

# **Lifestyle, Status and Energy Consumption**

*Loren Lutzenhiser, Washington State University  
Marcia Hill Gossard, Washington State University*

## **ABSTRACT**

The environmental effects of consumption are large and growing, with different lifestyles contributing in different ways to that growth. It would seem, then, that a recovery of the concept of “lifestyle” in energy research, policy and programming is overdue. This paper reviews the history of the lifestyle perspective in energy efficiency R&D and explores the status of the concept in marketing and sociology. The importance of lifestyles to social stratification and status display are discussed, a working definition of “lifestyle” is offered, and data on consumer culture, purchasing patterns and energy use are presented to illustrate lifestyle differences and their environmental effects. Finally, the implications of this new perspective on lifestyles are considered — for research, policy and environmental discourse.

## **Consuming the Environment**

“I just love your house!” “Is that a new car? It’s so *you*.” “Look at the hillsides around here. In just the past five years, they’ve all been covered with McMansions.” “We just had to have the commercial range, the huge fridge and the extra ovens because Molly’s such a marvelous gourmet cook.” “Well, of course, every parent on the team either has a minivan or an SUV.” “I can’t imagine why anybody would want to live outside the city — particularly when you have to drive all the time.” “We’ve been in this neighborhood since 1965 and not much has changed, except we’re all older now . . . and our TV set is bigger.”

In contemporary society, we live our lives in these and other stylized ways. All involve high levels of consumption — of energy, water, materials, and space. All have a variety of mostly invisible impacts upon surrounding biological and human systems. And all contribute significantly to environmental change on a global scale (Durning 1992; Stern et al. 1997). To many observers, including signers of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global warming, it is clear that something must be done to rein in consumption. This is particularly true of the consumption of energy, and especially fossil fuels. But how can anyone successfully fight “affluence” or “consumerism” (the broad brush treatment of consumption in most environmental discourse)? Particularly if an “American way of life” is involved?

## **The Energy Efficiency Fix**

Improvements in the *efficiency* of energy consumption — doing the same amount of work with less energy — can have clear environmental benefits, including reduced carbon and sulfur emissions and less demand for new power plants. The energy efficiency community has claimed for some time that large reductions in energy use and pollution are possible through the adoption of less consumptive technologies (Brown et al. 1998; Lovins

1977). As a result, these claims hold considerable attraction for environmental policy makers, including U.S. climate policy analysts (Lutzenhiser 2000). If these efficiencies could be realized, at least some breathing space would appear possible.

Unfortunately, the energy efficiency community knows little about consumers, demand, markets, processes of innovation, or adoption of alternative technologies — all of the things that one would want to know something about in order to make significant changes in technology, behavior, and consumption. This limitation has not stopped efficiency advocates from mounting ambitious programs to improve the efficiency of consumption in the U.S. over the course of the past two decades. And, unfortunately, only modest success on a societal scale can be reported from those efforts.<sup>1</sup> Low energy prices, public disinterest and political opposition are frequently cited as causes. All of these certainly played a part. So too did the ways in which the energy efficiency community understands the problem of consumption in modern societies.

### **The Techno-Rational Frame**

Using a “machine-centered” view, energy efficiency advocates see consumption as something primarily done by “end use” technologies — devices such as furnaces, refrigerators, air conditioners, buildings, industrial motors, automobiles. It is sometimes granted that these machines and systems are actually managed by people. But, lacking any social or psychological foundations in this framework, the model can only see people as generic “stick figure” consumers who use energy very much alike and who make rational economizing choices about their energy use (Lutzenhiser 1993; Wilhite et al. 2000).

Of course the world doesn’t work that way at all. Machines don’t consume energy — people and machines do. And consumers are not generic. They live in a wide variety of ways. As suggested in the opening paragraph, they live in mansions and hovels, in settings dominated by business norms and in religiously-oriented communities, in suburbs and in cities. As a result, policies and appeals aimed at universal citizen-consumers are directed at no one in particular.<sup>2</sup> It is little wonder that they ordinarily miss their mark, or that the efficiency movement has made so little headway.

