

**SOCIETY**

respondents' parents opposed intermarriage; fewer than one-third of the Gentile parents did. But Jewish parents rarely objected to their children dating non-Jews. Mayer argues that far from itching to flout parental wishes, Jewish "exogamists" rarely learn of any objections until relatively late in life.

Mixed couples tend to have more Jews than Gentiles as friends. Ten times more spouses convert to Judaism than leave the faith. And children of mixed marriages are more likely to be raised as Jews than as Christians. (Forty-two percent of Gentile wives, for example, expect their children to be Bar or Bat Mitzvahed, but only 18.7 percent expect them to be confirmed in church.)

When Jewish and non-Jewish values collide in mixed marriages, the Jewish values generally prevail, says Mayer. When the loss of religious identity that many devout Jews fear *does* occur in a mixed marriage, it probably stems "more from Jewish default than from the assimilating tug of the non-Jews they marry."

## Class Differences

"U.S. and British Perceptions of Class" by  
Reeve D. Vanneman, in *American Journal  
of Sociology* (Jan. 1980), University of  
Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Ave., Chicago,  
Ill. 60637.

With their egalitarian traditions, Americans have always seemed less "class-conscious" than Europeans. Yet a survey of 9,371 British and American voters analyzed by Vanneman, a University of Maryland sociologist, suggests that social class may be slightly more sharply defined by Americans than by Britons.

Sixty-eight percent of Americans surveyed in the 1960s and early '70s described themselves as aware of their class status, versus only about 59 percent of British respondents. Moreover, the criteria used by Britons and Americans to define classes were similar. The fact that an individual worked with his hands was 18 percent more likely to push him into the working class in most British minds and 16 percent more likely to do so in American minds. A college education increased the chances of being labeled middle class by 9 percent in the United States and 7 percent in Britain.

Why, then, is British society perceived as more rigidly class-conscious? Visible differences in makeup between the American and British political parties are one major factor, says Vanneman. Among employed British men and their wives, social class is four times more likely to determine party preference than it is among Americans. In Britain, Conservative and Liberal voters are invariably better educated and wealthier, and hold more prestigious jobs than do Labour Party voters. By contrast, in the 1972 U.S. presidential elections, Nixon and McGovern voters were, in terms of social class and income (if not numbers), nearly identical.

Vanneman writes that class distinctions are more clear-cut in Ameri-

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**PRESS & TELEVISION**

media spotlighting. For example, among women and the elderly, groups frequently victimized by crime, a doubling of crime coverage made crime twice as likely to be ranked as a major issue. Similarly, while families with members out of work were extremely sensitive to increased coverage of unemployment rates, opinion in families untouched by the problems held fairly constant.

Media coverage may affect people's notions of "what is important," to some degree. But the public's perceptions are more than a simple reflection of the front page.

### *Videopapers*

"All the News That's Fit to Compute" by Bill Kelly, in *Washington Journalism Review* (Apr. 1980), 3122 M St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20007.

Electronic data systems carrying advertisements and entertainment listings are already eating into print newspaper circulation and advertising markets in Great Britain, Japan, France, and Canada. Major U.S. newspaper publishers like the New York Times Company and Dow Jones now offer corporate clients instant access to published articles stored in massive electronic memory banks.

Such "electronic newspapers" may make print newspapers obsolete—and sooner than we think, says Kelly, a Washington free-lance writer. The Knight-Ridder newspaper group has announced it will launch the first major American test of an electronic newspaper this summer. Through a system called Viewtron, 200 Miami-area families will be able to read news, weather and sports reports, consumer tips, and movie timetables on their television screens.

Through 1987, gross annual newspaper sales are expected to fall 17 percent from 1977 levels, Kelly writes. But while labor, ink, and newsprint costs are steadily rising, prices for electronic computer components will average a mere 1 percent of 1976 prices as early as 1981. Circuit density (a measure of efficiency) will increase 100-fold, and the cost of magnetic storage will drop by a factor of 1,000.

Some electronic newspapers will probably be broadcast by television stations to home sets. Decoders will turn the signals into televised pictures of news bulletins, providing fast-breaking news coverage. Two-way phone-line and cable TV services will also be available, offering substantially more information and permitting the viewer to choose programs from a larger computer data base.

For all their advantages, electronic newspapers face several obstacles. "You can't bring your television on the bus to work," notes Kelly. Further, some members of Congress fear that electronic newspapers will undermine the watchdog role of the press in American society. Huge corporations could use their technological prowess to dominate the infant industry. (Currently, AT&T is prohibited from offering data base services.) And the public may find it easier than ever to skip serious news entirely in favor of sports and entertainment features.