



A Sociological Perspective

Edited by Bethany Teeter

Included in this preview:

- Copyright Page
- Table of Contents
- Excerpt of Chapter 1

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A Sociological Perspective



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Contents



INTRODUCTION	1
1. Power and Culture By John R. Hall, Mary Jo Neitz, and Marshall Battani, from <i>Sociology on Culture</i>	5
2. The Social Functions of Crime By Emile Durkheim, from <i>The Rules of Sociological Method</i>	23
3. Ethnic Conflict and Terrorism: Violence, Culture, and the Dynamics of Conflict By Joseph L. Soeters, from <i>Ethnic Conflict and Terrorism: The Origins and Dynamics of Civil Wars</i>	33
4. Class, Status, Party By Max Weber, from <i>Max Weber: Essays in Sociology</i>	49
5. Elites and Class Structures By Michael Hartmann, from <i>The Sociology of Elites</i>	63
6. Subcultures, Cultures, and Class By John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, from <i>Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain</i>	81
7. Moments of Intimacy: Norms, Values, and Everyday Commitments By Jeffrey Weeks, from <i>The World We Have Won</i>	95
8. The New Sexuality Studies: Theoretical Perspectives By Steven Seidman, from <i>Introducing the New Sexuality Studies: Original Essays and Interviews</i>	103

9. **Feminism and Method: Epistemology, Feminist Methodology and the Politics of Method** 115
By Nancy Naples, from *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*
10. **Religious Change in Modern Societies: Perspectives from the Sociology of Religion** 137
By Detlef Pollack and Daniel Olson, from *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*

Introduction



A *Sociological Perspective* is unlike most regular traditional textbooks, because it is an anthology (collection of works) by many authors. These particular articles were selected specifically for their importance in the field of sociology. Each typical Introduction to Sociology course introduces students to important people in the field such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Rather than simply reading about the contributions made by these individuals, it is important to read works that they have written. This helps establish a better foundation for the learning experience.

These readings will introduce students to key concepts in the field to provide them with a better understanding and appreciation of the many perspectives in sociology. These are not just topics from years ago that are being studied—they are current topics that are relevant in today’s society as well. Through the readings of these authors and the questions posed for consideration at the end of each, the students should take away a clearer definition of sociology and what it all entails.

A Sociological Perspective is a great anthology that contains some of the best and most noteworthy names in the field of sociology such as Durkheim and Max Weber. Durkheim’s work is a must-read for any sociology course because he is a prolific sociologist who has been referred to as the “Father of Sociology.” His article on *The Social Functions of Crime* is an excellent resource and supplement for any sociology course and text. Durkheim describes social facts and provides thorough examples using our everyday lives to help the reader better understand the functions of crime.

Max Weber is a German politician who has been noted as one of the leaders of modern sociology. He and Durkheim are referenced throughout many textbooks. These two men helped shape how we see sociology today and are necessary reading for students. Weber’s article titled *Class, Status, Party* addresses important aspects of class struggles, status and equality along with social power within parties.

The first chapter of this anthology is *Power and Culture*, which discusses Karl Marx, another German politician and sociologist. Discussions of the theories of power and culture are covered with focus on social forces and technology. Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud are also referenced in the article.

In every society, a code of conduct is imposed upon its members. These legal and moral values determine what is socially acceptable and what is considered criminal. In order to understand what makes a specific act criminal, it is necessary to establish the non-criminal functions of a society. In the article *The Social Functions of Crime*, Durkheim discusses this relationship between what an individual is taught and how this affects his or her attitudes and actions while interacting with others as well as the actions of the individual on a private, personal level.

As with individuals, societies have a code of conduct that is unique to that culture. A discussion of cultures and the underlying themes and ideals that drive them follows Durkheim's discussion of personal conduct. *Ethnic Conflict and Terrorism: Violence, Culture, and the Dynamics of Conflict* is a relevant article for sociology as it covers an analysis of conflicts between humans. Within this article are topics of racism, globalization, individualization, the connection between culture and violence and more. Terrorism and violence have become important topics in many courses but especially for sociology courses. Sociology is the study of societies, and understanding the different cultures plays a big role in understanding violence and terrorism as well.

A topic covered heavily in many sociology courses and books is that of the class or caste system of the past. To understand societies and how they work, it is imperative that we understand the order in which the people fit into it. Along with the structure of the classes, we find out more about the elites—or rather, the wealthier individuals—in a society. In the article, *Elites and Class Structures*, the relationship between elites and their social classes is discussed along with the business elites and their influences.

Subcultures, Cultures and Class is another important read for sociology students. Each structure is important to the other. Youth culture, parent culture, dominant societies and more are covered throughout this article. Cultures are looked at historically from the 1950s to present day.

Jeffrey Weeks's article, *Moments of Intimacy, Norms, Values, and Everyday Commitments* is valuable as a supplement for sociology courses, because understanding of a society's norms helps us have a better appreciation for everything within that society. Research that was conducted in 2006 is relevant for all readers as it determined that the relationship between children and parents is not as strong as that between children and their friends, because the boundaries of friendship and family are dissolving. Having a better understanding of commitments and values will lead to a better overall sociological perspective.

