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doesn't seem to make any sense.*

1

Understand the Trends of Today

“Who guards the guards?”-Juvenal

Sometimes the world around us doesn't seem to make any sense. There are high rates of unemployment, and unstable national currencies. Stock markets plunge. Disarmament negotiations end with disappointing results. Terrorists set off bombs and hijack planes. Newspapers and the media regularly carry accounts of crime, violence, and racial tension. On a personal level, people face problems with drugs, alcohol, stress, and disturbed relationships. It is no wonder that many of us often have a feeling of anxiety and confusion as we look at what is happening — not just in society, but even at times in our own lives.

Do politicians have any real control over events, or are they just carried along by them? Is today's society being shaped by new kinds of forces? Are these forces creative or destructive? What impact do the modern developments in communication, medicine, and technology have on us? And what does the future hold? Will a nuclear holocaust end it all?

Certainly there aren't any simple answers to the kinds of problems and challenges that we face in today's world. But we don't have to be totally at the mercy of the forces that seem to be at work. Even in the midst of change and uncertainty there is a way that we can achieve a greater degree of mastery over our

own lives. We can even experience genuine success and fulfilment.

Our first step is to find out what factors are actually at work in society and how they have affected us.

TOPICS

Tidal Waves of Change
Critical Points of Stress
An Uneven Landscape

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:

- Identify some of the factors that influence your life.
 - Relate specific problems in society to their underlying causes.
 - Understand how the pressures of modern living have affected you personally.

“Change is avalanching upon our heads and most people are grotesquely unprepared to cope with it.”
—Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock*

TIDAL WAVES OF CHANGE

Focal Point 1. *Consider ways in which your society has changed.*

One of the most important factors that influences our lives is change. Many changes, like the coming and going of the seasons, add interest and variety to our lives. Others, though, are unwelcome and disruptive.

In recent years the Western, industrialized nations have experienced a large number of fundamental changes. In fact, there have been so many that sometimes the old rules don't seem to apply anymore. Some observers have even gone so far as to say that society itself as we have known it may be disintegrating.

The Overall Picture

Let's look at examples from five basic areas of modern living to illustrate the kinds of things that are happening.

1. In the economy, there have been basic shifts in patterns of production. Steel mills and coal mines have been shut down in many places, and manufacturing industries of all kinds have been invaded by “smart” robots. People have bought cheaper imports rather than the more expensive goods which are produced locally, forcing many domestic industries to go out of business.

All of these factors have brought about higher and higher levels of unemployment — perhaps the most serious single problem that faces most nations in Western Europe today. A tragic result of this change is that many young people who want to work find the doors closed to them. Month after month, they find themselves with no place to go and nothing to do.

2. In law and government, there is a general pattern of growing inefficiency, injustice, and waste. For a while, the welfare state was able to solve some of the difficult post-war problems of European society. But today, many people feel that their government no longer has the ability to provide security or to guarantee an adequate standard of living. The rights of minorities are often ignored. Criminals and terrorists seem to be able to strike at will, seldom receiving punishment for their acts.

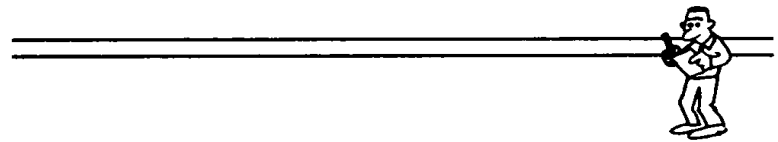
3. In the family, widespread unemployment causes serious problems for many. For others, the struggle to “get ahead” with its compulsion to buy more and more things means that parents spend long hours at work and less time with their children. Marriages are under stress. The traditional values of marital faithfulness and fidelity have been subjected to criticism and questioning, especially in an indirect way through television programmes, magazine articles, and films. Ideas about the family itself have been re-examined. As a result, many husbands, wives, and children are no longer sure about their roles. This uncertainty creates stress and tension. In addition, a large number of people have been affected by divorce and remarriage. Many end up living in single-parent households, having to cope as best they can from day to day. Others form “blended” families where the children of one parent and the children of another share a home with adults who themselves need to cope with both their current partners and their partners from former marriages. Relationships in these situations are often extremely complicated.