### **Bringing People into the Picture: Recovering the Concept of “Lifestyle”**

Social scientists interested in energy, technology, culture, and behavior have offered a number of theoretical correctives to this *techno-rational* view (Lutzenhiser 1993; Shove et al. 1998; Stern 1986). And, empirical observations of actual consumers have shown repeatedly that their conduct is ordinarily neither technology-focused, rationalistic, nor generic. In fact, while persons do share a utility grid and a few common appliances, that’s about it. The story

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<sup>1</sup> Efficiency advocates, and particularly those who have spent a good deal of time working to improve the energy efficiency of schools, government facilities, appliances, buildings, and manufacturing processes, will immediately object that the movement has made great progress. It certainly has, but only in relative terms. The efficiency of societal energy use is better today than it was twenty years ago (DOE/EIA 2000). At the same time, however, the effects of economic growth, new technologies, new energy uses, and more people have swamped those gains, with overall energy use and carbon emissions steadily increasing throughout the 1990s—albeit more efficiently. (DOE/EIA 2000).

<sup>2</sup> While some efficiency efforts have targeted particular subgroups of consumers, the bulk of government and utility-sponsored advertising and programming has been directed at a “mass” market.

of energy use turns out to be one of considerable variability and diversity. It has people in big houses or apartments, with loads of appliances or only a few, cranking up the heat or consciously conserving.

There was a point in the early 1990s when it appeared that a “lifestyle” perspective might emerge to account for this variability — one that could combine technical insights from the end-use/device-centered view with a more realistic understanding of consumer behavior. One that had different sorts of people using different sorts of devices producing different sorts of consumption profiles. However, because the energy system shifted its attention away from efficiency and social scientists moved on to other research problems, this perspective never developed.

We believe this to have been a serious mistake. An understanding of consumption focused on lifestyle could have been quite fruitful for the energy efficiency movement, even in a period of prosperity, low energy prices and technological expansion. We also believe that development of the lifestyle concept continues to be necessary for efforts to alter current consumption patterns and slow environmental change.

So the point of this paper is to revisit the concept of *lifestyle* — considering both its largely *ad hoc* use in the energy efficiency community and its more thoughtful use in the social sciences and applied marketing. We also offer a working definition of lifestyle that draws upon these sources, and for illustrative purposes present some examples of lifestyles and their environmental impacts. We conclude by considering the implications of a renewed interest in lifestyle — for environmental analysis and for the design of interventions aimed at reducing consumption in an increasingly crowded, polluted and resource-scarce world.

## **The Energy Efficiency Movement Discovers Lifestyle (and then loses it)**

From the time of the 1970s energy crises, the attention of the energy efficiency movement has been focused on the twin technical tasks of developing more efficient energy-using hardware and designing incentives to encourage individuals and organizations to adopt it. The pivotal part played by human actors in shaping energy flows and energy systems — as energy users, policy developers, program implementers, device designers, installers and managers — has largely been ignored by energy analysts. This is not terribly surprising, given the disciplinary origins and orientations of most efficiency advocates in physics, engineering and neo-classical economics. What is more puzzling is how durable the technological paradigm should be in the face of mounting evidence that otherwise rational persons and firms would routinely fail to take advantage of economically beneficial technology offerings (DOE/BTS 2000) — or would use them in unintended ways (Vine 1994).

By the late 1980s, detailed studies of energy use and human behavior began to accumulate. These were funded as minor parts of technical projects, as adjuncts to utility marketing and evaluation efforts, and through some unique academic centers.<sup>3</sup> They suggested that human energy use was highly variable (and often varied from engineering expectations), but was quite intelligible within the subcultures involved (e.g., Diamond 1984;

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<sup>3</sup> The University of California’s Energy Institute (UCEI) was a leading source of support for this line of work, stimulating a variety of “human dimensions” energy studies by UC investigators over the past twenty years. Related work was undertaken at Michigan State University, Princeton University, and by investigators scattered across other institutions. This work has routinely been reported in the proceedings of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy’s (ACEEE) biennial conferences.

Erickson 1984; Hackett and Lutzenhiser 1986; Kempton and Montgomery 1982; Wilk and Wilhite 1985). By the early 1990s, there were solid reports of distinctly different patterns of energy use and efficiency choice across consumer subgroups in the society (e.g., Hackett and Lutzenhiser 1991; Lutzenhiser and Hackett 1993).

It was at this point that the concept of *lifestyle* came to be treated as an agreeably broad heading under which a good deal of social science and other human dimensions of energy work could be organized. Although the term was used in somewhat different ways by different investigators (e.g., Lutzenhiser 1992; Nader & Beckerman 1978, Schipper et al. 1989), those differences seemed resolvable. The term “lifestyle” nicely captured a sense of differences among individuals. My new car, your refurbished house. But at the same time it pointed to technology-use as routine behavior conducted differently within different social groups. The country club set vs. recent Asian immigrants. It could capture the fact that efficiency technologies apparently have different meanings in different cultural contexts. It could handle the fact that hardware ensembles differ across different lifestyle groups. And it alluded to sometimes extreme social differences in persons’ opportunities to consume and conserve.