The article titled *The New Sexuality Studies: Theoretical Perspectives* covers the science of sexuality and the relationship between sex and society. Sigmund Freud helped shape the thinking of the Western sexual culture and, as mentioned earlier, is well known throughout both sociology and psychology coursework and texts. In this article Freud

brings both disciplines together as he explains the roots of human psychology and our sex drives.

Another important highlight of the aforementioned article is feminism, which is an important part of studying sociology because it is a belief or view in the political, social and economic equality of the sexes. To understand societies as a whole, each view or perspective is crucial to study. If we cannot understand where a person is coming from in their perspective and thinking we cannot possibly begin to understand the people and cultures.

Nancy Naples's article *Feminism and Method: Epistemology, Feminist Methodology and the Politics of Method* is an excellent follow-up to expand on feminism. This article strives to determine if feminists have a different method of approach when inquiring about information. The feminist theoretical perspective is another unique viewpoint that this anthology shows, specifically in the context of the struggles within social justice. This article ties in nicely as it also discusses the work of Karl Marx, who was mentioned in other earlier works.

No sociological text or supplement would be complete with covering the topic of religion. The article *Religious Change in Modern Societies: Perspectives from the Sociology of Religion* looks at the conflict and crisis of religion and modernity. Theories are central in Sociology and three religious theories are discussed to give the reader a better overall perspective of how religion relates in past societies and in today's society. The work of Durkheim and Weber are once again brought up in this anthology.

A Sociological Perspective has a unique perspective as it draws on the expertise of many well-known authors in the field. Some of the central key elements within our society are covered throughout this anthology. Together these articles can serve as a great textbook for the Introduction to Sociology courses or an excellent supplement to many sociology classes.

Power and Culture



By John R. Hall, Mary Jo Neitz, and Marshall Battani

What is the relation of culture to the exercise of power—the subordination of individuals and groups to the will of others or to the constraints of an established social order? Karl Marx once held religion to be the opiate of the people. Granted, Marx's view was more complex than this remark would suggest. But this strong version of class domination through cultural domination remains a useful benchmark by which to examine relationships between culture and power. This reading explores the social and technological forces that shape the conditions under which culture might prove powerful, and then examines various theories of power and culture. These theories are diverse: one view holds that the power of culture is beyond the control of any group or social stratum. Alternatively, the patterns of culture by which people live are seen as shaped in one or another way by the influence of powerful interests.

Questions of power may be addressed in two broad ways: (1) by looking at *power aspects of the established order of culture* and (2) by investigating the *political economy of cultural production*. The latter approach explores how the form and content of cultural objects may be shaped by the economic and political control of cultural production. The former issue, to which we now turn, is about the power implications of a society's cultural patterns.

POWER AND THE ESTABLISHED ORDER OF CULTURE

Sociologists widely recognize the importance of the ability to produce and distribute culture, but there is considerable disagreement about how much, how, and which powerful interests control the content and form of culture for their own benefit. One theoretical possibility is that an overall *established order*—the ongoing institutional

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arrangements—of cultural production has *functional* consequences for the power of different social groups, independently of any individual's, organization's, or stratum's capacity to control the shape of the established order. For example, although the field of media industries is dominated by a mere handful of organizations, we must also recognize that the overall structure of media production is the product of multiple forces, and that it is thus "relatively autonomous" of any given company's or corporate sector's ability to organize or transform the established cultural order. For example, although certain organizations seek to manipulate the structure of the music recording industry and thus benefit disproportionately from the established order, crucial factors contributing to the shape of that order—the shifting relative importance of verbal, written, printed, and visual communication and the development of digital technologies—are in important ways beyond the control of particular organizations and groups.

The established order of culture thus may be understood in two ways. First, technology and the interplay of a variety of social forces may produce cultural patterns that allocate power. Second, independently of these processes, it is possible to understand the cultural order as a realm of ideas and symbols that powerfully shape society.

Technology, Social Forces, and the Cultural Order

Is there a difference between a culture based largely on print and speech communication and one where people routinely watch television and use DVDs, VCRs, computers, and wireless communication? Do authoritarian societies have different cultural patterns from democratic ones? Posing questions about technology and social forces in such stark terms yields a ready affirmative answer. The more subtle question has to do with whether and how these differences condition the power arrangements of societies.

Technology

Marshall McLuhan's (1964) famous formulation that "the medium is the message" suggests a sort of technological determinism. For McLuhan, the content of what we hear on the radio is not so important as the way that the radio organizes our worlds, both in the capacity to transmit information and entertainment and in the ways we incorporate sounds from beyond our immediate life-worlds into our everyday activities. With radio, patterns of human interaction are changed to the extent that music (and a wide variety of it) becomes accessible to us without much effort—certainly without the need to assemble musicians, attend a concert, or make music ourselves. Other technologies—the automobile, television, the VCR, the computer—also reconfigure the ways we interact with one another.

Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) extended McLuhan's analysis by looking at the information we get through various media. Instead of assuming that information comes into a social world that itself is unchanged by the process, Meyrowitz asks how one or another particular medium shapes social relationships. In his view, print media—books, magazines, newspapers—offer a depth and detail of information that makes each person something of a specialist on the basis of what he or she reads, whether astrophysical theory, home hobby books, or gossip columns. With print, we each get to know a great deal about selected topics, but what we know and what others know can be quite different, because people burrow into many different topics. Television, on the other hand, is oriented to more general audiences, and it lacks the capacity to convey detailed information yet offers its audiences a wide awareness of things previously known only by specialists (rituals of warfare among Pacific island natives, for example). General audiences also become familiar with knowledge previously held largely by people with distinctive status positions; for instance, children can become conversant with the “backstage” worldview of parents.

Technological and economic changes shaping media industries during the 1990s amplified the importance of Meyrowitz's argument. The veritable explosion of cable channels and the internet (and the emerging convergence of the two) rapidly have increased the availability of often highly specialized content. Citizens not only get to read newspaper accounts of politicians' speeches; they get to inspect very intimate details in the life of the president of the United States, as when Bill Clinton's affair with a White House intern became the focus of media attention in the late 1990s, or when George W. Bush lost consciousness, and nearly his life, after choking on a pretzel while alone watching a football game on television in the White House.

For Meyrowitz, such developments blur the distinctions between backstage and frontstage, and between expert and lay person. Thus, frontstage presentations by public figures—how they want to be seen—compete with images about backstage activities. As a variety of commentators have noted, public life obtains the dramatic quality of a soap opera that feeds on previously secret “scandal” or other plots that are easily serialized. In a similar way, the expertise of professionals becomes subject to second-guessing because television offers everyone a patchwork of expert knowledge in diverse fields. Overall, television and streams of information available online have made many people much more sophisticated about “performances,” and, possibly for that reason, people sometimes do not easily impress. Ironically, though, awareness of the constructed character of public images brings people to recognize that images do make a difference. For example, in the weeks following the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001 considerable television airtime, column inches, and server space were given over to a debate about the appropriate name for the war on terrorism. The original name coined by the Bush administration, “Infinite Justice,” was criticized as vengeful, and

the administration then chose a new name, “Enduring Freedom,” both to reflect better on the motives for war and—importantly—to avoid alienating potential members of the international coalition the administration was forging to prosecute the war (cf. Arundhati 2001; Rosenberg 2001).

Meyrowitz’s focus on television can obviously be broadened to include other technologies that followed—the video cassette recording, the compact disc, the digital video disc, electronic computer mail, and so on. Each technology gives rise to a distinctive set of possible relations between individuals and culture, and each shapes social relationships among the people who participate in it. McLuhan grandly imagined a sort of “global village” in which people would be united into one large community by the enveloping web of communication. The worldwide web and the huge audience for events like the World Cup seem like unifying developments, yet the opposite image—of alienation—also seems relevant: people become separated from one another by their ability to select and experience culture individually through technology like MP3, which allows individuals to download and store music from the web on portable hard drive/players, or the “TIVO” and devices like it, which can instantly record and time-shift television programming and even make programming choices in response to the history of a given user’s viewing habits. Rapidly changing technologies that alter the web of communication thus may either increase or decrease the degree to which people are connected.

How are these changes related to power? The answer depends on both the nature of culture under various technologies and the relation of technologies to the established order of culture. Participants in what began as the Frankfurt School of critical theory have argued since the 1930s that there can be no single theory of how power operates in societies because every change—even toward freedom—establishes a set of conditions in which new arrangements of domination can take hold. There are dialectical shifts in the exercise of power. For example, a well-established democracy can be subverted by the rise of propaganda. Similarly, free choices in the marketplace can be constrained by the social conditions under which they are made, such that the range of choices cannot be assumed to match buyers’ wants and needs.

In the dialectic of power identified by the critical theorists, people interested in minimizing the non-legitimate exercise of power need to identify specific sources of power that operate in their immediate circumstances. Early on, the critical theorists wondered why the working class lacked the revolutionary fervor that Karl Marx had expected. One answer pointed to the new technological possibilities of cultural domination. Already in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin (1969) identified a key divide in culture, noting the increasing prevalence of mechanically reproduced recordings, art prints, films, and so on, distributed on a mass basis. In our era, the mass production and distribution of culture is the central arrangement by which people have access to culture, and this is as true for much of high culture as it is for popular culture (Gans

1974; Halle 1993). Both classical composers and the latest offerings of the pop music industry are available on compact discs and as MP3 files. What, then, was Benjamin's concern? For Benjamin a real cultural object has "authenticity," a special "aura," and a kind of "authority" that are diminished by mass copying. In his view, the shift to mass production—from live to recorded music, from theater to film and TV, from painting to art prints and reproductions—has dire consequences. Art loses its significance as a critical activity when mass reproduction makes it more of a commodity subject to the same forces of manufacturing and marketing as other commodities—cars or laundry detergents, for example. "To an ever greater degree," Benjamin wrote, "the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility" (1969, p. 224).