4. In education, there are sharp differences of opinion about what ought to happen in the classroom. Some are convinced that students should have a great deal to say about what they will study. Others do not believe they are able to make such decisions. Those who favour corporal punishment find themselves at odds with those who oppose it. There are financial strains. Salaries of teachers are often considerably lower than those paid to people in other professions. Teachers who feel forced to strike for higher pay face the anger of the community as a whole — the very people whom they are supposed to be serving. A large number of schools find it increasingly difficult

to prepare young men and women to find employment in today's extremely complex and fast-changing job market.

5. In religion, there has been a massive movement away from the traditional forms of Christian practices and teachings. Religion has lost its role as a cohesive, unifying force in Western society. Instead, it is seen as a matter of private conscience. The Christian Church in general, whether Protestant or Catholic, no longer has much credibility. Many people feel that its leaders have little to say to them.

In this book you'll find questions and surveys included in each chapter. These are opportunities for you to express your personal reactions to the ideas that have been presented. After responding to each item, look at the feedback to it that is given at the end of the chapter.



1 RATE YOUR SOCIETY

Think about your society. No doubt you have seen problems and changes over the last several years. Perhaps some of these have had (or now have) a direct effect on your life. Here is a chart you can use to evaluate these effects. Indicate your responses and/or add your descriptions.

MAJOR AREA	The most serious problem or change that has affected me and/or my family in this area is . . .
1. ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Unemployment o Low wages o Redundancy Or?
2. LAW & GOVERNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Crime rate o Inefficiency o Violation of my rights Or?
3. FAMILY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Role uncertainty o Divorce o Remarriage o Being a single parent

	Or?
4. EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The growing expense o The lack of its practical application o Conflicts in the classroom Or?
5. RELIGION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Its irrelevancy o Its lack of credibility o Prejudice Or?

Why does society seem to be in such a turmoil today? Is there some pattern or explanation that can help us understand what is happening?

An X-Ray of Society

For the sake of analysis, let us think of society as if it were a building: the **values** are the foundation, the **norms** are the ground level, and the **institutions** are the pillars. These all interact to shape the society. The illustration on the following page is a diagram of this analogy.

The values of a society are its beliefs and ideals. The norms are the customs and traditions through which its beliefs and ideals are expressed. The institutions, or “pillars” are its organizations, the ways in which it meets the needs of its members. As the diagram shows, the values are the key element, since the rest of the structure is shaped by them.

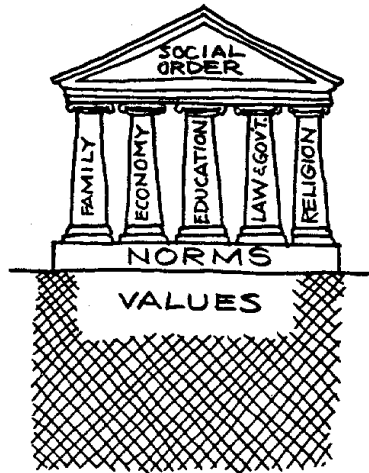
Within this framework of society it is perfectly normal for gradual changes to take place. The structure can absorb the impact. But if changes in one or more of the pillars or in the foundation occur too suddenly or too drastically, the entire structure is affected. It can even collapse completely. Are we about to see this happen to Western society?

In the past several years, many observers of Western society have tried to pinpoint causes for its problems. Some see them as the result of a basic change in its economic structure — the economic pillar. Others are convinced that they also stem from a shift in its foundational values. It is probably true that there are a number of factors involved. Let us examine, however, these two

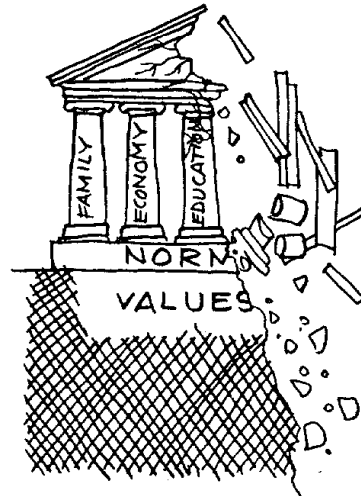
explanations and see what help they may be able to give us as we try to understand what is happening.

Significant Economic Patterns

Those who put forward the economic explanation say that the economic system of a society is a powerful force—perhaps the most powerful—in shaping the way people live. They think that many of the current problems of Western society are the result of a basic change that is taking place in its economy. This change has two aspects: 1) the economy is losing the traditional base it developed during the industrial, mechanical age; and 2) the economy is struggling to make a transition to a position in which it will be based—providing it can make the change—on the new occupations and energy sources that are being developed during the high-technology, information age. These observers point out the fact that when an entire society must change the way it provides for its basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, there are difficult times of adjustment and transition.



