I. **Berger Chapter 4 (Man in Society)**  

A. Society: Society is strong and overpowering. Society and the history of our society define our reality.

1. Society confronts us objectively, it is external to us, surrounds us, and encompasses us.
   a. How many times have you heard someone say, or you have said yourself, “They” or “Them” when referring to why you have to follow a rule, obey a law, practice a social ritual?  
      • This is the idea that unseen forces are controlling society and we have little choice but to obey.
   b. We are *in* society and it predetermines and predefines almost all aspects of our life.  
      • And later, we will see that it confronts us in the form of coercion.
   c. Durkheim, mentioned last week, was one of the first to conceptualize society in this way.  
      • He felt that society confronted us with a massive reality that cannot be reduced or translated into smaller parts (suis generis).
      • Durkheim also described *Social Facts* as things in society that have an objective existence outside our selves. They appear as things immovable or impenetrable (ex. The law).
   d. Berger explains we are located within societal space and time.  
      • It is an historical entity that moves beyond individual biography – it was here when we were born and it will be here long after we are dead.

2. Our social situation, our reality, is not only defined by our contemporaries, people now in society, people in power, but by our predecessors, people and beliefs from the past.
   a. This is why it is important to realize the connection the Mills and Berger discussed earlier regarding biography, society, and history – and how hopelessly intertwined they are.
   b. It is hard to break out of the tradition and established societal reality of the past, thus the past, its power, narrows our choices in the present.
   c. Berger even states that “Society is the walls of our imprisonment in history” (kind of bleak).
   d. Berger believes that almost all of our actions and behaviors in society are prefabricated, predesigned, and fixed.
3. **Institutions** in society (distinctive complex of social actions) act as regulatory agencies – channeling our action in the same way that instinct channel animal behavior.
   a. These institutions not only provide procedures that pattern our conduct and action, but they pressure us and reinforce these behavioral patterns.
      • Thus, it makes it look like these are the only possible choices that we have in society.
   b. The idea of the **Institutional Imperative** is that all of our other options get shut out in favor of the predefined societal one.
      • Our conduct is channeled, making us behave in a certain predictable way – our action becomes categorized making precise predefinitions of how to behave in any given situation.
      • Berger believes that in many cases there is little free will involved in our actions.
      • There is a certain inevitability to this imperative, thus our reality is already defined as a course of action, and is the only one we can take, the only one we can conceive of (bad faith, false consciousness).
      • We deceive ourselves or are being deceived when we look at our lives as inevitable (job, marriage, cheating, more than one wife)
      • These are all social constructs not biological or instinctual
      • But society and institutional structure depends on deception, it comes with an element of bad faith.

4. Social Structure creates our **identity** and **location** within society.
   a. **Location** determines what one will do and what to expect in our lives.
      • We are located in society at the intersection point of specific social forces.
      • We move within defined systems of power and prestige – and we find that we are trapped in these locations.
      • Our location in society defines the rules that must be obeyed – the system and our captivity in it.
   b. Thus, when a child talks about “growing up,” they mean locating themselves in physical, geographical, and social structures (ex. map, gender roles, etc.) conceived of by strangers.
   c. When we, as adults, talk about having common sense, or taking the “common sense view,” this is the growing up view taken for granted – it becomes a matter of fact.
      • It appears that our reality is the only one, completely taken for granted.
B. Two examples of the power of society and the social structure built around it, as well as how it is able to maintain the appearance of an objective reality are Social Control and Stratification. I will only cover this briefly because each of these concepts will be covered in the coming weeks when we talk about inequalities and Deviance.

1. **Social Control**: are the various means used by society to bring its disobedient and hard to handle members back into line.
   a. No society can exist without social control.
      - Any group of people has to develop methods of social control or it cannot stay together (even in this classroom).
      - Methods of control will change from one situation to the other – they vary with the purpose and character of the particular group.

b. **Control Mechanisms** are used to eliminate undesirables, trouble makers, or rebels in a society – they also motivate people to conform to the group
   - The oldest means of social control is physical violence.
   - No state can exist without a police force, army, or some armed force
   - Violence is the ultimate foundation of any political order.
   - In Western democracies it is under emphasized but still present (voluntary compliance, popular legislation.
   - Using violence all the time would be counter-productive to running society
     - So the very fact that we know violence can exist and does exist (the threat of it) is enough.
     - Violence is used sparingly and as a last resort, threat is enough for social control.
     - Everyone lives in social situations where if the peaceful means of coercion fail, violence will be used against them.
   - There is social control other than violence:
     - Political and Legal Controls
     - Economic pressure (effective because it threatens lifestyle, survival)
       - Both in strikes and by your employer.
c. **Primary Groups:** We live and work in these compact groups that have potent but subtle social control mechanisms. These mechanisms are brought to bear on the potential or actual deviant (non-conformist).
   - They can use persuasion, ridicule, gossip, shame, guilt, or disgrace to get you to conform to the group norm (common belief system).
   - It varies from group to group
   - These group dynamics stem from the human desire to be accepted
   - Must be careful because these dynamics can be manipulated (cult leaders, politicians, etc.)
   - Ridicule and Gossip are prime social control mechanisms
     - How many people might not raise their hand or ask a question in class because of fear of sounding stupid or being made fun of?
   - Social Control is frequently based on fraudulent claims (use of false threat or claim)
   - Concentric Rings of control: we live at the center of a set of concentric rings (outer – political/legal system; center – morality, custom, manners)

d. **Mores:** they are folkways that develop the force of law in our society – they become embedded in the legal code. (ex. sex – sodomy, incest is outlawed in some states, nudity in public [how could there possibly be a law against nudity?!!])
   - Sometimes if these mores are broken you may not be legally in trouble but you are labeled as sick/stigmatized (homosexuality).

e. **Sphere of the Intimate:** deals with personal choices one has made to define beliefs, world views, and themselves (friends, family, work, etc.)
   - Most devastating to us, we aren’t prepared when control is used in these situations – we are too closely tied to it, to intimate with it – it reflects on us – may show us as wrong. We risk losing ourselves in a total way.
   - **Occupations:** includes formal and informal controls.
     - Codes of conduct that are essential to keep job and moving ahead, codes of ethics (Prof. dating students), must alter behavior, dress, language, etc.
   - **Family/Friends:** most important social ties and strongest control system
     - This can carry more psychological weight and power than many other types of situations where control is involved.
2. **Stratification**: Societal levels that relate to each other in terms of superordination and subordination within power, privilege, or prestige. It is a system of ranking found in all societies.
   a. Not only do different societies have different systems of stratification, but there can be different ones in the same society.
      - They are the criteria by which people are assigned to different levels (age, sex, class, race, etc.)
      - It creates a large influence over our entire lives.
   
   b. One of the most important stratification systems in our society is the **class** system.
      - Positions in society are determined by economic criteria.
      - Achieved rank is more important than the ones you are born with, but those do influence what you achieve in life (ex. race, sex).
      - **Class position** determines life chances, amount of education, medical care (life expectancy), and lifestyle.
      - Class is usually measured by income, occupation, sometimes education.
   
   c. **External Controls**: peer pressure, unspoken rules, etc. that force one to stay within their class position.
      - But class position is so strong that it isn’t likely one will rise above it.
      - It influences us from birth – shapes/forms personality of people.
      - The way society penetrates our consciousness
      - Different social strata exert different pressures on members – some will work better than others.
   
   d. Racial and Class system
      - Fixed at birth (ascribed versus achieved)
      - One is born into a “caste” where we must spend our entire lives in it – must follow code and rules in it as well (ex. marry into it).
      - Ideas, conduct, identity, all shaped by race and class.