CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Video (Premium Resource CD ROM)  Eating Disorders

Annotation: This video shows a physician expressing concern about the images of success offered teenagers, and the relationship between body image and success. Acceptance of these images leads some teens to develop eating disorders in their attempt to bring their bodies into conformity with widely viewed ideals. The symptoms of two serious eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia, are listed. The video is followed by two questions about the influence of the mass media on body image.

Learning Objective: To sensitize students to the potentially harmful health consequences of accepting widely held images of ideal body shape.

Faculty Note: Culturally imposed ideals of body image lead many college students to engage in harmful eating behaviors. The exercise below will sensitize students to the pervasiveness of the messages about body image and eating. Video clips are provided on the Premium Resource CD Rom.

Activity: Ask students to view the video. Then ask them to observe the selection of foods and discussion about food when they eat with their friends over a period of several days. Have them keep a diary of their observations and conversations. At the end of the period have students write summaries of these observations and conversations. Consider reading several of these summaries in class without identifying the authors.

Also have the students address the cultural reasons why both men and women aspire for a certain look.

Additional Resources: Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc. (EDAP) is the largest non-profit organization in the U.S. devoted to the awareness and prevention of eating disorders. Their web site http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org offers links to material about all aspects of eating disorders. Their "Media Watchdog Program" invites the public to submit examples of offensive or inspirational advertisements.

World Wide Web Activity  How do Intentional Societies Restore Gemeinschaft to Modern Living?

Annotation: Intentional Community is an inclusive term for ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives and other related projects and dreams. One of the major web sites addressing intentional communities is found at http://www.ic.org/

Learning Objective: To personalize the advantages and disadvantages of Gemeinschaft society.

Faculty Note: For students who have never lived in a Gemeinschaft society, it is easy to idealize the experience--close, supportive, multi-dimensional relationships. The exercise below asks them to explore what living in such a society might be like for them, and to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of such living arrangements.

Activity: In addition to using the Intentional Community home page at http://www.ic.org/, direct students to the Yahoo home page at http://yahoo.com Click on "Society and Culture," then "Culture and Groups," and then "Intentional Communities." From there have them click on "Housing Cooperatives" and "Eco-villages" and browse several of the linked web sites that describe the features of life in different housing cooperatives. Using the material discovered, ask the students to write a paper describing what they would like and dislike about living in a housing cooperative. How are the intentional communities and housing cooperative described at these sites similar and different to the Amish community which is a Gemeinschaft society?

**Test Question:** (Essay) Why do some people consider Gemeinschaft communities attractive?

*Answers might include:* Sharing material possessions with others, collective decision-making, low cost, living with people that have the same values.

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**Web Link**  
*A Social Psychology of Clothing*

**Annotation:** The brief reading on this web site emphasizes the function clothing serves in differentiating people in different demographic and economic categories. The web site also offers links to interesting web sites with information on the history of clothing, tattooing, and body piercing.

**Learning Objective:** To develop appreciation for the diversity of ways people in different cultures and throughout time have decorated their bodies, sometimes with clothing at others with piercing and tattooing.

**Faculty Note:** Throughout history people in all cultures have decorated their bodies through the clothing they wore, make-up, hairstyles, piercing, and tattooing. The exercise below exposes students to the piercing and tattooing phenomena in a colorful, interesting way and from an authoritative source, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

**Activity:** Have students click on the Web Link "A Social Psychology of Clothing" and read the brief article "Clothes Make the Person." Then have students click on “Body Modification Ancient and Modern” found at [http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Exhibits/bodmodintro.html](http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Exhibits/bodmodintro.html) a web site of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Ask students to browse on the links to body piercing, tattooing, and painting and read about these phenomena. Lead a discussion of why people, throughout time and across cultures have adorned their bodies in these ways.

**Additional Resources:** See the web site “Body Art Tattoo Inc.” at [http://www.azbodyart.com/](http://www.azbodyart.com/) for an objective description of a tattoo business. If you’re going to suggest other sites, you may wish to explore them yourself before assigning them. Some sites can be sexually explicit.

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**World Wide Web Activity**  
*How Different is Amish Society?*

**Annotation:** The home page for the Amish society [http://www.800padutch.com/amish.shtml](http://www.800padutch.com/amish.shtml) provides links to additional web sites about the Amish and asks questions about the similarities between Amish and conventional society.