... let us think of society as if it were a building.



... if changes in one or more of the pillars, or the foundation occur... it can collapse completely.

To put it another way, they say that the problems of Western society are being caused by a clash between the dying industrial society with its way of living and the rising information society with its way of living. Those who hold this view say that the conflict between these two types of societies is as great as the conflict between an agricultural way of life and an industrial way of life. In order to understand their ideas, let us compare three basic kinds of lifestyles with each other: the agricultural, the industrial, and the information. (Although we will not discuss it, there is also the nomadic lifestyle, which is often the norm in pre-industrial societies where the land is not suitable for farming. Problems can also arise when there is an attempt to replace this style with one of the other types.) **This is not just an academic exercise; it will help you understand what is happening today.**

In a pre-industrial, agricultural society, most people farm the land and raise their own food in order to survive. Large families are the rule, and women must be strong in order to share the



*... a woman must be strong to share
the labour.*

burden of manual labour. Oxen pull simple wooden plows, or people till the ground by hand. Life revolves around the home and the village and is tied to the rhythms of nature and the seasons of crop planting and gathering. Everyone participates in the work, especially during harvest time. People seldom travel very far away. Communities are basically self-sufficient, making for themselves practically everything that they need. Some handcrafted goods, such as baskets or pottery, are produced for trade or barter in nearby marketplaces.

In an industrial society, most people live in urban centers and are employed by factories or large corporations. Families are small and streamlined in order to relocate quickly when necessary. Businesses are run from the top down, with little input by the workers. Few people make anything for their own use.

Instead, they are paid to produce goods for others. They buy what they need with money, the all-important medium of exchange. The market is a complex system of sellers, middlemen, and buyers, many of whom never deal directly with each other. Transportation lines are well-developed so that mass-produced goods can be moved rapidly and efficiently from place to place. At peak hours, commuters crowd on and off the trains and buses and jam the roads with their cars. Life is organized and synchronized and tuned to the methodical, relentless pace of the clocks and machines that dominate existence.

In an information society, a large number of people are involved in gathering, processing, and transmitting information. They work as secretaries, travel agents, translators, insurance brokers, writers, science researchers, teachers, journalists, television and radio broadcasters, and intelligence experts. They often have a high degree of participation in making decisions that affect their work. Computer networks make it possible for some of them to work at home or while travelling as well as at the office. Many people do practical tasks for themselves in order to save high labour costs. With the help of detailed “do-it-yourself” manuals, they remodel and repair their houses or flats, assemble furniture, and make clothing. There are hundreds of special interest magazines and journals, video and music cassettes, and local newspapers. People see the limits of technology and are concerned about a wide array of issues, from ecology to nuclear power to animal rights. In general, life presents an almost overwhelming variety of options, choices, and styles.



2 IDENTIFY ECONOMIC PATTERNS AND CONFLICTS

Which of the above patterns do you think your society resembles the most? If there seems to be no obvious pattern, do you think it may be in a time of transition, conflict, decline, or change?

Here's a survey to help you analyze and identify what is happening . . .

- Your choices:
- a** Pre-Industrial (Agricultural)
 - b** Rising Industrial
 - c** Industrial
 - d** Declining Industrial
 - e** Rising Information
 - f** Information
 - g** Other:

The time-frames: for each period, circle the letter or letters that match your choice. You may need more than one letter for your analysis (such as **d** Declining Industrial + **e** Rising Information).

- 1** When my grandparents were children **a b c d e f g**
 - 2** When my parents were children **a b c d e f g**
 - 3** While I was growing up **a b c d e f g**
 - 4** Now **a b c d e f g**
 - 5** What my children will probably live in as adults **a b c d e f g**
-
-

Shifting Foundations

Now let us examine the second explanation for some of the problems we see in Western society. Those who put forward this explanation believe that economic change is not the only influence, though they would agree that it accounts for some of the facts. They say that there has also been a major shift away from the traditional Judeo-Christian values. This has produced a general and widespread collapse of moral standards because people no longer agree on what is right and what is wrong. Consequently, there is a vacuum at the core of society. The problem is that people have no adequate values to live by.



*... there is a vacuum at the core
of society.*

The way people regard marriage today is a good example of the effect this collapse has had. In the traditional view, marriage was considered to be a lifelong, exclusive relationship. Generally speaking, people were expected to be faithful to their spouses

and proof of adultery was the only legal ground for divorce. Then things began to change. As society changed, so did people's commitment to those traditional values. More and more marriages began to fall apart under the pressures of modern life. People who moved to the cities were often separated from their relatives and left very much on their own to cope with the ups and downs of married life and family living. Reliable birth control methods made extramarital sex "safer," and at the same time the role of sex in both advertising and entertainment increased greatly. This fostered a general mood of sexual permissiveness, which made marriage seem less restrictive.

