priority in their lives.



In fact, the act of watching the show becomes an important focus on their Real Lives. Lives come to revolve around watching the show, talking about the show with others who watch, discussing the scripts and dialogues, learning the names of actors, writers, and directors of the show. It becomes important to not miss an episode of that show. Fans want to see the show “fresh,” not taped, (although many will tape the show for later rewatching.) because the subject of the show—and the loyalty to the show—are strong in their lives.

It’s literally possible to spend way (a Buffyism, meaning “very”) more than four hours a day living in the television show’s “universe,” i.e., a world created by producers and writers, buttressed by make-up artists and special effects artists, actors, musicians, etc. Genre fans’ lives, therefore, become what they visualize—peopled by characters reminiscent of those in the TV-verse, with pop cultural references, a vocabulary and language gleaned from episodic dialogue. Thus, can a fan move their *weltanschauung* from the world familiar to non-genre universe viewers to the world of what exists on television. Talking with other TVverse fans is *of the good, insane troll logic* need not apply. (“Of the good,” and “insane troll logic” are also Buffyisms.)

## ☉ *Buffy the Vampire Slayer + Angel* the Series = *The Buffyverse* (or the *Jossverse*)

One of the most prominent “universes” in popular television is that of “the Buffyverse,” (Both *BtVS* and *AtS* share the television universe created by Joss Whedon.) a universe created by Joss Whedon, writer and creator of three remarkable television series: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel: the Series*, and *Firefly*. (When referring to ALL of the series’ created and penned by Mr. Whedon, fans use the term, “Jossverse.”) The former series, *BtVS* and *AtS*, have received cult status since their premieres on March 10, 1997, and October 5, 1999, respectively. Its fans watched each program, digested dialogue, and then popped onto the Net immediately after each episode to discuss, digest, and deconstruct each episode. Even now, with *BtVS*’s run of new episodes finished, and *AtS* about to end its run of new episodes, many *BtVS* and *AtS* Website boards include threads (discussions specifically limited to one topic) for a particular season or show. Buffistas and Angelistas can quote dialogue from entire episodes; weave “Buffyisms” and “Angelisms” into

their everyday language; compare Real Life situations to those in the episodes, and compare folks they know in Real Life with characters on the shows.

Although the long-running *BtVS* series ended in May 2003, and *AtS* is, sadly, scheduled to end its run in May 2004, syndication assures that new generations of Buffistas and Angelistas will generate indefinitely. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel: the Series* are a global phenomenon, with an extensive international fandom in Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and many countries in South America, as well.

In fact, in the United States, *BtVS* plays in syndication 4 hours every day and one hour each day on weekends. *AtS* plays one hour in syndication daily, one hour each day on weekends, and two hours every Tuesday—and there are still six new episodes to be broadcast in the next few weeks. Result? Buffistas and Angelistas can watch their hero and heroine, their friends, their lovers, and their epic stories, for a total of twenty-two hours a week. Many fans own every season of *BtVS* and *AtS* available on DVD (eight seasons, to date), and not only watch the DVD's in their spare time, but still watch the shows televised in syndication.

Of course, there are also books, fanfiction available on the Internet, board discussions, *BtVS* soundtrack music available on two separately-issued CDs to play in one's car or at home, collectible major character dolls, two RPG's (Role-Playing Games), video games, comic books, graphic novels, collectible cards and plates, souvenir items, T-shirts, key chains, bumper stickers, and all sorts of other goods and wares, regularly-scheduled Fan Conventions (called "fancons") and a regularly issued *Angel* magazine and a *Buffy* magazine. There are also two streaming" radio (Internet radio) radio programs, each dedicated to discussions and the music played on Buffy and Angel. Their titles: *The Succubus Club* and *Radio Buffy*.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel: the Series* are a multi-billion dollar business, and its fans not only watch the show, they also purchase the goodies. In other words: they *watch*, they *read*, they *listen*—they are surrounded by, and live in, a universe which, at the same time that it is enriching its makers, is also enriching the lives of the millions of fans who populate it. It's a mutually reinforcing circle of life. And this does not include the profound place of *BtVS* and *AtS* on the Internet. Indeed, it might be said that, without the Internet, specifically the virtual community, the Buffyverse might never have spread so wide, so far, so deeply into the realm of the cult TV show, and American industry. (It's called show **business**, but that's another study.)