Of course, Benjamin had not seen the half of it. Television and streaming video delivered via the worldwide web may appear to represent the world, but acting, the technologies of animation and editing, and the possibilities of embedding images in a variety of textual and graphic contexts mean that the world as it is depicted on television and via the web need not have any existence beyond the screen, even though, as a Baudrillardian simulacrum, the screen reality paradoxically threatens to overshadow the significance of everyday life. The images brought into our homes by television and the web create a new claim of authenticity. We are dazzled by the experiences made possible by the new technologies: they allow us to see and hear things in ways unavailable in our everyday worlds. Yet for Benjamin our individual responses to the fascinations of mass-produced culture are prefigured in their design. Indeed, the successful producers of popular entertainment and advertising have developed substantial lore about how to use media techniques to create particular effects in mass audiences. Benjamin was not completely opposed to the new developments. He recognized that mechanical reproduction could free art from its "parasitical dependence on ritual," thus contributing to the possibility for autonomous artistic practice (1969, p. 224). But mainly he worried that the mass production of culture heightened the potential for promoting entertainment over critical thought and offered a distraction from the circumstances of actual social life by spreading new kinds of (debased) ritual values—those of mass spectacle—with affinities both to fascist politics and to consumer capitalism.

Overall, technology shapes culture in important ways: it establishes the media of cultural interchange; it may make culture more accessible to some groups and less accessible to others; it can shift our connections to culture and change how we view the world. However, technology itself is an insufficient basis on which to explain the power effects of an established order of culture. In response to the technology argument, critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno observed in the 1940s: "No mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest" (1982, p. 121).

Social Forces

Despite the significance of technology, empirical sociological research suggests that the established order of culture cannot be reduced to its technological basis. To the contrary, as Benjamin (1969) indicates clearly in the epilogue of his famous essay, technology, artistic schools, and political movements are interrelated. Whatever the consequences of a cultural order for the distribution of power, diverse social forces help shape its emergence.

We might assume, to take one example, that technological innovations in printing brought the modern newspaper into being. But Michael Schudson has argued that it is just the reverse: in the U. S., various social forces of change came to a head in the 1830s, creating demand for a new kind of newspaper, and this demand in turn motivated technological innovations that made printing easier (1978, pp. 31–5). What were these social forces in the nineteenth-century U.S.? Schudson points to three: the emergence of a broadly based market economy, the diffusion of political participation among wider and wider sectors of the population, and the eclipse of small-scale community by a more complex society. When increasing numbers of people become drawn into the market economy, they begin to have an interest in news of commerce that previously was important solely to business people. Similarly, the growing interest in politics could not be adequately served by the party-organ newspapers of the day, which primarily published the views of the political parties without offering what we today think of as “news.” Finally, even if in small communities face-to-face conversations could serve as a medium of communication that helped bind people together, a complex society created wider social ties beyond the world of people’s immediate neighbors: what happened in another state or country became of interest to people whose horizons were expanding. In the nineteenth century, forces were at work changing the social world and people’s ties to it; these changing conditions, Schudson argues, created circumstances in which “news” gained a sufficient audience to fuel the birth of the first modern newspapers.

What about other kinds of societal arrangements, for example of material culture? Let us take the case of the American motel. It would be easy to argue that technology gave rise to the motel. At the end of the nineteenth century, hotels were a form of travel accommodation appropriate to cities and to forms of travel such as trains that served urban places. With the early-twentieth-century advent of the automobile—a technological innovation—motels might be explained as hotels moved out to the highway. But this commonsense explanation is drawn into question by Warren Belasco (1979), who shows that motels indeed originated by catering to the motoring public, but not simply as hotels at the edge of town. Instead, the motel form of overnight travel accommodation emerged as a byproduct of status competition between elite vacationers and other people with whom they shared the road. When the grand American spas and resorts began to attract a less elite clientele in the latter part of the nineteenth

century, some patrons began to seek out other forms of leisure. Motivated by the desire for a nostalgic return to nature and embracing “the strenuous life” recommended by President Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the twentieth century, some people used the first automobiles for “auto-camping,” going, as they said, “a gypsying” to escape the constraints of the increasingly industrial, bureaucratized, and urban social landscape. To cater to this trend, city campgrounds gradually became established, and then private ones, which charged a fee, thus excluding vagrants and the migrating poor. By the 1920s entrepreneurs were offering tourist cabins and cottages on campgrounds as more comfortable accommodations for their paying clients. It was at these auto-camping/cabin facilities that the first motels were established. Thus, the motel as a business format for lodging was born of changing tastes among automobile tourists engaged in status competition with one another.