It might have seemed to an optimistic policy observer at the time that the concept of lifestyle would “have legs,” in the sense that it could capture the imaginations of success-oriented program managers, while establishing a common rubric for research across disciplines in support of energy policy. But this didn’t happen. Instead, the lifestyle concept fell fairly quickly into disuse. The literature in this area today remains thin and scattered across disciplines, and it has had little impact on technology development or program design. In recent years, the pace of academic research, and even the reporting of energy program findings, has slowed considerably.

Why? Because sympathetic efficiency program managers fell victim to the withdrawal of resources and mandates as efforts to deregulate utilities swept across the energy system. At the same time, most of the social scientists working on energy moved on to what they considered to be a larger and more significant problem — global environmental change (GEC). This left a dwindling number efficiency advocates who closed ranks around a technical agenda (Lutzenhiser and Shove 1999).<sup>4</sup> Despite a subsequent turn of energy system attention to “market transformation” (MT) approaches to energy efficiency, there has been little interest by MT practitioners in recovering lost energy system knowledge, or in applying the new perspectives being developed by GEC social scientists.

However, the notion of lifestyle is alive and well — and considerably better-developed than it was a decade ago — in both social science theory and research. In the following section, we consider the status of the concept in marketing and sociology — two areas where lifestyle is of fundamental importance.

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<sup>4</sup> Exceptions include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s various “Energy Star” initiatives, which have had some success by taking marketing and industrial alliance approaches. While focused on people and institutions — and dependent upon change in these in order to induce change in technology and practices — there is no effort to ground this work theoretically or to support research that would take advantages of the new knowledge about consumption, lifestyles, technological systems, or markets uncovered in the course of implementing Energy Star.

## Theorizing Lifestyle: Class, Culture and Distinction

The point of marketing is to sell products. The point of sociology is to explain human behavior. Both have found the concept of lifestyle important in those efforts. A review of the work in each would take considerably more space than we have here. But it is important to present some key ideas about lifestyle from these two traditions in order to give the reader a sense of how the concept has been theorized and applied — and to see how it might be put to use in the analysis of environmentally significant consumption.

### Marketing Models

Marketing has historically approached selling things to consumers as a problem that required the *segmenting* of markets to identify those persons who are the most likely to buy a particular product. This is obviously more cost-effective than targeting the entire universe of customers with every product offering. Market researchers have used surveys and point-of-sale data to identify relatively homogeneous “market segments” of customers with similar and distinguishing characteristics who exhibit similar purchasing patterns (Michman 1991; Newell 1997; Weinstein 1987). Four kinds of variables have been commonly used to identify those segments: *Geography* (region, urban/suburban, climate, density, etc.), *Demographics* (age, sex, family size, income, education, race/ethnicity, occupation, etc.), *Behavior* (purchase occasion, benefits sought, loyalty, etc.), and *Psychology* (personality, attitudes, values, etc.) (Michman 1991; Newell 1997).

“Lifestyle” has appeared in a variety of forms in the marketing literature (and in marketing practice) — often as an element in “psychographic” segmentation (e.g., lifestyle preferences), sometimes as a primary segmentation dimension (i.e., identifying key lifestyle groups) or combined with other (e.g., psychological and/or social-structural) variables to define market segments. The dominant marketing model of the recent past is the “Values and Lifestyles” (VALS) segmentation scheme developed by the Stanford Research Institute in 1978, with both *values* and *lifestyles* becoming increasingly important topics in marketing and market research by the 1980s (Burgess 1992). Originally, VALS was a psychographic model that segmented consumers on the basis of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (from “immature” to “higher order” states of development; see Mitchell 1983). VALS has subsequently undergone a series of modifications following extensive testing in a variety of markets. The VALS II version is fundamentally different, combining measures of consumer “self-orientation” (e.g., “principle-oriented” vs. “status oriented”) with “consumer resource” variables (e.g., energy level, propensity to change, income, marital status), to form an eight category lifestyle typology.

