

questions for reflection and further reading

Our intention in this section is to provide a structure for seminar discussions, reading groups, or those individuals who have read the book and wish to explore further the issues we have raised in the book. For this purpose we have provided a series of questions for each chapter, along with suggestions for further reading. These are bound to be selective when it comes to areas of interest that have often generated a considerable amount of writings. After all, sociology is a growing and dynamic discipline that is producing new studies all the time. This is not surprising given our lives are changing in different ways and at different times. We have selected these books in terms of the topics they cover and the issues we have examined in the individual chapters. As a result, they are not always the easiest books, but we hope they prove to be of sufficient interest to prompt further thought on core social issues.

When you consider these texts and read them, do not feel depressed or surrender to the temptation to quit. Sociological knowledge may seem overwhelming, but you will find the effort richly rewarding and certainly not beyond your power. Besides, there are sociological publications that are specifically produced to help you and others move into the main body of sociological knowledge. Note that reading can be a passive exercise in which the reader acts as a recipient of the text and does not engage with it in criticizing, analysing, cross-referencing and bringing prior learning and experiences to the text. It is for these reasons that you should read using an 'interrogative style' where you 'engage' with the text and constantly ask questions, bearing in mind the aims of your reading. We have produced the questions to assist in this process, but your interrogative abilities will clearly develop as you accumulate an ever-widening depth and

breadth of knowledge. It only remains for us to say that we hope you enjoy the continuing sociological journey.



Introduction

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Do you think there can be a science of common sense and/or a common-sense view of science?
- 2 If you were asked to define the discipline of sociology in no more than two sentences, what would you say and why?
- 3 What are the benefits and pitfalls associated with the process of 'defamiliarization'?
- 4 Is sense 'common'?

Suggested Further Reading

- Berger, P.L. and Kellner, H. (1982) *Sociology Reinterpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin). This book, following on from the earlier *Invitation to Sociology*, examines topics such as freedom and the 'scientization' of social life.
- Giddens, A. (2001) *Sociology*, fourth edn (Cambridge: Polity). A comprehensive and general overview of sociology.
- May, T. (2001) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*, third edn (Buckingham: Open University Press). While we have not examined research methods, this book provides a tour of methods and perspectives employed in social research for those interested in these areas of activity.
- Mills, C.W. (1970) *The Sociological Imagination* (Harmondsworth: Penguin; originally published in 1959). Although this seems dated, it is still a sociological classic and the last chapter anticipates the theme of 'ambivalence'.



Chapter 1

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What goals do you have in your life and what means might you have access to in order to attain them?
- 2 Who are the reference groups in your life and what is the relationship between your actions and their expectations?
- 3 How do you understand the relationship between freedom and dependence?
- 4 What would you consider to be the relations that exist between families, communities and organizations and how do these affect the goals we set for ourselves and whether they are attainable or not? Consider this in relation to the 'criteria of relevance'.

Suggested Further Reading

- Bauman, Z. (1988) *Freedom* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press). This study considers the issues we have addressed in this chapter.
- Griffiths, M. (1995) *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity* (London: Routledge). Ideas on the self are considered in relation to belonging, authenticity, politics and autobiography.
- Mead, G.H. (1964) *Selected Writings: George Herbert Mead*, edited by A.J. Reck, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). An edited collection of Mead's original writings that are worth reading in themselves, rather than via secondary sources.
- Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage). A sociological study tracing the lives of women and how they struggle to make their social identities.



Chapter 2

Questions for Reflection

- 1 The boundaries between 'us' and 'them' provide for the maintenance, via distinction, of identity. How does this occur and with what consequences for how we see others and ourselves?
- 2 Is there a 'togetherness' or 'common bond' that humanity, as a whole, shares?
- 3 What practices of segregation and entitlement do you see within the City? Would you regard yourself as the beneficiary or victim of these and why?
- 4 What did Erving Goffman mean by 'civil inattention' and how is it manifested?

Suggested Further Reading

- Bourdieu, P. et al. (1999) *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, translated by P. P. Ferguson, et al. (Cambridge: Polity). A study based on detailed empirical investigations, conducted over several years, into the issues that people face in their everyday lives.
- Frisby, D. and Featherstone, M. (eds) (1997) *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage). Simmel was a great sociologist and this edited collection of his works enables the reader to gain an insight into the range and depth of his interests.
- Goffman, E. (1984) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin; originally published in 1959). This book has sold a great many copies, probably because of the insights that its author brought to our interactions.
- Miller, T. and McHoul, A. (1998) *Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (London: Sage). Interesting insights into everyday practices.