The importance of diverse social forces can also be seen in long-term and global developments toward contemporary culture. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, complex interactions between global media technologies, consumer capitalism, international tourism, and migration are reshaping social relationships within and across nation-states, including the very notion of citizenship. People’s identifications with communities have become defined less in political terms and more in terms of what cultures they consume and how they become tied to new hybrid cultures that have developed out of increasing social interchange across national boundaries. As Nick Stevenson argues,

citizenship becomes less about formalized rights and duties and more about the consumption of exotic foods, Hollywood cinema, Brit. pop CDs and Australian wine. To be excluded from these commercial goods is to be excluded from citizenship (that is full membership) in modern western societies. (N. Stevenson 1997, p. 2)

On the flip side of this international consumption dynamic are the emerging imperatives of relations between culture and the market. To be a full member of the global community is to offer up one’s images, practices, language, and other cultural artifacts to those with the power and resources to consume them (buy them, watch them, eat them, study them). Thus, to understand globalization it is essential to recognize that mass-mediated communications technologies which make culture available to a wide audience are operating in a globalized social climate of consumer capitalism and tourism. In this globalized circumstance, social relationships to culture increasingly become defined as relationships between performances and audiences. The relationships of individuals and groups to cultures beyond the boundaries of their own societies may have political effects as well. Just as Meyrowitz argues that relations between individuals are

reshaped when television makes formerly “expert” knowledge available to lay persons, globalizing media may be transforming the nature of citizenship by making social and cultural resources available that allow individuals to distance themselves from their own official state-centered discourses and connect transnationally with other bases of identity (J.B. Thompson 1994; 1995).

Emergent patterns of culture as diverse as the newspaper, the motel, and globalized identity discourses cannot be explained by technology alone. Cultural developments are shaped by social forces at work in the societies where they appear. We may suspect that further research would show the significance of social forces for diverse kinds of culture—popular music, film, craft fairs, literature, motorcycle gangs, and so on. Yet to explain the origins of an established cultural order by either the influence of technology or social forces does not necessarily explain that order as a basis of social power. This is true for two reasons. First, whatever the origins of a cultural order, once it is established it may have consequences as a set of meanings and objects that inscribe power within society. Second, individuals and groups that own or control key organizations in the established social order may be able to exercise power through cultural production.

The Established Cultural Order as a Medium of Power

Do the institutionalized patterns of culture that inform our actions themselves amount to orders of power? If so, why and how? Sociologists like Durkheim (1995) focus on culture as a force of social integration. Yet this does not deny the power of culture. To the contrary, culture can thereby define the boundary between social integration versus alienation or deviance. At least implicitly, this means that culture is a medium of power: people who operate within the boundaries of a culture are dominated by its categories and meanings; those who deviate from cultural expectations may be subject to sanctions both at the hands of authority and of other people who conform to the established cultural order.

Sigmund Freud confronted the coercive power of culture much more directly than Durkheim. Freud argued the existence of a fundamental conflict between the individual’s subconscious desires for sexual pleasure and the demands in a civilized world for the individual to knuckle down to the responsibilities of family and work. The superego, representing normative social demands on the individual, had to be accommodated by the individual ego, or society could not exist. As with Durkheim, the victory of culture over the individual is a functional necessity in any society. For Freud, the persistence of culture requires the repression of individual freedom.

In the view of critical theorists, the “necessity” of cultural domination is organized within contemporary societies by the necessity of channeling social life along lines

that gear into capitalist-organized satisfaction of wants that substitute for the freedom to satisfy individual desires. For theorists like Benjamin mass production of culture played into this possibility: production, distribution, and consumption crystallized as an organized complex that gave rise to specifically capitalist styles of life. Some twenty-five years later, Herbert Marcuse argued for the connection between capitalist cultural domination and the lifestyles of specific social strata—working-class youth, suburban professionals, and so on—by suggesting that consumption may be an act of free choice, but the choice is “spurious”: it conceals the “universal coordination” of consumers, and it has consequences for all kinds of people, even the affluent.

The high standard of living in the domain of the great corporations is *restrictive* in a concrete sociological sense: the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. (Marcuse 1962, pp. 90–1)

Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Marcuse emphasizes the role of corporate business interests in the structuring of a world organized to surround and envelop consumers. In this view, power is based on the ability to shape the world so that people will freely choose to define their needs, wants, their entire existence, through consumption. Yet this power is hardly total: as can be seen from global ramifications of the Asian market collapse in 1997 and the U.S. economic slowdown in 2001 and 2002—exacerbated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and business scandals—the spending practices of consumers may shift radically from time to time, with dramatic consequences for a capitalist-organized consumer order.

Though critical theory offers mostly interpretation rather than concrete research, its interpretations are not without empirical support. Sociologists who have studied commercial architecture, for example, have found that restaurants and stores often are designed to maximize sales, maintain customer turnover after purchase, and meet other corporate goals, such as appealing to multiple customer values with a strong yet inoffensive “business format.” At franchise restaurants, we enter worlds designed as extensions of their advertised images, on the basis of market research (Wright 1985). Similar considerations go into the design of shopping malls, which recreate the civic space of downtown shopping streets, but under totally private auspices, which can maximize control of a thematically integrated environment, excluding nonconforming business activities, the homeless, or political controversy, and thereby sustaining a sense of “mall gentility” in which “nothing unusual is happening” (Jerry Jacobs 1984, pp. 13–14).