And all of this? Doesn't include the latest piece of high-tech business and high-tech life: the cyberness of The Internet, which feeds the business of Buffy and Angel memorabilia, DVDs, CDs, graphic novels, novels, and etc.

## Enter the Virtual Community

The Buffyverse exists nowhere as profoundly as the Internet. It can be said that the true Buffista and Angelista exists in a Buffyverse made unique and richer by the (sometimes) synergistic energy of fanfic writers (who write without remuneration, and are the subject of a future study) who post their tales on the Internet and Internet fan boards. Provide fans with a means by which they can “check in” daily with other fans, and you have a sub-culture of people (commonly called a “cult fandom”) that metaphorically lives in the Buffyverse.

Loyalty to *Buffy* generally includes its spin-off, *Angel: the Series*. The devotion fans previously accorded only to *BtVS* stretched to include *AtS*, especially so at the beginning of *AtS* Season five, when Buffy's most popular character (excluding Buffy herself), Spike the Vampire (also known as William the Bloody) joined the cast of *Angel*, offering that show a re-charged mission and an increase in viewers, many of whom followed the charismatic character (and the actor who plays him) to *AtS*. Many of the formerly only *BtVS* virtcoms now follow each new episode of *Angel: the Series*, with a formal review and discussion on the boards, much as they did new episodes of *BtVS*.

Enter the Internet, and enter the realm of real social change. Millions of people spend time every day chatting with others through the medium of the Internet. Although the Internet has often been criticized for replacing real-life social interaction, through the modality of the virtual community the Internet has become a means of encouraging and enabling people to cross sometimes vast territorial boundaries to form communities of people who share the same interests, fears, loves, and experiences. Nowhere is this phenomenon of the virtual community manifested more clearly than in the fan virtcoms (“the boards”) supporting genre television. The fan support is complete such that, in the UK such TV shows—and their fans—are referred to as “cult TV.” In the United States, cult status had, prior to *BtVS* and *AtS*, been limited to the *X-Files*, *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* phenomena.

A community is described sociologically as . . . well, it isn't described sociologically. Indeed, there isn't any one single definition of community that is accepted in sociology. Odd, that. Anthropologists use the term community more than sociologists, and often use the term territorially, such

as when studying contemporary societies bound by specific physical boundaries. As used by sociologists today, the term is ambiguously applied, expanded to include both people who live within specific territorial boundaries as well as citizens of an online community. The community beyond borders—the Internet community—is called a virtual community, or “virtcom.” A virtual community is a contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century manifestation of what sociologists used to call a *public*—a group of people united by a common interest/passion, except, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century they communicate with each other chiefly through the Internet. The last century’s *public* is today’s *virtcom*. There are literally hundreds of thousands of virtcoms on the Internet.

Virtual communities, “can gather strangers from the far reaches of cyberspace and throw them together in the real world.” (Metz, p. 134) And I would add, for long, long, periods of time; long enough to create real and lasting relationships. Relationships in the virtcom reflect relationships in the real world. Polite hellos are quickly replaced by a sharing of opinions, ideas, fears, happiness and secrets. Citizens of virtcoms use personalized avatars (personal icons), emoticons, and animated and static imported images, to overcome the anonymity of invisibility. These enable the citizens of virtcoms to interact at deeper levels at a faster pace than might be appropriate in Real Life.

Board posting does have its problems, since communication is chiefly through a visual vacuum. We can’t see each other. The chief problem is that the written word does not afford us a glimpse of recipients’ body language, facial expression, and general mien. Regionalisms, communicating across national and linguistic boundaries, etc., make virtcom communication a challenge. Emoticons, and other images such as those noted above, and shorthand phrases (Like lol [lots of laughs], ROTFL [rolling on the floor laughing], ITA [I totally agree.], IMHO [In my humble opinion], and IIRC [If I remember correctly]) help, but board conflicts can be common and hard to forget. It’s not unusual, for example, to get caught up in one’s desire to make a point, tell a joke, or add color commentary to a subject under discussion only to find that one has offended at least one person, and perhaps a sizeable number of persons. Then, it’s not unusual for others to jump right in, in full attack mode (called “a flame”), before the original poster has a chance to even respond, clarify, apologize, or delete.