A variety of other segmentation models have also been developed, which focus on other combinations of demographic, psychological, and social value variables.<sup>5</sup> And new lifestyle segmentations systems were introduced in the 1990s because the VALS II system offered too broad a segmentation base for many marketers who were interested in identifying

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5 These include: the “LOV” or List of Values model (University of Michigan Survey Center), which is considered to have greater predictability than VALS, is easier to administer, and it is easier to incorporate “preserved” phrasing from a value study into an advertisement (Michman 1991, 186), and the “RVS” or Rokeach Values Survey approach, based on the work of sociologist Milton Rokeach (1968) and primarily used for brand choice segmentation studies (Burgess 1992).

consumer “niche markets” (Newell 1997).<sup>6</sup>

All of these segmentation schemes share some significant limitations. They tend to (1) lack theoretical grounding (as an applied discipline, marketing has no theory of its own, but must apply basic theory from psychology, sociology and the other behavioral sciences), which leads to (2) *ad hoc* and sometimes indiscriminate application of theories, concepts and models from handy and currently popular sources, (3) a tendency to view consumers as individuals who happen to fall into segments (rather than as members of social groups), and, as a result, (4) a preference for explanations that refer to psychological states (attitudes, values, personality types, etc.), rather than consumers’ social locations, in explaining their behavior. A typical definition of “lifestyle” from the marketing literature illustrates the point: “[lifestyles are] ... how individuals spend their time, what they consider important about their surrounding, their opinions on issues and their interest” (Michman 1991, 135).

The strength of marketing, however, lies in its access to data on actual consumption behavior and its relentless interest in selling. Marketers are interested in creating models of consumer lifestyles that predict real-world consumption. And one particular “geodemographic” segmentation system merits mention in this regard, because it is based on actual purchasing patterns, and seems to connect most directly with the better developed perspectives on consumption and culture in the social sciences.

The PRIZM (Potential Rating Index for Zip Markets) model differentiates forty different lifestyle groups on the basis of persons’ social characteristics and observed buying habits. It also goes further, locating them in the zip codes areas in which they are found to be most highly concentrated. Weiss notes in *The Clustering of America* that, “Within each cluster of neighborhoods, inhabitants tend to lead similar lives, driving the same kinds of cars to the same kinds of jobs, discussing similar interests at similar social events . . . each cluster has a personality of its own, a perspective from which its inhabitants view the world . . . The clusters provide a framework for making sense of our pluralistic society and for finding our way around in it” (Weiss 1988, 2-3). Interestingly, this model, which is the result of detailed analysis of actual behavior, reveals a powerful underlying social status dimension — modulated by regional, cultural and ethnic factors.

Consideration of social status has a long history in marketing. Persons with higher incomes are obviously better able to afford to buy a wider range of goods. But also, the types, kinds, amounts, and meanings of goods consumed vary across social classes. The stratification of consumers according to income, occupation, education, etc. is at least an implicit dimension of many lifestyle segmentation models (e.g., VALS II). And, while still a delicate subject, stratification is becoming more openly discussed by marketers. Newell (a professional marketer) observes that “...as politically incorrect as it sounds, a word must be said about segmentation by social class. While most Americans reject the concept of social class, it does exist in America. The American Dream is to move up the social class ladder” (Newell 1997, 55). And he elaborates his understanding of social class with observations that “...[social class is a] division of society into relatively distinct and homogeneous groups with respect to attitudes, values, income and lifestyles. . . The accepted breakdown of social class is into seven groups. They range from Upper-Uppers to Lower-Lowers. Anheuser

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6 These include: DNA™ (Metromail), Niches™ (The Polk Company) and Cohorts II™ (Looking Glass, Inc.). A somewhat different approach is found in the Synchronographs™ model, which targets consumers at important life moments (Newell 1997) — also see Moschis (1987) for changes in consumer behavior over the life-cycle.

Busch used social class to position Michelob to the Upper-Middles and Lower-Uppers. Budweiser was positioned for the Middle Class, and Busch for the Working Class” (Newell 1997, 55-56).

## **Sociological Models**

In sociology, social class has long been a central concept, and the one with which lifestyle has most closely been linked. Nearly every known society practices some form of stratification — with access to resources and power characterizing the higher strata, and (widely varying) poorer conditions in the lower strata. In industrial societies, social hierarchies are closely aligned with material wealth and participation in the cash economy. In the U.S., status has been traditionally associated with income and occupation, with upward status mobility (e.g., through education, business dealings, hard work, luck) being generally seen as desirable.

Sociologists have devoted considerable attention to social hierarchies, their associated problems and evolution in different societies. Much of that work is relevant to environment and consumption, although there has been little effort to connect the literatures. For the purposes of this paper, however, it is enough to point to some key ideas related to stratification, lifestyle and consumption that extend the empirical findings of marketers and ground them in more fundamental theories of social action.