The success of shopping malls across the U.S. came largely at the expense of downtown shopping areas. Efforts in response to revitalize downtown shopping areas—and later to create entire “gate-guarded” communities—have in some sense transferred

the ideology of mall gentility into actual civic spaces. The planned community of Celebration, Florida, for example, began selling houses in 1995 amid accusations that its funder—the Walt Disney Corporation—was plotting “to lure unwitting citizens into living in theme parks” (Jerry Adler 1995, p. 44). In 2001, the grand opening of “The Village,” a housing development in Northern California, offered prospective homebuyers the opportunity to live in a community entirely modeled after the paintings of Robert Kincade—a highly successful artist roundly criticized for creating mass-produced art sold to the middle classes through a chain of retail galleries in suburban malls.

In the early 1840s, before Karl Marx developed his theory of capitalism, he engaged in a philosophical critique of bourgeois society that warned against a situation in which private interests would come to structure the organization of civic space (1978, p. 33). But Marx could not anticipate the world of the mall and the planned community that so many shoppers—and citizen-consumers—would find so attractive.

The designs of restaurants, stores, malls, and towns are physical manifestations of a culture created by business corporations. Yet this is not the end of the matter. As Robin Leidner (1993) shows through participant-observation research on service workers, human interaction itself, not just physical structure, is constructed and scripted to serve business interests. By studying insurance sales and McDonald’s restaurants, Leidner demonstrated the subtle and not so subtle ways that scripted interactions—which are an attempt to control both workers and clients—have consequences for identity and self-image. Corporate scriptings transform the affective display of emotions into work (cf. Hochschild 1983). Routinizing those displays may violate everyday norms of authenticity, autonomy, sincerity, and individuality, but if the practices become commonplace, they routinize a public culture of inauthentic authenticity.

Of course, not everyone responds to any given script enacted by service workers and therefore even for a given material need different products and marketing strategies are required to satisfy a diverse population. Market research is able to identify “clusters” of consumers to “target” with goods, services, and business formats designed specifically for them. Malcolm Gladwell (1997) has described a very sophisticated version of this targeting with respect to the highly lucrative U.S. teen market. He calls it “coolhunting.” Coolhunters fancy themselves as anthropologists who observe teen subcultures in order to define newly emerging trends. Coolhunters sell the information they gather to culture-producing firms (a one-year subscription to one of the most well-known sources of cool, *Look-Look*, runs at \$20,000). Perhaps, one could argue, such research procedures are democratically oriented toward insuring that producers respond to the needs and desires of consumers. But, as media critic Mark Crispin Miller (in Goodman and Dretzin 2001) points out, producers are not always interested in giving consumers what they want or need. They are often concerned with devising ways to sell some image that they already control to a very lucrative market whose members like to imagine

themselves to be independent of the corporate marketing of culture. After all, what is “cool” often is by definition outside of convention.

In the final analysis, a critical theory of power does not assume the existence of a single, cohesive, powerful group; nor does it depend upon centralized control of communication. Advertising, market research, and capitalist consumer production are significant elements of a wider set of social institutions that includes politics, government bureaucracies, information-processing organizations, planning agencies, and scientific laboratories. The power of these institutions may lie in their diffuse yet pervasive character—in their ability to structure everyday experience. Thus, in the view of the contemporary critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (1987), the social world of everyday life—the “life-world”—has become overshadowed by the “system.” In part this change occurs because systematic rationalization of social life has invaded the lifeworld to the point that much of life is overwhelmingly organized via corporate and governmental bureaucratic systems. These systems produce goods, services, and information in ways that affect the environment, the character of cities and towns, what we eat, how we maintain health, how we care for the sick, and so on. Habermas’s argument is largely theoretical, but it makes sense when one recognizes, for example, the use of “under-the-radar” techniques of youth marketing like hiring teens to log on to internet chat rooms and surreptitiously promote products or hiring college freshmen to throw parties and pass out promotional materials. The life-world has shifted from once having been the location from which action proceeded to the reverse: the realm of everyday life is now organized increasingly from the outside, by the “system.”

The model of power illuminated by critical theory argues that organization of the social world yields a *de facto* domination of society’s members through its cultural arrangements, shaped especially in the arena of large-scale economic and political organizations. Such a theory can be put into sharper focus by asking how cultural arrangements yield such a form of power. The most insightful answer to this question has been provided by Michel Foucault, who moves in a quite different direction from critical theory.

In a fascinating array of studies on prisons, mental illness, and other aspects of social life, Foucault (1965, 1975, 1979, 1978–86) consolidated an important account of the diffuse institutionalized power of culture. Other strands of research already had begun to explore this terrain. Labeling theorists had shown, for example, that “madness” is not simply a psychological fact; it is a shifting social construction of meanings that coordinates institutionalized arrangements designed to identify and deal with people at the fringes of society. The matter of who is at the fringes of society depends on time and place (Goffman 1961; Scheff 1966; Laing 1967; Szasz 1987). Foucault deepened this fundamental insight by positing a time before the emergence of the modern world in which neither “reason” nor “madness” described the average person. In this view, the emergence of modern reason as a category

of popular personality at the end of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had two implications for the social order. In the first place, it allowed reasoning *about* madness. However, for Foucault, the power of reason does not guarantee truth and it has not yet tamed madness. Perhaps this failure stems from the second implication of reason's emergence: that madness was uncommon in an earlier era because reason was uncommon. The birth of reason made possible the delineation of madness, in that reason established a standard of comparison by which madness could be identified.

