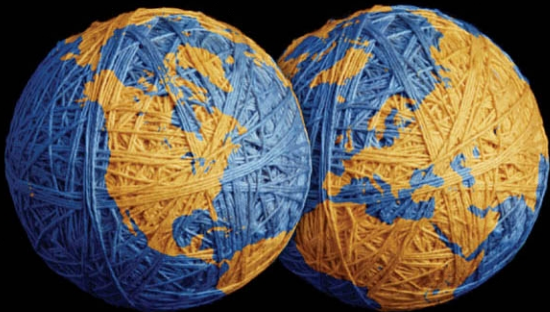


**Pearson New International Edition**

Essentials of Sociology:  
A Down-to-Earth Approach  
James M. Henslin  
Tenth Edition



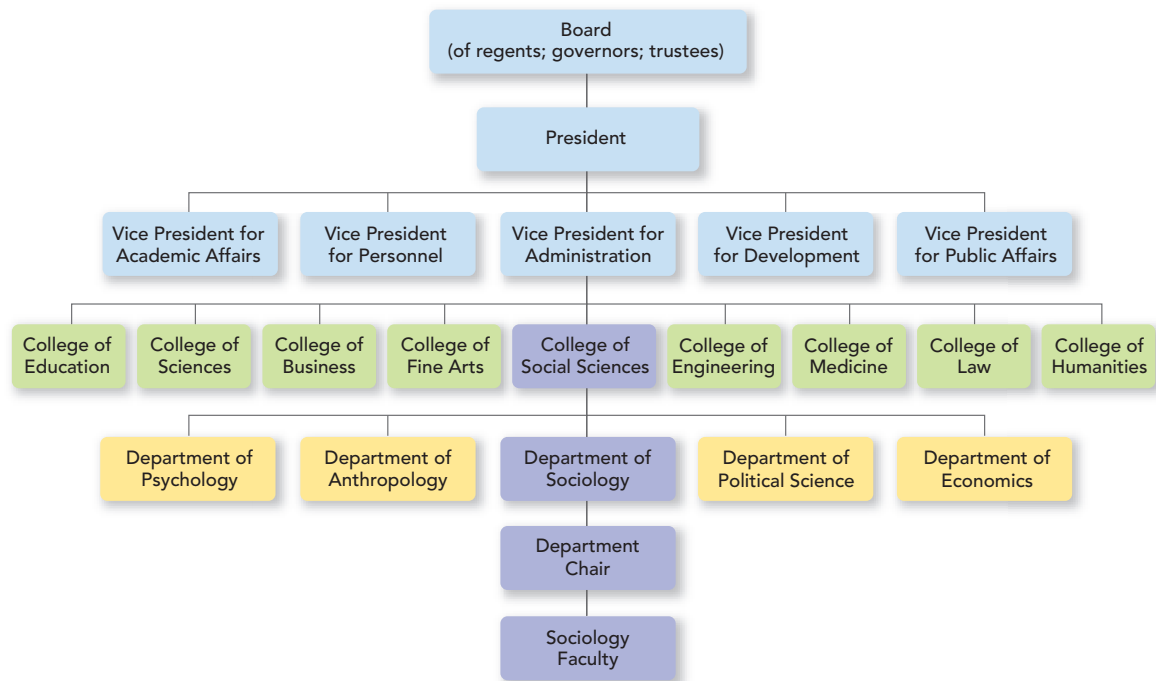
# Pearson New International Edition

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**FIGURE 1** The Typical Bureaucratic Structure of a Medium-Sized University

This is a scaled-down version of a university's bureaucratic structure. The actual lines of a university are likely to be much more complicated than those depicted here. A large university may have a chancellor and several presidents under the chancellor, each president being responsible for a particular campus. In this illustration, extensions of authority are shown only for the Vice President for Administration and the College of Social Sciences, but each of the other vice presidents and colleges has similar positions. If the figure were to be extended, departmental secretaries would be shown and, eventually, somewhere, even students.



Source: By the author.

so successful that, as illustrated by the Down-to-Earth Sociology box below, they have even begun to take over cooking, one of the most traditional areas of life.

## Goal Displacement and the Perpetuation of Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are so good at harnessing people's energies to reach specific goals that they have become a standard feature of our lives. Once in existence, however, bureaucracies tend to take on a life of their own. In a process called **goal displacement**, even after an organization achieves its goal and no longer has a reason to continue, continue it does.