Chapter 3

Questions for Reflection

- 1 In what ways are communities and social identities linked?
- 2 What do you think Raymond Williams meant by 'the remarkable thing about community is that it always has been'?
- 3 Do sects and organizations differ? If so, in what ways?
- 4 Would you consider exposing those practices in organizations that you consider unethical? If so, when, why and under what type of circumstances?

Suggested Further Reading

- du Gay, P. (2000) *In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber – Organization – Ethics* (London: Sage). The author argues that bureaucracy can have an important role to play in a society that seeks responsible government.
- Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (eds) (1970) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul). As with our suggestions on Simmel and Mead, it is often worth returning to original materials to gain the best insights into the ideas of leading sociologists.
- Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity* (London: Routledge). A very useful overview of both sociological and anthropological views on identity, mixed with the author's own analysis and interpretations.
- Lyon, D. (2001) *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life* (Buckingham: Open University Press). Increasing areas of our lives are subject to routine surveillance and this study illuminates how this takes place and discusses its implications.



Chapter 4

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What are the differences between coercion and choice?
- 2 What does it mean to say that people are ends in themselves, rather than means towards the ends of another?
- 3 Traditionalist legitimations play an important role in our lives. Can you think of some examples and how they relate to your actions?
- 4 Are there such things as 'universes of obligation'?

Suggested Further Reading

- Bauman, Z. (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity). An in-depth examination of some of the themes we have raised in this chapter.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1994) *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Citadel; originally

- published in 1948). A highly insightful essay by a leading figure from the French existentialist movement which examines the choices we face in situations of ambiguity.
- Bellah, R.N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A. and Tipton, S.M. (1996) *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (updated edition; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press). A study that sparked a wide-ranging debate about contemporary values and ways of life.
- Sennett, R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (London: W.W. Norton). This book looks at political and economic changes in terms of their affects in relation to trust, integrity and belonging.



Chapter 5

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Does the idea of a 'pure' gift in a social relationship make sense to you?
- 2 Jürgen Habermas wrote about the 'colonization' of the lifeworld by money, power and bureaucracy. Do you think this is an increasing trend in contemporary society? If so, what effects does it have on everyday life?
- 3 Is there identity outside of commodification?
- 4 Is the impersonality of exchange underpinned by social relationships such as emotional attachment and trust? If so, in what ways and what does this mean for the idea of 'exchange'.

Suggested Further Reading

- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage). Ulrich Beck characterizes contemporary society in terms of its propensity to produce risks that have effects upon the conduct of our lives.
- Hochschild, A.E. (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press). The title speaks enough of the content and is written in an engaging style.
- Jamieson, L. (1998) *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity). Is the desire for intimacy a basic human need? To what extent is it shaped by social and economic conditions? These are some of the main questions addressed in this book.
- Luhmann, N. (1998) *Love As Passion: The Codification of Intimacy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press). An insightful examination of love, emotion and attachment in terms of its evolution over the course of history.



Chapter 6

Questions for Reflection

- 1 In seeking security are we in search of the unattainable?
- 2 How are habits and bodily postures and mannerisms related? How do they manifest themselves in everyday life?
- 3 In what ways are bodies represented in the popular media and for what reasons and utilizing what means?
- 4 Are the ideas of health and fitness different because of the existence and absence of a 'norm' against which they can be measured?

Suggested Further Reading

- Burkitt, I. (1999) *Bodies of Thought: Embodiment, Identity and Modernity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage). This book engages with arguments around the mind-body issue and concludes that having a body, acting and thinking of ourselves as persons are inseparable.
- Delphy, C. and Leonard, D. (1992) *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity). A comparative analysis of how the organization of the family is related to labour, production and consumption.
- Foucault, M. (1979) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by R. Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin). The first of Michel Foucault's studies on sexuality not only is accessible, but also requires the reader to examine what may be habitually held beliefs from a very different perspective.
- Nettleton, S. (1995) *The Sociology of Health and Illness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity). A comprehensive overview of perspectives on medical sociology.