Because madness and reason are intimately connected with each other, changes in what counts as reason will change what counts as madness too. Foucault's account suggests that we are trapped in the very boxes established by social efforts to create valid categories. The social arrangements for processing people through treatment or incarceration or monitoring have the effect of constructing the specific conditions of madness, from the warehousing of schizophrenics in the back wards of mental hospitals to the "mentally ill" homelessness of today. In other words, institutionalized practices based on reasoned knowledge in the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology, social welfare, and police procedure construct both the life circumstances and the meaningful categories of "madness" (Foucault 1965, 1979). It is this critique of reason itself, and our entrapment in and through its unfolding, that separates Foucault from the social constructionists.

For Foucault, even one of the most intimate aspects of personal life—sexuality—is "deployed" from outside the sites of its practice. But Foucault did not follow Freud in regarding civilized power as an exercise in repressing sexuality. To the contrary, there is a flood of discourses on sexuality—in movies, advertising, in the newspapers and magazines, in therapy groups, and with doctors. These discourses are powerful, not because they offer rules of conduct, but because they establish the web of meanings that embed sexuality within society. Sexual activity, at its core an animalistic behavior, has become imbued with specifically moral attributes. Thus, we do not simply act sexually as animals. Sexual practices carry specific culture freight. Forms of heterosexual, monogamous, marital, homosexual, and other sexual conduct transpire within fields of meaning organized by professional and mass-mediated discourse (Foucault 1978–86). To take but one example, Mark Monteiro (1997) examined discourses of masculinity in the popular Brazilian magazine *Ela Ela: uma revista para ler a dois* ("Him Her: a magazine to be read by the couple"). This magazine was published between 1969 and 1972—a period when Brazil was facing sociohistorical changes associated with the rise of countercultural social movements advocating feminism, gay power, and the entry of women into the once male-dominated workforce. Monteiro finds that the visual and written discourse on men undergoes a shift over the period: there are more pictures of male models, more articles dealing with male vanity, new cosmetics marketed to men,

and treatments of male homosexuality. However, a durable undercurrent of male social dominance remains, for social changes are represented as running counter to norms of heterosexual patriarchal power. The image of the “real man” persists as a yardstick against which to measure social change.

For madness, sexuality, and other aspects of social life as well Foucault connects “reason” to disciplines of knowledge, and disciplines of knowledge become the basis of another “discipline,” the bodily exercise of power over the subjects of disciplinary knowledge.

Foucault’s emphasis on knowledge has informed the work of a wide variety of scholars. Notably, the Subaltern Studies Group that emerged in the 1980s made an effort to rewrite the history of India from the perspective of groups oppressed by colonial rule. This effort required that the group critique the discipline of history itself, in particular for its complicity in extending the discourses of colonialism, nationalism, and modernity. “The inescapable conclusion from [the group’s] analyses is that ‘history,’ authorized by European imperialism and the Indian nation-state, functions as a discipline, empowering certain forms of knowledge while disempowering others” (Prakash 1994, p. 1, 485).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) raised the relevant question: “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak, who both champions and critiques postcolonial studies, draws from Jacques Derrida to deconstruct the rhetorics and images of colonialism and postcolonialism, and argues that without an explicit critique of the disciplinary bases of knowledge subalterns simply become, once again, subordinated to the discourses of modernism and modernization, and to those who might speak for those discourses—Western intellectuals. Such an argument is particularly disarming because it depicts a cultural domination that operates without conspirators yet reduces the agency of acting subjects to mere reflections of the cultural categories that frame social life. The consequence of such domination, in the case of the subaltern, is that efforts to liberate the dominated subject simply reinscribe the hierarchy of dominant/dominated positions.

Both in subaltern studies and elsewhere, Foucauldian analysis can seem to create an intellectual impasse for the less powerful. We all seem trapped within culturally constructed standpoints that imprison both our reasoning and our selves. For this reason, the efforts of the Subaltern Studies Group have gained importance outside India. Florence E. Mallon (1994), in surveying their influence in Latin American studies, has urged scholars to remain focused on the tension between postmodern discourse analyses and emancipatory politics. Otherwise, there is no privileged standpoint like that asserted for the working class by Marxists, and power and domination eclipse both objective analysis and subjective agency.