A classic example is the March of Dimes, organized in the 1930s with the goal of fighting polio (Sills 1957). At that time, the origin of polio was a mystery. The public was alarmed and fearful, for overnight a healthy child could be stricken with this crippling disease. To raise money to find a cure, the March of Dimes placed posters of children on crutches near cash registers in almost every store in the United States. The organization raised money beyond its wildest dreams. When Dr. Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio in the 1950s, the threat of polio was wiped out almost overnight.

Did the staff that ran the March of Dimes hold a wild celebration and then quietly fold up their tents and slip away? Of course not. They had jobs to protect, so they

What is goal displacement? Why does it exist?

## Down-to-Earth Sociology

### The McDonaldization of Society

The significance of the McDonald's restaurants that dot the United States—and, increasingly, the world—goes far beyond quick hamburgers, milk shakes, and salads. As sociologist George Ritzer (1993, 1998, 2001) says, our everyday lives are being “McDonaldized.” Let's see what he means by this.

The **McDonaldization of society** does not refer just to the robotlike assembly of food. This term refers to the standardization of everyday life, a process that is transforming our lives. Want to do some shopping? Shopping malls offer one-stop shopping in controlled environments. Planning a trip? Travel agencies offer “package” tours. They will transport middle-class Americans to ten European capitals in fourteen days. All visitors experience the same hotels, restaurants, and other scheduled sites—and no one need fear meeting a “real” native. Want to keep up with events? *USA Today* spews out McNews—short, bland, non-analytical pieces that can be digested between gulps of the McShake or the McBurger.

Efficiency brings dependability. You can expect your burger and fries to taste the same whether you buy them in Los Angeles or Beijing. Although efficiency also lowers prices, it does come at a cost. Predictability washes away spontaneity. It changes the quality of our lives by producing sameness, a bland version of what used to be unique experiences. In my own travels, for example, had I taken packaged tours I never would have had the eye-opening experiences that

have added so much to my appreciation of human diversity. (Bus trips with chickens in Mexico, hitchhiking in Europe and Africa, and sleeping on a granite table in a nunnery in Italy and in a cornfield in Algeria are just not part of tour agendas.)

For good or bad, our lives are being McDonaldized, and the predictability of packaged settings seems to be our social destiny. When education is rationalized, no longer will our children have to put up with real professors, who insist on discussing ideas endlessly, who never come to decisive answers, and who come saddled with idiosyncrasies. At some point, such an approach to education is going to be a bit of quaint history.

Our programmed education will eliminate the need for discussion of social issues—we will have packaged solutions to social problems, definitive answers that satisfy our need for closure, likely stamped “U.S. government approved.” Computerized courses will teach the same answers to everyone—“politically correct” ways to think about

social issues. Mass testing will ensure that students regurgitate the programmed responses.

Our looming prepackaged society will be efficient. But we will be trapped in the “iron cage” of bureaucracy—just as Weber warned would happen.



McDonalds in Xian, China.

### For Your Consideration

➔ What do you like and dislike about the standardization of society? What do you think about the author's comments on the future of our educational system?

targeted a new enemy—birth defects. But then in 2001 another ominous threat of success reared its ugly head. Researchers finished mapping the human genome system, a breakthrough that held the possibility of eliminating birth defects—and their jobs. Officials of the March of Dimes had to come up with something new—and something that would last. Their new slogan, “Stronger, healthier babies,” is so vague that it should ensure the organization's existence forever: We are not likely to ever run out of the need for “stronger, healthier babies.”

Then there is NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), formed during the Cold War to prevent Russia from invading Western Europe. The abrupt, unexpected ending of the Cold War removed the organization's purpose. But why waste a perfectly good bureaucracy? As with the March of Dimes, the Western powers found a new goal: to create “rapid response forces” to combat terrorism and “rogue nations” (Tyler 2002). To keep this bureaucracy going, they even allowed Russia to become a junior partner. Russia was pleased—until it felt threatened by NATO's expansion.

What is the McDonaldization of society? Why is it important for your life?