But, back to the main topic: How did the concept of a “virtual” community develop? What are its roots? Writing in 1979, Barry Wellman and Barry

Leighton reconceptualized the model of community away from fixed territorial and physical reference points and toward the concept of community that was bound by the territory of social relationships, social ties and social bonds. (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, pp. 3760–379).

Instead of physical boundaries, they suggested a reformulation of neighborhood and community into the concept that people were not geographically limited in their choices of relationships, and were, indeed free to create their own communities, based on their social relationships and social interests. By so doing, people would be expanding their opportunities to become engaged in a social community unlimited by spatial boundaries.

Three years later Claude Fischer's research on social spaces and social relationships in California supported Wellman and Leighton's suggestion that community was more socially constructed than geographically constructed. People, Fischer said, were more interested in hanging out, spending time, socializing, and just generally interacting with others who shared their socioeconomic status, education, and interests.

Let's stop a moment and recall that, until the development of the railroad and the automobile, most people interacted only with others who lived within a five-mile radius. Autos, trains, telephones, radio, television, and then the wondrous Internet, all stretched our possibilities for meeting, greeting, bonding, and friending. With the Internet, we can literally make friends with people half-a world away, who have interests and passions like our own. Citizens offer each other support. When someone in a citizen's family dies, when someone is about to lose their job, when they have work or school or family or health problems? The citizens of the board are there to offer solace, advice, and support.

## ☉ *Hypothesis and Method*

The Buffyverse was chosen for four reasons: (1) the deep loyalty Buffy and Angel fans have for the show, its cast and crew of writers; (2) a prior review of the literature on genre fandoms indicated that genre series fans are generally more engaged with their favorite shows than are non-genre fans; (3) the researcher is a Buffista who has some previous knowledge of the Buffyverse fandom; and (4) The *BtVS* and *AtS* fan communities occasionally engage in face-to-face activities designed to afford citizens an opportunity to meet face-to-face (sometimes with citizens of cast and crew) at fancons (fan conventions), social events, and events designed to raise money for charity. These latter

activities grew directly out of large boards such as *City Of Angel* and *the Bronze Beta Board*.

How large and powerful is the Buffyverse virtual community? Well, all of the major characters (and actors) (and some minor recurring characters) have websites dedicated to them. *Many* websites dedicated to them. Many of these Websites (not all) also have boards.

For our purposes, I did not include Websites dedicated to the series' actors. Actors' websites may extend beyond the series to include movie work and theatre work, thus taking the study beyond the confines of the universe of *Buffy* and *Angel*. For our purposes, we're focusing on the *characters* that the actors portray.

There are hundreds of Websites dedicated to the major characters: Angel, Buffy, Cordelia, Spike, and Willow. There are Websites dedicated to the love relationships (called 'ships) of the major characters: Buffy/Angel, Buffy/Spike, Cordelia/Angel, Willow/Tara, for example. There are also Websites dedicated to what are called "unconventional," i.e., non-canonical 'ships, such as Spike/Anya and Spike/Angel. There are Websites dedicated to specific episodes of *BtVS* and *Angel*, such as *Once More with Feeling*, *Chosen*, and *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been*. In addition, there are thousands of sites maintained by fanfic writers who support various 'ships. Each of these sites may/may not have a fan board.

Such is the loyalty toward the 'verse that even *minor* recurring characters may have their own websites. Warren, a character from *BtVS* Season 5, who became a villain in Season 6, has a website dedicated to him which includes fanfiction adventures. The same is true for Gwen Raiden, a *Rogue*-like character who appeared in several episodes of *AtS* Season 4. Finally, a mention should be made of the Website devoted to the Hyperion Hotel, (*Hyperion's Attic*) Team Angel's Art Deco base of operations for *AtS* Seasons Two through Season Four.

With so many possibilities, how did I decide which virtcoms to observe in-depth? Alexa.com, an amazon.com company, and Google.com, periodically post statistics on the 100 most frequently visited sites (called a "traffic post") in the Buffyverse. Their statistics are not useful for this study, since they count "visits," not postings, and since many of the sites listed do not have fan boards.