Any given societal arrangements rarely benefit everyone equally. Instead, they work to the advantage of particular social classes, ethnic groups, professions, and

one gender (almost universally men) over another. How are these inequalities to be explained, and what is the significance of culture? Some theorists emphasize the cultural patterns as products of a capitalist consumer society. Others, like Habermas and Foucault, see the cultural power basis of contemporary society as grounded in a wider set of institutions than purely economic ones. Yet one feature of theories about how culture helps sustain an established order is especially worth noting. Privileged groups that benefit from the cultural matrix do not necessarily achieve this benefit by the direct exercise of power, and people from disprivileged strata are not necessarily excluded from participation in the apparatus. What matters is that a diffuse but pervasive set of meanings, objects, and arrangements establishes a de facto power by the incorporation of culture into our everyday lives.

Insofar as the power of culture is diffuse, as Foucault suspected, political change and even a shift in economic organization would not change the powerful operation of culture in daily life. Indeed, for Foucault, even broad cultural change—a change in sexual mores, the end of colonial rule—seems only to herald a new set of categories that entangle us. Thus, Foucault has been read both as a conservative theorist, pessimistic about the possibilities and benefits of cultural change, and as a new radical who produced a fundamental critique that must be reckoned with if meaningful social change is to occur. If Foucault is right, efforts at social change must be directed toward the categories of culture, their consequences, and the implications of changing their operation in social relations. Only if he is wrong, and the content of culture is connected to specific economic and political interests, does the question of who controls cultural production make very much difference.

THE OWNERSHIP OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

A venerable tradition in sociology confronts power much more directly than Foucault does. If power is defined as the ability to make people do things whether they want to or not, then power to shape culture can be traced to those people and organizations that produce culture. Obviously culture is directly produced by cultural workers—artists, journalists, film producers, novelists, fashion designers, teachers, and sociologists. The questions then become, whom do cultural workers work for, and how does the ownership of cultural production affect culture?

The close of the twentieth century saw unprecedented growth in media industries brought on by waves of mergers made possible by wide-ranging deregulation. A brief look at the economic value of the biggest media-company mergers that took place between 1980 and 2000 reveals the dimensions of this startling consolidation. In 1983 the largest merger, achieved when Gannet Newspapers bought Combined Communications (billboards, newspapers, and broadcasting) was worth \$581 million

(in constant 2000 dollars). Six years later the largest merger created a \$19.4 billion company, bringing together Time Incorporated and Warner Communications. Two years after that, AT&T combined with TCI for \$56 billion, and when AOL got together with Time Warner in 2000 the deal was worth \$166 billion (Croteau and Hoynes 2001). The fourth largest international media conglomerate, with 1998 sales of \$12.8 billion, was Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, which brings together the Fox channels (news, sports, Fx), a string of television stations and newspapers, including the *New York Post*, book publisher HarperCollins, several sports teams, including the Los Angeles Dodgers, and British Sky Broadcasting (Demers 1999).

As Croteau and Hoynes point out, media empires are nothing historically new. What make today's empires different is their enhanced opportunities for media integration. Today they seek to integrate both horizontally, by owning many different types of media products, and vertically, by owning or controlling all phases of the creation, distribution, and marketing of a particular media product. Although "product placement" (placing a product within the story of a film or TV in exchange for an advertiser's money) has been an accepted business practice for some time, the new profit-making strategies almost completely blur the boundary between advertisement and product. Now, for example, internet players of "The Sims Online" video game find a handy McDonald's kiosk where busy cyber-social individuals can stay happy eating fast food. "Synergy" or "cross-promotion"—the new industry buzzwords—is made possible by ownership and business alliance patterns that create what some media critics refer to as the "integrated communications mix."

When the Disney Corporation makes a feature film about a youth hockey team called the "Mighty Ducks," when they actually own part of a National Hockey League team called the Mighty Ducks, and when they own the ESPN cable network that televises hockey games, when they use their ESPN network and Disney stores to sell jerseys (licensed by the League and worn by both fictional players on the film screen and professional players on the TV screen), and when this all somehow gears together nicely with the Disney character Donald Duck, it becomes difficult to tell what is a promotion, what is a product, and what is culture. There might not be any difference. As Douglas Rushkoff puts it:

Look how Viacom leverages [Howard Stern] across their properties. He is syndicated on 50 of Viacom's Infinity radio stations. His weekly TV show is broadcast on Viacom's CBS. His number one best-selling autobiography was published by Viacom's Simon and Schuster, then released as a major motion picture by Viacom's Paramount Pictures, grossing \$40 million domestically and millions more on videos sold at Viacom's Blockbuster Video. (Rushkoff, in Goodman and Dretzin 2001)

Growth and conglomeration of mass-media outlets have contributed to the direct political power of owners and to the consolidation of media under the dominance of large-scale, consumer-oriented corporate capitalism. In turn, the latter development has shaped the content and formats of mass media. This consolidation, of course, has taken place as part of a wider consolidation of corporate capitalism—in food brands, shopping-mall chains, department stores, and so forth. The power entailed is not simply that of direct authority and influence. Instead, it is a power to design, produce, and distribute culture on a mass basis.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the debate surrounding powerful interests and control of the content and form of culture.
2. Discuss how technology shapes culture and its significance for power and culture.
3. What are other elements that exert power over culture?
4. Discuss how the established order influences culture?
5. What are some ways the form and content of cultural objects can be shaped by the economic and political control of cultural production?

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