## Social Groups and Formal Organizations



The March of Dimes was founded by President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s to fight polio. When a vaccine for polio was discovered in the 1950s, the organization did not declare victory and disband. Instead, its leaders kept the organization intact by creating new goals—first “fighting birth defects,” and now “stronger, healthier babies.” Sociologists use the term goal displacement to refer to this process of keeping a bureaucracy alive by adopting new goals.

## Dysfunctions of Bureaucracies

Although in the long run no other form of social organization is more efficient, as Weber recognized, bureaucracies also have a dark side. Let’s look at some of their dysfunctions.

**Red Tape: A Rule Is a Rule.** Bureaucracies can be so bound by red tape that when officials apply their rules, the results can defy all logic. I came across an example so ridiculous that it can make your head swim—if you don’t burst from laughing first.

*In Spain, the Civil Registry of Barcelona recorded the death of a woman named Maria Antonieta Calvo in 1992. Apparently, Maria’s evil brother had reported her dead so he could collect the family inheritance.*

*When Maria learned that she was supposedly dead, she told the Registry that she was very much alive. The bureaucrats at this agency looked at their records, shook their heads, and insisted that she was dead. Maria then asked lawyers to represent her in court. They all refused—because no dead person can bring a case before a judge.*

*When Maria’s boyfriend asked her to marry him, the couple ran into a slight obstacle: No man in Spain (or most other places) can marry a dead woman—so these bureaucrats said, “So sorry, but no license.”*

*After years of continuing to insist that she was alive, Maria finally got a hearing in court. When the judges looked at Maria, they believed that she really was a living person, and they ordered the Civil Registry to declare her alive.*

The ending of this story gets even happier, for now that Maria was alive, she was able to marry her boyfriend. I don’t know if the two lived happily ever after, but, after overcoming the bureaucrats, they at least had that chance (“Mujer ‘resucita’” 2006).

**Bureaucratic Alienation.** Perceived in terms of roles, rules, and functions rather than as individuals, many workers begin to feel more like objects than people. Marx termed these reactions **alienation**, a result, he said, of workers being cut off

Technology has changed our lives fundamentally. The connection to each telephone call used to be made by hand. As in this 1940s photo, these connections were made by women. Long-distance calls, with their numerous handmade connections, not only were slower but were also expensive. In 1927, a call from New York to London cost \$25 a minute. In today’s money this comes to \$300 a minute!



© Peter Sickles/SuperStock/Alamy

What are some functions and dysfunctions of bureaucracies?

## Social Groups and Formal Organizations

Bureaucracies have their dysfunctions and can be slow and even stifling. Most, however, are highly functional in uniting people's efforts toward reaching goals.



© Tom Cheney/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

from the finished product of their labor. He pointed out that before industrialization workers used their own tools to produce an entire product, such as a chair or table. Now the capitalists own the tools (machinery, desks, computers) and assign each worker only a single step or two in the entire production process. Relegated to performing repetitive tasks that seem remote from the final product, workers no longer identify with what they produce. They come to feel estranged not only from the results of their labor but also from their work environment.

**Resisting Alienation.** Because workers want to feel valued and to have a sense of control over their work, they resist alienation. A major form of that resistance is forming primary groups at work. Workers band together in informal settings—at lunch, around desks, or for a drink after work. There, they give one another approval for jobs well done and express sympathy for the shared need to put up with cantankerous bosses, meaningless routines, and endless rules. In these contexts, they relate to one another not just as workers, but also as people who value one another. They flirt, laugh, tell jokes, and talk about their families and goals. Adding this multidimensionality to their work relationships maintains their sense of being individuals rather than mere cogs in a machine.

As in the photo to the left, workers often decorate their work areas with personal items. The sociological implication is that of workers who are trying to resist alienation. By staking a claim to individuality, the workers are rejecting an identity as machines that exist to perform functions.

**Bureaucratic Incompetence.** In a tongue-in-cheek analysis of bureaucracies, Laurence Peter proposed what has become known as the **Peter principle**: Each employee of a bureaucracy is promoted to his or her *level of incompetence* (Peter and Hull 1969). People who perform well in a bureaucracy come to the attention of those higher up the chain of command and are promoted. If they continue to perform well, they are promoted again. This process continues *until* they are promoted to a level at which they can no longer handle the responsibilities well—their level of incompetence. There they hide behind the work of others, taking credit for the accomplishments of employees under their direction.

How is this worker in Houston trying to avoid becoming a depersonalized unit in a bureaucratic-economic machine?