In many societies, divorce laws were eventually liberalized, and divorce for any one of a number of reasons became socially acceptable. In this way a change in values regarding marriage caused a corresponding change in the laws and in the way people behaved towards each other. In today's society, there are those who are convinced that legal ceremonies are unnecessary and undesirable. Some have even concluded that traditional family structures are a thing of the past.



3 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

You have read a second explanation for some of the changes in society. Now, what is your opinion? Mark your answers.

- a** Have you observed any changes in society that could be traced to a shift away from traditional values?
- YES NO NOT SURE
- b** Do you think your values are different from those of your parents? If so, in what areas of life?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> MONEY | <input type="radio"/> MARRIAGE |
| <input type="radio"/> FAMILY | <input type="radio"/> EDUCATION |
| <input type="radio"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input type="radio"/> EMPLOYMENT |
| <input type="radio"/> RELIGION | <input type="radio"/> POLITICS |
-
-

Changes can create tensions. Let's take a closer look at some of them.

CRITICAL POINTS OF STRESS

Focal Point 2. *Identify the kinds of stress in your life.*

One of the unique tensions of modern life is the disorientation that has come because of rapid and intense change.

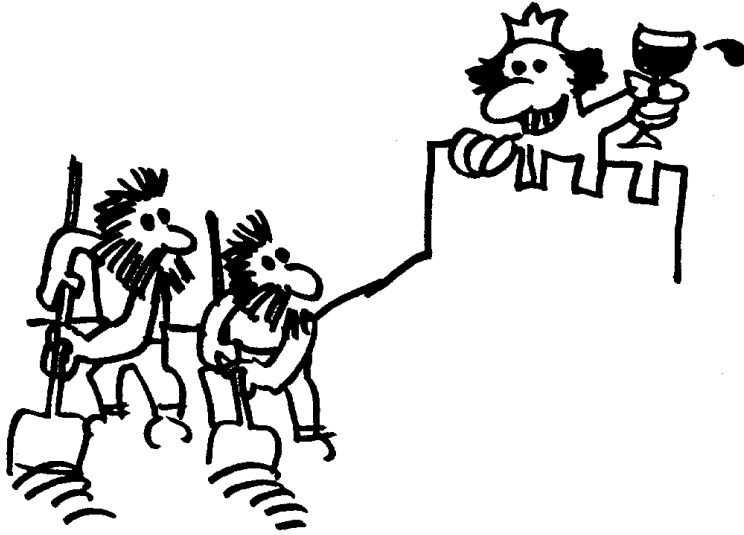
Too Much Too Fast

Of course, we all know that change is nothing new in human history. But what is new about change today is that it is much faster and greater than ever before. In exercise 2, for example, you may have stated that your parents were born in an agricultural community. You may have also said that you live in an industrial (or perhaps a “dying industrial” or information) society. The fact that it is even possible for so much change to occur in a few generations is a dramatic departure from previous eras.

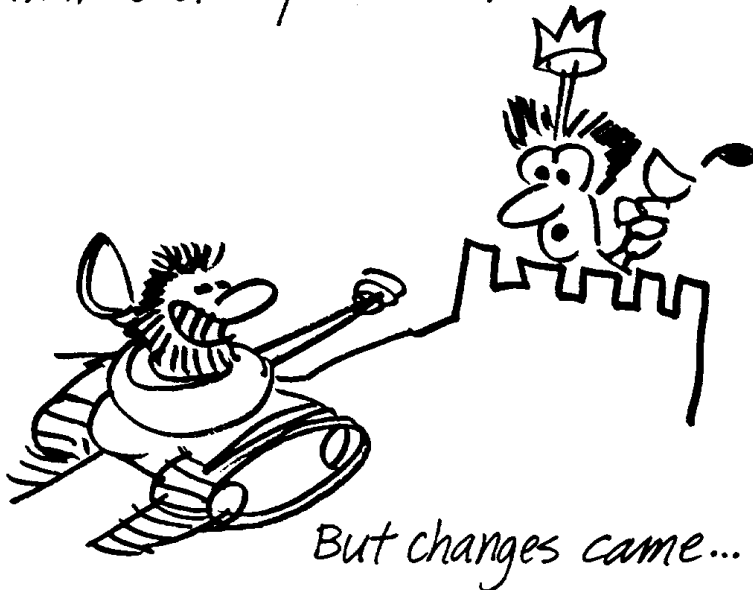
In medieval Europe, by contrast, families often lived on the same land generation after generation. For hundreds of years, sons did things the way their fathers did, and their fathers before them. Certainly that society was oppressive for the peasants, who rebelled against their rulers from time to time. Yet at least it was stable. Everyone knew who was in charge: like it or not, it was the feudal lord in his castle up on the hill. Year after year, life followed the same basic patterns.