There was one board I purposely eliminated from inclusion: the Bronze Beta. The Bronze Beta is arguably the most famous cult TV board. Celebrities post there. The producer and the writers of both *BtVS* and *AtS* post there.

Scholars have written articles about the influence of the Bronze board. It seemed “over-exposed,” so I moved over it to boards that seemed less self-conscious, less aware that others were reading their postings.

I used three methods. First, from a listing of the major *Buffy* boards postings according to Alexa.com and Google.com (the major source for statistics on Web traffic), I derived a random list of twenty-five fan boards. From these boards, I derived another twenty fan boards that I obtained from links on the Alexa and Google-derived boards. My next step was to randomly choose four boards for daily observation. (I randomized via the traditional “paper sack” method.) The results? The boards observed were, (in order of choosing) (1) thebigbad.net, (2) soulfulspikesociety, (3) hellmouthcentral.com, and (4) cityofangel.com. One board was a “general” board; two were character (Spike) specific, one was series-specific. Considering the spread, I gained a renewed trust in the “paper sack” method, and a renewed wonder at the mathematics of probability.

The initial population of twenty-five Alexa/Google boards and twenty linked boards were randomly chosen for inclusion in this study based on (1) facility of posting and (2) regularity of posting. Fan boards which had been randomly selected, but had not received regular postings in the first week of June, 2003 were not included in the study.

Regular posting was defined, for purposes of the study, as having at least 5 messages posted for each day in the first week of June 2003. Observation began the following week. I registered and lurked at each site for at least an hour each day, every day, 6 days a week over a five month period, starting with June 8, 2003 through October 31, 2003. While I did occasionally post, the only board at which I posted with any frequency was the S<sup>3</sup>. (The Soulful Spike Society board is referred to as S<sup>3</sup> by its citizens.) In addition to the four in-depth boards, I observed an additional 15 boards, checking in every two days for at least an hour. This was a time-consuming method, but it garnered me an appreciation of the Buffyverse fandom, and the people who love and support the creative staff employed by Joss Whedon and the folks at Mutant Enemy, the producers of BtVS and AtS.

A caveat on SoulfulSpike. I fought myself on including it because I am not only a registered citizen of S<sup>3</sup> (as it’s known to its board members), but a frequent poster there.

By the end of August, I was considering eliminating SoulfulSpike from the observation list. In doing research on virtcoms, I had found a home for myself—hence, I felt the need, for purposes of objectivity, to eliminate my

home community from the base of those being observed. Still, that board was growing, dynamic, and very active—easily the most active, per citizen, of any of the observed boards. How could I eliminate the board that was appearing to be the closest to the virtcom ideal? How could I withhold the data, the knowledge, of an active, *real* virtcom in fandom? Because it is the board at which I post most frequently I did want to eliminate it from the study, but the results were such that I **had** to include it. I decided, therefore, to continue to include the board, but to eliminate any mention of specific board conversations and controversies in the written report *for all fanboards*. (Such is the conscience of objectivity. Fan boards are rife with controversy, most of which stem from communication problems noted above.)

Members of virtcoms are often called “citizen” in the literature. We can approximate the level of virtcom involvement per citizen by a simple arithmetical formula. This can be done arithmetically, by dividing the number of posts by the number of citizens (Let  $P$  = Posts and  $C$  = Citizens, so:  $P \div C$ ). The resulting number will yield the number of posts per citizen ( $P \div C = \#$  Posts per Citizen).

The number of posts per citizen is an indication of commitment to the online community. The greater the number of posts per citizen, the more likely the board is to be a virtcom. The fewer the posts, the less involved the person, and the less likely the board is to be a virtcom. The results were somewhat surprising, as we will see.

Private boards, of which there are thousands, were not included in this study. Such boards are small, with size limited by founders. These are the elite boards; free speech is a given. For purposes of this study, small boards would not be germane. Such boards are more properly defined as a clique or circle of friends, rather than a true virtcom. For example, during the observation period, one board had 1 citizen, but logged in 28 visits and not one visitor posted. (Information on this URL is provided in the Appendix).