Chapter 7

Questions for Reflection

- 1 We spoke of 'hardware' and 'software' times. What did we mean by this and what consequences does it have for the ways in which we lead our lives?
- 2 Are communications freed from the limits placed upon them by 'people and material objects'?
- 3 Is 'threat' targeted at that which lies within a neighbourhood, but whose actual source is more distant?
- 4 What are the relations between problem-solving activities and boundaries?

Suggested Further Reading

- Adam, B. (1995) *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time* (Cambridge: Polity). One of the foremost social theorists of time, Barbara Adam examines the ways in which time informs our lives in a number of areas, for example, health and work.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity). An examination of the fluidity of life, which we have discussed here, in relation to such topics as work, time and space, community, emancipation and individuality.
- Waters, M. (1995) *Globalization* (London and New York: Routledge). A good overview of this concept and its implications for our lives.
- Williams, R. (1989) *Culture* (London: Fontana). Raymond Williams devotes his attention to the idea of culture and why it has become so important to an understanding of social relations, as well as how this relates to his own 'cultural materialist' position.



Chapter 8

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Is nature anything more than the material upon which culture fashions itself?
- 2 Is the genetic control of crops a step forward in the process of controlling nature for human purposes?
- 3 What do the terms 'xenophobia' and 'heterophobia' refer to? Give two examples of each in everyday life.
- 4 What are the differences between citizenship, state, nation and nationalism and how do they relate to each other?

Suggested Further Reading

- Calhoun, C. (1997) *Nationalism* (Buckingham and Minneapolis, Minn.: Open University Press and Minnesota Press). The importance of national boundaries, states, identities and nationalism is evident in contemporary times. This book examines these issues and how they interact and are used in different ways.
- Delanty, G. (2000) *Citizenship in a Global Age* (Buckingham: Open University Press). Defining the term 'citizenship', the author examines the implications of de-territorialization and argues for a 'cosmopolitan' form of citizenship.
- Gilroy, P. (2000) *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press). An examination of identity, ethnicity and race in modern times and the issues they present for living our lives with others in improved ways.
- Segal, L. (1999) *Why Feminism? Gender, Psychology, Politics* (Cambridge: Polity). Lynne Segal's writings resonate with contemporary issues and this collection of essays is no exception.



Chapter 9

Questions for Reflection

- 1 In what ways are new technologies informing and shaping your life?
- 2 Is advertising simply a means of conveying information, or does it determine what we buy?
- 3 Are public problems becoming private ills?
- 4 Is there more to life than shopping?

Suggested Further Reading

- Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage). A review of the idea that we can characterize modern societies in terms of consumption, while also being the author's own evaluation of a global order and its implications for cultural practices.
- Klein, N. (2000) *No Logo* (London: Flamingo).
- MacKenzie, D. and Wajcman, J. (eds) (1999) *The Social Shaping of Technology*, second edn (Buckingham: Open University Press). An edited collection of original articles by thinkers reflecting upon the interactions between technology and human relations.
- Slevin, J. (2000) *The Internet and Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity). A detailed study on the rise of the internet and its implications for identity and the organization of social relations.



Chapter 10

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What do you hope for in studying sociology?
- 2 What are the issues that have informed the development and practice of sociology as a discipline?
- 3 In what ways can thinking sociologically assist us in improving our understanding of ourselves, others and the social conditions that we inhabit?
- 4 Is no 'form of life' pure?

Suggested Further Reading

- Fraser, N. (1997) *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (London: Routledge). Nancy Fraser has the ability to reach to the core of arguments and set out the ways in which we might constructively find solutions to the problems they raise. This set of essays is no exception and in here she makes the point, apparently so often forgotten, that recognition walks hand in hand with redistribution.

- May, T. (1996) *Situating Social Theory* (Buckingham: Open University Press). Utilizing a basis in the history of social theory and traditions of social thought, this book situates contemporary schools of thought and discusses their strengths and weaknesses.
- Williams, M. (2000) *Science and Social Science: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge). A guide to the debates on science and how these relate to the practice of the social sciences. The author also considers the important issue of values and scientific practices.
- Young, J. (1999) *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage). This book examines the transition from stability to change and division. Noting that 'there is no going back', the author considers the possibilities for the future and in so doing, utilizes the sociological gaze in a manner that is not dissimilar to the one we have suggested in this final chapter.