But changes came—the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, to name just a few. In a few hundred years, society was re-shaped around the new forms of energy and labour. Gleaming railway tracks laid out in straight, parallel lines replaced the meandering carriage roads. Students were seated in rows at school, and fathers manned assembly lines in the factories. Housewives used identical washing machines, and clerks did their work under electric lightbulbs which were produced by the hundreds of thousands from the same types of components. On a larger scale, nation-states were formed.

Powerful military leaders arose to impose their will within and beyond their borders using tanks, guns, and bombs and the mass media of the press and the radio. Two world wars pushed the capabilities of the European nations to their greatest efforts.



Everyone knew who was in charge:
like it or not, it was the feudallord
in his castle upon the hill.



But changes came...

Now the technological revolution has risen to challenge the industrial, mechanical society. The pre-war power structures have been weakened. Multinational companies, world class banks, and international cartels now exert their influence. Secessionist movements use guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics to oppose centralist governments. There has been an explosion of information in every field of knowledge, matched by the invention of powerful, efficient computers to manipulate it. Satellites circle the globe relaying signals in a matter of seconds, and networks of computers store and exchange vast amounts of data at electronic speeds.

As all this has happened, many people have felt a profound sense of confusion and dislocation. It is as if a person who grew up in a small village all his life were suddenly to find himself abandoned on a street corner in Paris. Modern man, of course, has not been taken *to* Paris. Instead, "Paris" has been taken to him. That is, a different kind of society has taken shape around him, almost overnight. While the world still looks somewhat the same, all the rules have changed - in many cases, within a generation. People who have been brought up in homes where their fathers had factory jobs and factory minds find themselves facing a world where the factory has been shut down and is rusting away. Children who learned to obey their parents and their teachers find themselves having to cope with a world their parents and teachers never lived in. The sheer speed with which all this has happened has been deeply disturbing.

Clashing Lifestyles

A second kind of stress is that which is caused by conflict among the opposing lifestyles which are created, to some extent, by the different economic systems. Let us imagine what can happen when there is this type of conflict in a family.

Case Study No. 1: Tony and Maria

Tony and Maria have a small farm which provides a living for them, their six children, and Tony's mother, and aunt. Each person, except for the two smallest children, is responsible for some part of

the work. But then like many other families in the area, Tony and Maria are forced to sell their land to a new developer.

The family moves in with Tony's uncle in the next village until they can decide what to do. Tony finds out that a textile plant in a city some distance away is hiring workers. He applies for a job, and they employ him as a factory hand. For a while he travels for several hours back and forth every day. Eventually, the family moves to a small flat in the city. Tony's mother and aunt decide not to move, and Tony promises to send them some money each week.

Life in the city is different. Prices are high, and Tony and Maria find it hard to survive and to feed and clothe their six children. Tony makes new friends at work. They begin to influence him and his attitudes. One of them remarks that it is a pity he has so many children and has to send money to his mother and aunt. If he didn't, this friend points out, he would be



able to buy things like a television set or a motorbike. He would also find it easier to move if there were better jobs available in another city. Tony wonders if his friend is right.

For Maria, things have become very difficult. Now there is no one to help her with the children or with the cooking and cleaning. Her husband's life seems ruled by the clock and he often works late into the evening. When he is not at work, he spends a lot of time with his new friends instead of with the family. She often feels that he resents her and the children and the demands they make on him. Before they moved, she was the

one who could sell their extra vegetables for the best price. Now there is little for her to do except the daily round of household chores. After school the children have nowhere to play except on the street, and she is afraid for them because of the rough neighbourhood they live in.

Case Study No. 2: Harold and Tom

Harold has spent most of his working career in a metal products manufacturing industry. He is punctual and dependable, and very rarely absent. He has earned several promotions and increases in salary because of his ability to carry out the orders of his superiors. He often feels bored by the routine and repetitive tasks assigned to him, but he convinces himself that the pay he receives is a sufficient reward. He spends a good deal of his time thinking about the new car he would like to buy and where he plans to go on his next annual holiday.