There are two major weaknesses to the methodology. First, it’s important to remember that although boards are maintained by a half-dozen people (all of whom are volunteers), they may be visited by thousands each week. In the thirty-six hours following a new episode of AtS, thousands of fans may be trolling the boards, reading reviews and looking for an opportunity to chat about the episode which has just been broadcast. Many visitors to a site lurk and read—few post. Where registration is required prior to posting, many don’t bother to register; other may register, post, then



move on to another board, and never post at that board again. Since we are looking at the numbers of *regular* posters, we are interested in the forum as a *community*, not solely a means of information. Second, the number of boards studied is microscopic compared to the number of boards that exist. Undertaking a study of the top 100 boards would have necessitated a cadre of trained observers—which I did not have.

The strength of the methodology is that, by limiting the number of boards studied to four, and by focusing on each board for a minimum of 8 hours a week, I could gain both a better depth of understanding of the concept of a virtual community *and* the depth of involvement in fandom on the part of the citizens of those communities. Of course, it's all about the mission—and the mission—(learning more about fandom) could be kept on track with a smaller, more intense observation, as opposed to a larger, more diffuse observation.

## ☉ Expectations and Observations

Beginning my observations soon after the finale of *BtVS*, I hypothesized that much of the board communications concerning *Buffy* would be about the finale, *Chosen*. By mid-summer, discussion of *Chosen* had trickled out and speculation concerning *AtS* Season 5 was exploding.

The popular and highly original *AtS* spin-off ended its fourth season at the same time that *BtVS* was ending permanently. There was some question as to whether or not *Angel* would be renewed for a fifth season. Producer Joss Whedon shot a new concept finale, and all parties reached an accord that (1) character Spike would be added to *Angel*'s regular cast (2) *Angel* would return to a MOTW format, thus enabling new viewers to catch onto the premise more easily, (3) the cast location would be removed from a demon detective agency housed in a 50's noir-style hotel to an evil law firm whose Los Angeles branch is housed in a contemporary skyscraper, and (5) two popular female characters were eliminated and replaced by different female characters—played by actresses at least ten years younger.

The WB's demographic research had revealed that Spike was the most popular character in the Buffyverse. It was Spike's fans The WB was hoping to entice as new *AtS* viewers. I was particularly delighted about the choice of two Spike-centric boards, since it was inclusion of the character of Spike that was creating speculation throughout all the boards. As both a fan of *BtVS* and a sociologist, I knew the Spike-change would have an

effect on board posting, or at least, reading the postings about it was bound to be interesting and fun! (“We all need less ritual and more fun!”, Spike, *School Hard*.)

The WB and ME (the production company) hoped these changes would result in higher ratings for the critically-acclaimed spin-off series. The anticipated changes in *AtS* created a buzz in the boards. Each day’s circuit of observation included a growing thread regarding rumors and “spoilers” about the season’s opener and the role that Spike would be playing in the series. Always a controversial presence in the lives of Buffy and the Scoobies in Sunnydale, Spike had appeared on *Angel* several times, each appearance bringing energy, a quality of gleeful mayhem to each of his appearances there. So much so that many long-time *AtS* viewers were concerned that his character would overshadow that of the lead or over existing characters in the series.

In the months since, the presence of Spike has proven to be a catalyst of change for the series. The *Monster of the Week* format has a tag-along, but subtle seasonal arc, replete with red herrings of evil puppets, warlocks, demon clan fights, parasitic worms, Nazis, and cybermen. The new location has allowed the writers to focus on corporate evil and the dangers of succumbing to its temptation. Ratings shot up 36%; several national critics listed it as one of the ten best shows on television, and that the scripts were better than ever; oh, and The WB—*AtS*’ network—cancelled the show, presumably because it’s old.

During the period of observation, the most popular topic on *BtVS* fanboards (commonly called *BuffyBoards*) were:

1. Attempts by *BtVS* viewers to catch up on the storyline for *AtS*.
2. The projected changes in *Angel: the Series*, especially insofar as the addition of a new regular (Spike, a.k.a., William the Bloody).
3. The addition of two new female recurring characters, Harmony (a recurring character on *BtVS* and a guest character in an episode of *AtS*.), and Eve, a liaison to the Senior Partners at Wolfram & Hart.
4. The deletion of two popular female characters, Cordelia Chase and Lilah Morgan.