In what ways do workers in bureaucracies resist alienation? What is the Peter principle?

Although the Peter principle contains a grain of truth, if it were generally true, bureaucracies would be staffed by incompetents, and these organizations would fail. In reality, bureaucracies are so successful that they have come to dominate our society.

## Working for the Corporation

Since you are likely to be working for a bureaucracy after college, let's look at how its characteristics might affect your career.

### Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes in the "Hidden" Corporate Culture

Stereotypes can be self-fulfilling. That is, stereotypes can produce the very characteristics that they are built around. The example used there was of stereotypes of appearance and personality. Sociologists have also uncovered **self-fulfilling stereotypes** in corporate life. Let's see how they might affect *your* career.

**Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes and Promotions.** Corporate and department heads have ideas of "what it takes" to get ahead. Not surprisingly, since they themselves got ahead, they look for people who have characteristics similar to their own. They feed better information to workers who have these characteristics, bring them into stronger networks, and put them in "fast track" positions. With such advantages, these workers perform better and become more committed to the company. This, of course, confirms the boss's initial expectation or stereotype.

But for workers who don't look or act like the corporate leaders, the opposite happens. Thinking of these people as less capable, the bosses give them fewer opportunities and challenges. When these workers see others get ahead and realize that they are working beneath their own abilities, they lose motivation, become less committed to the company, and don't perform as well. This, of course, confirms the stereotypes the bosses had of them.

In her studies of U.S. corporations, sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977, 1983) found such self-fulfilling stereotypes to be part of a "hidden" **corporate culture**. That is, these stereotypes and their powerful effects on workers remain hidden to everyone, even the bosses. What bosses and workers see is the surface: Workers who have superior performance and greater commitment to the company get promoted. To bosses and workers alike, this seems to be just the way it should be. Hidden below this surface, however, are the higher and lower expectations and the open and closed opportunities that produce the attitudes and the accomplishments—or the lack of them.

As corporations grapple with growing diversity, the stereotypes in the hidden corporate culture are likely to give way, although slowly and grudgingly. In the following Thinking Critically section, we'll consider diversity in the workplace.

## THINKING CRITICALLY

### Managing Diversity in the Workplace

**T**imes have changed. The San Jose, California, electronic phone book lists *ten* times more *Nguyens* than *Joneses* (Albanese 2010). More than half of U.S. workers are minorities, immigrants, and women. Diversity in the workplace is much more than skin color. Diversity includes age, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and social class.

In the past, the idea was for people to join the "melting pot," to give up their distinctive traits and become like the dominant group. With the successes of the civil rights and women's movements, people today are more likely to prize their distinctive traits. Realizing that assimilation (being absorbed into the dominant culture) is probably not

How do self-fulfilling stereotypes affect careers in bureaucracies? What is the "hidden" corporate culture?



## Social Groups and Formal Organizations

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The cultural and racial-ethnic diversity of today's work force has led to the need for diversity training.

the wave of the future, most large companies have “diversity training” (Bennett 2010). They hold lectures and workshops so that employees can learn to work with colleagues of diverse cultures.

Diversity training has the potential to build bridges, but it can also backfire. Managers who are chosen to participate can resent it, thinking that it is punishment for some unmentioned insensitivity on their part (Sanchez and Medkik 2004).

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

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

Groping and name-calling, on the one hand, and making managers accountable, on the other hand—not all diversity programs are equal. It seems logical, then, that different programs will produce different results. And this is what the researchers found. For example, forcing workers to participate in diversity programs or doing the minimum to prevent lawsuits produces resentment. But setting goals for increasing diversity and making managers accountable for reaching these goals increase the diversity of a company's workers.

### For Your Consideration

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

## Technology and the Control of Workers: Toward a Maximum-Security Society

The microchip is affecting all areas of society. One of the most ominous is the greater potential to create a police state. It is now easier than ever before in history for governments to monitor our behavior, eventually our every move. The Big Brother (as in Orwell's classic novel *1984*) may turn out to be a master computer that makes servants of us all.

We should know shortly. Computers now monitor millions of workers. In some workplaces, cameras even analyze workers' facial expressions (Neil 2008). Other cameras outside the workplace, called “little brothers” (as compared with Orwell's “Big Brother”),

What approaches to managing diversity in the workplace have positive results?