Betty, Harold's wife, has taken care of their home since she and Harold were married. Before getting married, she had thought she might study a business course and get a job as a secretary. But after she met Harold her plans changed, and she has contented herself with being his wife and rearing their two children. When Harold comes home at night, she often feels that he is not very interested in the things she has done during the day. It seems that he would rather watch television than talk with her or pay much attention to their son and daughter. But she tells herself that she is lucky that he is dependable and that he gives her a generous allowance to spend on things she wants for herself. Lately, though, she has become very concerned about their son Tom, who is trying to find a job. She mentions this to Harold, and one evening Harold decides to talk to Tom and give him some fatherly advice.



I want a job with some real meaning - something creative.

Tom has just come home after being with his friends. He's in the kitchen, piling up a plate of snacks. Harold walks in.

HAROLD: Well, son, how did things go today?

TOM: *Closing the refrigerator door . . .*
Not so good, Dad. There just isn't anything much.

HAROLD: What do you mean?

They go into the living room. Harold turns the television on and they both sit down.

TOM: *Setting his plate down and taking a few bites.*
There just aren't any decent jobs.

HAROLD: What do you mean, "no decent jobs"? It doesn't sound like you've tried very hard. Have you been to the Employment Agency?

TOM: Oh sure. There are a few jobs for mindless idiots who want to punch a time clock in the morning and then stare at a conveyer belt full of pieces of junk going by all day . . . then get up the next morning and do the same dumb thing all over again, day after day. What a waste.

HAROLD: I don't understand what you're talking about. They get paid for it, don't they?

TOM: So what's so great about a paycheque?
He looks around the living room.
I suppose it buys you a house full of stuff like this. Who needs it? I want a job with some real meaning—something creative.

HAROLD: Now listen, son, I've worked hard to make a good life for us. You're making no sense at all. You have to eat, don't you? Have a place to live? I never heard of anything so ridiculous.

TOM: But I could live on a lot less . . . raise my own food and have time to enjoy life and do things. You know . . . listen to music . . . be with my friends . . . help save the environment.

HAROLD: Well, you just try it. You'll find that the real world is a lot different from what you think **it** is.

TOM: *Finishing his snack and getting up.* Oh Dad, you don't know anything. *He takes his plate to the kitchen.*

HAROLD: That's a fine comment, coming from you.
He waits for Tom to come back in, then continues.
When I was young I was glad to get any kind of work. Hard work never hurt anybody.

TOM: *Sitting down again . . .* Look, Dad, things aren't the same as when you were young. I just want something to do that makes sense.

HAROLD: Oh you do, huh? Good luck. You're going to need it.

TOM: *Sarcastically . . .* You're sure a lot of help.
He gets up . . . I'm going to bed.
He goes to his room and slams the door.

Betty comes in to see what has happened . . .

BETTY: What's the matter? Can't you two talk to each other?

HAROLD: I'll never understand that boy. Hasn't he learned *anything* all these years? I'm not surprised he can't find a job—not in those weird clothes he wears.



4 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The people in the case studies above have different ways of looking at family relationships, money, and work. Their problems may be seen partly as the result of clashes between the lifestyles associated with the different types of economies we have identified—agricultural, industrial, and information.

- a** What lifestyles do you think are in conflict in case study no. 1 (Tony and Maria)?
- Agricultural Industrial Information

- b** In case study no. 2 (Harold and Tom)?
o Agricultural o Industrial o Information
- c** Do you find that one of the characters has a point of view like your own? If so, which one?
o Tony o Maria o Tom
o Harold o Betty

Check your answers.

In today's world, there are many such clashes among lifestyles and their customs and traditions. But as we have already pointed out, the level of values, beliefs, and ideals, is deeper and more significant because it is the one that determines how people actually react to the pressures and changes that they face. A shift away from the traditional foundations that have existed at this level is the third, *and perhaps the most important*, reason for the kinds of stress people feel today.

Inadequate Value Systems

When there is an inadequate value system, there is a lack of a worthwhile purpose for living. This lack creates a pervasive type of frustration and dissatisfaction that colours all of life. In order to describe this subtle kind of stress, let us return to the example of the loss of traditional values which we mentioned before: changing beliefs about marriage.