Many fans claimed they would not return to *AtS* because of the deletion of the characters of Cordelia and Lilah; others claimed they wouldn’t return

to watching *AtS* because of the inclusion of Spike. Still others said that Spike's inclusion on the show would spark their becoming a regular viewer of the show. These events were all discussed, digested, pondered, debated and meditated upon in the active boards.

Following is an abridged list of the major boards observed, including the four that were examined in-depth, in descending order:

Buffista Fanboards (Virtcoms)	
Soulful Spike	106,850 posts/169 citizens = 632 posts each citizen
Hellmouth Central	231,041 posts/677 citizens = 341 posts each citizen
Buffyworld Forum	622,693 posts/2,205 citizens = 282 posts each citizen
Buffymania.net	10,668 posts/41 citizens = 260 posts each citizen
Buffy-vs-Angel	30,258 posts/207 citizens = 146 posts each citizen
Smg.fan	233,097 posts/2,502 citizens = 93 posts each citizen
Totally DB.uk.com	3,936 posts/49 citizens = 80 posts each citizen
Buffy.com.au	114,939 posts/1651 citizens = 70 posts each citizen
Stranger Things	27,778 posts/2,324 citizens = 62 posts each citizen
Charisma Carpenter Forum	37,080 posts/1,035 citizens = 36 posts each citizen
alysonhannigancorner.com	11,579 posts/441 citizens = 26 posts each citizen
marstersmobsters.com	9,985 posts/494 citizens = 20 posts each citizen
sparklies.com	29,508 posts/1,999 citizens = 15 posts each citizen
charismacarpenter.com	19,077 posts/1,433 citizens = 13 posts each citizen
The Big Bad	12,650 posts/1,300 citizens = ~10 posts each citizen
davidboreanaz.com	12,471 posts/3,380 citizens = 3 posts each citizen
CityofAngel.com	129,360 posts/156,000 citizens = 1 post each citizen
	Note: # posts/# citizens = # posts each citizen

Using this measure, the boards that are closest to a virtcom are those that have over 100 posts each citizen. That would include the following boards: Soulful Spike, Hellmouthcentral, Buffyworld Forum, Buffymania.net, and

Buffy-vs-Angel.com. Of those listed, only two—Soulful Spike and Hellmouthcentral, were part of the in-depth study.

Citizens of three of the four boards under observation did **not** post messages that were Off-Topic, i.e., not germane to the Buffyverse. There were also very few Off-Topic conversations during the observation period at the boards I studied less intently. There was one exception: Soulful Spike.

Board members discussed their private lives, their fears, their hopes and dreams for themselves, their families and friends. Virtual prayers were sent for citizens experiencing hard times. Child-rearing tips were exchanged. Citizens were supported, nurtured, and encouraged. Disagreements and controversies were quickly mediated. Respect for each other was treated as importantly as the board's *raison d'être*: an appreciation of the character of Spike and indeed, all the characters of the Buffyverse. Unlike many of the boards I'd observed, disagreements were quickly settled, with all parties moving on to positive interaction quickly.

Mixed in with the personal exchanges were the On-topics specifically related to the two series, their characters, myths, episodes, music, etc. Unlike other boards, the Verse discussions often related to the philosophical, psychological, and even anthropological aspects of the characters and their stories. I had found that rare commodity: a real virtual community! And, oh how rare it is! The conversations were of a type not usually seen in the larger boards, with topics rarely seen in the larger boards. Here was that Eldorado promised in the literature: a true virtual community. Eureka!

## ☉ Conclusions

Conclusions, while always tentative, indicate that although the virtual community is indeed rare, it does exist. It wasn't what I'd expected, though; in my enthusiasm for online living, I had expected to find that at least half of the four would be virtcoms, and that as many as one-half of the less-intensely-observed forums would also be virtcoms. Clearly, from the table above, this was not the case.

Where information about citizens' gender was available, it seems that most of the Buffyverse citizens (at the boards observed) are females. There are more males registered at AtS boards and Jossverse boards, though females predominate there, too. This is in line with the two series: Buffy is about a young female super-heroine; Angel is about a young (well, young-looking; after all, he is a vampire) male superhero. Angel is aimed at a male

audience, and it delivers male citizens, too, according to the boards' posters.

Many of the women are married, with children; whereas, the many of the males are single. At the major boards, where citizens average 100 postings/more, female citizens are more likely to be older—over 25 years of age, college-educated or with some college background, middle-class, white-collar workers, professionals and semi-professionals.