**Learning Objective:** To understand the connections between Amish practices and their religious beliefs, to appreciate, more generally, how unconventional lifestyles can be derived from belief systems.

**Faculty Note:** Amish people, with their dress, appearance, and mode of transportation seem unusual. The exercise below helps students understand that the origins of Amish practices lie solidly within Amish religious beliefs. Advise students that if they have difficulty accessing the web pages listed in Sociology and the Internet they may need to type in each address for these sites separately onto the address line.

**Activity:** Have students click on an Amish home page at [http://www.800padutch.com](http://www.800padutch.com). Within this web page, have students click on "The Amish" button and read the historical and cultural material provided. Then have students write brief papers explaining the religious significance of Amish lifestyles (e.g. clothing, appearance, rejection of contemporary technology).

**Additional Resources:** The "Amish.net" web page [http://www.amish.net/](http://www.amish.net/) offers much supplemental information about Amish culture. The "Amish Life FAQ" line at the bottom of the home page leads to an especially long list of questions and answers.
The Video Professor  

**Annotation:** *Cast Away*, starring Tom Hanks, is the ultimate “survivor” tale of a man stranded on a tropical island, totally alone. The film illustrates the importance of family and friends and the meaning of the social imperative.

**Learning Objective:** To illustrate the importance social interaction is for the average person and to recognize the difficulty we face when left totally “alone,” either by our own choosing or by fate.

**Faculty Note:** *Cast Away* is available on video and DVD as an inexpensive rental from a movie house or it may be available through the university library or a local public library as a rental.

**Activity:** For class discussion or through an essay, have the students address the social network Tom Hanks had prior to the plane crash, during the time he was stranded on the island, and how it changed upon his return to civilization. When he was stranded, how did Hanks establish his own social network when he was without human company? What value did he place on “Wilson” and his other associates?

**Additional Resources:** Refer students to [http://www.findarticles.com](http://www.findarticles.com) and have them type in “Imaginary Playmate” to locate this article, followed by “Fantasy” to locate a second. These two articles will assist students in understanding the plight of the stranded islander in *Cast Away*. There is additional information regarding the story line of *Cast Away* found at [http://www.popmatters.com/film/reviews/c/cast-away.html](http://www.popmatters.com/film/reviews/c/cast-away.html) The original theatrical trailer for *Cast Away* can be viewed at [http://www.apple.com/trailers/fox/cast_away/](http://www.apple.com/trailers/fox/cast_away/)

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**Content Select Activity:**  

**Social Interaction**

**Annotation:** Students can use Content Select to discover additional articles and sources about social interaction.

**Activity:** Have students type in “social interaction” in the “find” box and then hit “search.” There are at least 95 articles in the Content Select database addressing social interaction. These may be useful to students wishing to understand the concept better for the purposes of writing a paper assigned in this chapter or engaging in quality discussion.

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**Video Activity**  

*(VHS Interactive Video for Introductory Sociology)*  

**Male Body Image**

**Annotation:** Women are often accused of being “body conscious” but this video shows how men can become obsessed with their figure as well. It is noteworthy that body image for men, as well as women, is a cultural value that differs considerably between societies.

**Learning Objective:** To encourage students to examine their own lifestyles and self concept objectively and to use that same objectivity when interacting with others.

**Faculty Note:** The video clip makes reference to the physiques on male action figures. Obtain several of these for the class to examine. Also take a look at the popular dolls young girls are eager to own, such as the Barbie collection. In the alternative, photos may also serve to make the point

**Activity:** Break the class down into small groups for discussion, and then have a spokesperson for each group summarize that group’s conclusions for the class. Non-material culture includes “the way people think”. Using the principles of symbolic interactionism and cultural values, what does body image convey to others and what impact does it have on one’s own self concept? How important is body image to the average male? When does concern for one’s body image cross the line from being a part of sound physical health to a mental health issue?

**Additional Resources:** In this same chapter there is a web link on “Social Psychology of the Body” and a video clip on “Eating Disorders”. A web site dedicated to both male and female bodybuilding can be found at [http://www.getbig.com/](http://www.getbig.com/)