The erosion of the traditional view of marriage has caused many problems. Yet there seems to be no real substitute for the marriage relationship. Marriage continues to be popular. The divorce and remarriage statistics show that most people who get divorced get married again at some point. And even those who openly reject the idea of a lifetime commitment still seem to want some kind of intimate, lasting relationship; otherwise they would not stay together at all.

In today's society where marriage is often considered to be primarily a matter of temporary personal convenience, people often choose to separate or to get divorced instead of trying to work out their problems.

Ironically, a large proportion of them find that similar kinds of difficulties resurface in their new relationships. They have suffered the pain and rejection of divorce, yet they have no system of values that prevents them from making the same kinds of mistakes again. In short, they want to be married, but they find it hard to *stay* married.

Other examples of the loss of traditional values could be given. In general terms, though, it appears that this loss has affected every area of life because it has occurred on the foundational level of values. Although some have felt liberated, others have experienced a profound sense of emptiness and futility. Certainly it seems that people living in the affluent Western nations today face a unique situation.

Few societies in the history of mankind have offered people more options, models, designs, styles, accessories, colours, flavours, sights, sounds, textures, activities, images — even beliefs and causes — from which to select. At the same time, few have offered so little to really believe in and live for. The constant need to choose creates its own kind of stress, for not all choices are possible or equally satisfying. Without an adequate set of foundational values, people have no guide for making decisions. Life becomes a series of purposeless motions and unproductive experiments which lead ultimately to nothing and nowhere.

In summary, it seems that the structure of Western society has been under pressure at several points. Its foundational values have been eroded, its traditions and norms have been challenged, and its economic institutions have been drastically weakened. These changes have had far-reaching effects on every part of the system. It is no wonder that our time of history has been called “the age of anxiety.”



5 WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL STRESS PATTERN?
 We have identified three main factors that have contributed to stress in society as a whole. Perhaps you would like to evaluate your personal experience in relation to these pressures. Opposite the type of stress named, circle the number that indicates how much it affects your life.

1 = a little	2 = some	3 = moderately			
4 = significantly	5 = very much				
a Too much too fast	1	2	3	4	5
b The clash of lifestyles	1	2	3	4	5
c Inadequate foundations	1	2	3	4	5

As a result of all these pressures and changes, how do people cope with the kind of society they face today? Are some able to succeed in spite of the problems that exist?

AN UNEVEN LANDSCAPE

Focal Point 3. *Describe your reaction problems of modern living.*

People today show a wide variety of responses to the pressures of life. Some of the ways they react seem to be unique to our times. Others, perhaps, are as old as mankind.

Exploiters and Victims

Of course, there wasn't much to do on that bright, Tuesday afternoon, except drift to the park. Ryan and Lester were already there. They were starting to work their way through a supply of several bottles they had bought with Lester's unemployment allowance. Magda lit up one of her carefully hoarded cigarettes, the kind she got from Ned. That dreamy effect felt so good.

"So where's Larry?" she asked, sitting down on the grass and taking a deep drag.

Lester opened one of the bottles. "Haven't you heard?" he said, throwing the top into the bushes. "He got beat up by Jeff's boys last night . . . so he's at his place trying to recover." He

took a swallow and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "He owes Jeff a lot of money."

"For crack?" she said, puffing a small cloud of smoke into the soft sunshine.

"You got it," he answered. "He hasn't been able to pay up for a couple of weeks now, and he needs more of the stuff all the time."

"It sure doesn't seem fair," Magda observed, taking another drag.

"What d'you mean?" said Ryan, putting down the bottle he had been drinking. He leaned over towards Magda, eyeing the cigarette. "Hey, love, give us a taste."

"Sure . . ." She handed it to him. "I mean it isn't fair about Jeff," she continued. "He has that big house and those sports cars and everything he wants. Why can't he just forget about what Larry owes him?"

"Don't be stupid," Ryan remarked, lying back on the grass. He inhaled slowly, then exhaled. "No dealer in his right mind could do that. If word gets around that Jeff is a soft touch, the rest won't pay up, and Jeff won't be able to pay the people who give him the stuff to sell. Then he'd be in for real trouble."



"What a mess," Magda said. Ryan took another drag. "You bet it is."

“What a mess,” Magda said.

Ryan took another drag. “You bet it is.”

“Hey, leave some for me!” she protested.

“Huh? Oh, sure thing, love.” He rolled over and handed the cigarette back to her. Then he picked up the bottle he had started.

There was a silence for a while. A woman went by, pushing a pram. She glanced at the unkempt trio, frowned, and disappeared down the path.