Many of the men are younger—thirty-five years old or younger. Younger males are likely to be college students. Older males are likely to be college-educated, and, like their female counterparts, middle-class, white-collar, professionals and semi-professionals.

Not surprisingly, many of the citizens are very computer-literate, capable of answering complicated questions to help another citizen with a computer problem. One board (Soulful Spike) includes a large number of lawyers and teachers.

Many citizens are lovers of sci-fi and not only watch sci-fi fantasy programming and movies, but also read sci-fi. Older citizens initiate younger citizens into sci-fi reading, movies, and TV programming. This is one area where you won't find a generation gap; the Buffyverse brings the generations together.

This study had begun as part of a larger endeavor to learn more about cult TV fans and the fandom experience. This I have accomplished, and will continue to accomplish throughout the long-term study, and each project will hopefully add to the knowledge base about the Buffyverse fandom. The next projects will find me working with a former student to design a Website that will make information about, and access to, the next three fandom projects easier : (1) canonical and non-canonical love in the Buffyverse (Bangels, Spuffies, Spangels, etc.), (2) fanfiction (writers and readers), (3) unpopular canonical decisions, (4) ) the delineation of character loyalty, (5) the fancon, (6) predictions about the Buffista and Angelista fandom over the next five years, and (7) the Buffyverse as entrepreneur.

## ☉ Appendix

**Following is a listing of major virtual communities in the Buffyverse:**

<a href="http://www.hellmouthcentral.com">http://www.hellmouthcentral.com</a>	Hellmouth Central
<a href="http://www.whedonesque.com">http://www.whedonesque.com</a>	Whedonesque

<a href="http://www.protej.com/Buffy/">http://www.protej.com/Buffy/</a>	The Council of Watchers
<a href="http://www.buffymania.net">http://www.buffymania.net</a>	Buffy mania (This is an Italian site.)
<a href="http://www.buffyworld.com">http://www.buffyworld.com</a>	Buffy world
<a href="http://www.buffy-vs-angel.com/cgi-bin/sunnydale/ikonboard.cgi">http://www.buffy-vs-angel.com/cgi-bin/sunnydale/ikonboard.cgi</a>	Buffy-vs-Angel
<a href="http://www.cityofangel.com">http://www.cityofangel.com</a>	City of Angel
<a href="http://www.thebigbad.net">http://www.thebigbad.net</a>	The Big Bad
<a href="http://www.sparklies.com">http://www.sparklies.com</a>	Sparklies
<a href="http://www.morethanspike.com">http://www.morethanspike.com</a>	More Than Spike
<a href="http://scubiefan.proboards18.com/index.cgi">http://scubiefan.proboards18.com/index.cgi</a>	Soulful Spike
<a href="http://totallydavidboreanazuk.com">http://totallydavidboreanazuk.com</a>	Totally David Boreanaz (This is a UK site.)
<a href="http://www.stranger-things.net/forum/guide.php">http://www.stranger-things.net/forum/guide.php</a>	Cordelia Chase

### **Following are the sites of websites created to celebrate specific episodes of BtVS/AtS:**

<a href="http://musical.chosentwo.com/main.html">http://musical.chosentwo.com/main.html</a>	Once More With Feeling
<a href="http://www.aynohyeb.moonlitviolets.com">http://www.aynohyeb.moonlitviolets.com</a>	Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been
<a href="http://www.hyperion.moonlitviolets.com">http://www.hyperion.moonlitviolets.com</a>	Hyperion Hotel
<a href="http://chosen.blueberry-scone.com">http://chosen.blueberry-scone.com</a>	Chosen
Eternal Flame (one member, 28 postings.)	

### **Flash mobs:**

<a href="http://www.flashmob.com">http://www.flashmob.com</a>
<a href="http://www.flashmob.co.uk">http://www.flashmob.co.uk</a>

### **Buffy Radio Stations:**

<a href="http://www.thesuccubusclub.com">http://www.thesuccubusclub.com</a>	A radio program focused on Buffy and Angel series Unintended consequences/Intended consequences.
<a href="http://www.radiobuffy.nu">http://www.radiobuffy.nu</a>	French Buffy radio program.

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