Magda slowly stood up. “I’ve got to leave now,” she said, looking down at them. It was getting chilly.

“Suit yourself,” Ryan said. “See you later.”

“Yeah, see you later,” Lester nodded, tipping his bottle up.

Drug dealers, blackmailers, thieves, corrupt public officials — the world seems full of them. Even the new computer revolution has created its own generation of sophisticated electronic criminals. In every class of society there are those who have learned how to take advantage of the weak, the unwary, and the fearful. They have also learned how to use the ordinary desires of other people for their own profit.

Winners, Losers, and Cheaters

Of course, not everyone suffers from direct exploitation. Some are simply shuttled aside as the mainstream of society surges by. Those who are elderly, poor, and disadvantaged often find that the governmental agencies they are forced to depend on are unable to respond to their needs. Consequently, the ones who require the most help are often the ones least able to get it. Well-meaning political candidates make glowing promises. But as soon as they are elected, they are faced with the same mountains of paperwork and snarls of red tape that bedeviled those who were elected before them. And once inside the system, some fall into the temptation to misuse their position. Sad to say, there are probably dishonest people in all levels of public service.

But governments have their problems too. In today’s tense international climate, large amounts of public funds must be

spent on defence. High levels of violence, crime, and social unrest mean that more policemen must be employed to protect people from each other. On occasion, political leaders are compelled to give financial help to failing industries in order to prevent the serious problems that massive unemployment would create. Yet such measures do not really seem to make much of a difference in the long term. Those who do have jobs add to the difficulties by finding ways to avoid paying taxes.

They feel their behaviour is justified in view of their own financial struggles and the government waste that is everywhere visible. For all these reasons, and more, public funds are often in short supply and social needs go unmet.

Rescuers and Builders

The picture is not totally dark, though. Some people have learned how to deal with the changes and problems around them. They have organized volunteer neighbourhood “crime watch” networks. They have taken business risks to form new companies and provide employment for others. They have started hospices for the terminally ill and shelters for battered women. They have learned new jobs and helped to train others. They have pioneered innovative ways of using technology to save lives. But perhaps most important of all, they have refused to allow the apathy and cynicism of the times to deter them. They give us much to admire.



6 A SELF-PORTRAIT

If you could choose just one word to describe the way you have reacted to the pressures of modern life, what would it be? Mark it or write it in on the blank space.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> SUCCESSFUL | <input type="radio"/> COMPETENT | <input type="radio"/> COPING |
| <input type="radio"/> SURVIVING | <input type="radio"/> STRESSED | <input type="radio"/> CONFUSED |

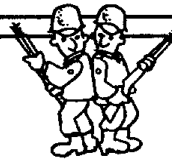
- o INADEQUATE o ANGRY o FRUSTRATED
- o ESCAPING o FAILING

Or?

Now that we have taken a look around us and examined our general situation, let's focus on some specifics. First, the economy — money, jobs, prices, wages — how we pay for the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Making ends meet these days isn't always easy. Somebody said, "It's a jungle out there!" Most of us would agree. But there are some trails through the underbrush if you know where to look . . .



*Now that we have taken a look
around us and examined our
general situation...*



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS ...

- 1 Your answer. It may be that this interaction has helped you become more aware of some specific problems that change has brought to your life.
- 2 Your answer. You can see that if your parents were brought up in one type of society and you in another, a great deal of change has taken place. If you think your children will face yet another type of life-style, this means that even more adjustments will be needed.
- 3 Besides the problems mentioned in the chapter, you may think of others that are the result of a shift in the value system of society. These problems show that values have a significant place in the social structure and influence the way people behave.
- 4 Your answers. In case study 1, the values that are in conflict are probably those of the agricultural and industrial life-styles (they could also be called rural and urban). In case study 2, while the so-called “generation gap” is part of the picture, it doesn’t seem to explain all of the conflict that is evident. The industrial “view” appears to be at odds with the information (or “post-industrial”) view.
- 5 If your total is 12-15, no doubt you are under a great deal of different kinds of stress. A score of between 9 and 11 would indicate that you are somewhat average in your reactions. A sum of 3 to 8 might mean that your society is not in a period of rapid change or that you have been able to find ways of dealing with the changes that have occurred. A high number response (4 or 5) to item **c** shows that you probably lack an adequate overall value system to help you deal with the other kinds of pressures that you may be experiencing.
- 6 Of course, a number of answers are possible. It might be interesting to compare how you feel now with the way you might have felt 8 or 10 years ago or the way you think you will feel 8 or 10 years from now.