The primary insight of the sociological work in this area, we believe, is not that societies are stratified or that persons pursue different ways of life. Marketing does an adequate job of making that point. The real insight is that lifestyle is not just a secondary feature of human societies, but a basic human activity and molar unit of social organization.

It is a given in the social sciences that differential access to resources, wealth and power, is associated with different life chances. Different ways of living (“qualities of life,” “standards of living,” “lifestyles”) characterize different classes of people, which tend to be hierarchically related to one another. Thorstein Veblen (1931), in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, argued that the *conspicuous* consumption (of goods, housing, clothes, leisure) is an important means by which higher social groups are able to make their status visible to themselves and to others. It is increasingly necessary for those with greater wealth to demonstrate their superior position in clearly visible ways, if status is to mean anything in increasingly large, urban, mobile, and egalitarian societies.

While Veblen was interested in lifestyle as part of a visible struggle between individuals vying for a higher status position, Max Weber was concerned with the *social legitimization* of status groups through customs and political/legal arrangements. Weber’s historical studies suggest that status display through consumption is an integral element of social hierarchies in a number of societies (also see Douglas and Isherwood 1979). He defines “style of life” as the way in which individuals express/elicit prestige — with it being necessary that specific lifestyles be adopted by all those belonging to, or wishing to belong to, certain status circles (Weber 1946, 198). Appropriate behavior and acceptable acquisitions of consumptive goods allow the creation of status distinctions within the larger social order by members of elite social circles. These status distinctions are reinforced and reproduced through customs, laws and rituals that all circles are required to observe. Consequently, status groups not only maintain and reproduce certain lifestyles, but particular status positions can both confer privilege and visit punishment upon individuals as a

consequence of their display of certain styles of life. Three-piece suits vs. gang colors.

Extending this perspective, Pierre Bourdieu, focuses on lifestyle from a place/process that he calls the “habitus” — the everyday world through which persons construct and experience their lives. The habitus is acquired by individuals through family socialization and education, and it also changes (albeit slowly) through accumulation of experience. Actors find themselves in a socially formed and sanctioned landscape where various styles of action, privileges and prohibitions are already given (as Weber points out). It is also a world shared by others who are engaged in their own lifestyle-based status performances (à la Veblen). What Bourdieu adds to this account is his observation that habitus, lifestyle and life chances are structured by the joint effects of three forms of “capital” or “usable resources and powers” brought by actors into the social field (Bourdieu 1984, 114). These are *economic capital* (financial assets), *social capital* (the network of relationships to which a person has access) and *cultural capital* (tastes, preferences, cultural artifacts, manners, deportment).

The first two are sociological staples. The notion of cultural capital, however, helps to explain the subtlety (and durability) of social position. Learned cultural tastes and behaviors are necessary for the making (and maintaining) of *distinctions* between persons and social groups — distinctions that guarantee that persons do not mistake one another’s social identities and class memberships. So Bourdieu offers a view of lifestyle as a phenomenon that is hardly voluntary or superficially “stylistic.” It is a fundamental business of social life — the making of social distinctions being a core interest, and consumption a primary means by which these distinctions are made and reinforced. In Bourdieu’s words, class-based cultural tastes — the basic stuff of “lifestyles” — can be understood as a “generative principle” with consumption patterns “expressing particular class conditions of existence” (Bourdieu 1984, 175).

Bourdieu argues that, regardless of how egalitarian a society might want to be, since tastes are largely transferred through socialization, they are especially difficult to regulate and would be impossible to redistribute in a fashion similar to economic capital. Therefore, these symbolic inequalities, manifest in taste and lifestyle, can be very powerful and insidious forms of social exclusion (Bourdieu 1986).

Although Bourdieu’s work has gained nearly universal acceptance by sociologists, the model is somewhat static and his data are from 1960s France. Michelle Lamont (1994), however, applies this perspective to contemporary upper-middle class French and American culture, also updating earlier work on status, display and consumption in the U.S. by Packard (1959) and Fussell (1992). Also, insights such as Sobel’s (1981) notion of “stylistic unity” in lifestyles (i.e., what goes with what) would help us to better understand their durability, and Ann Swidler’s (1986) view of culture as a “tool kit” would help to explain how lifestyles evolve in the face of changing conditions.

But for understanding the *lifestyle-environment* connection, an adequate theory of lifestyle should also incorporate insights about culture, consumption and action in globalizing systems. In this, clearly relevant are the efforts by corporations to shape lifestyles via the “3 M’s”: marketing (advertising), media representations (cultural images and “product placement” in films and television programs), and merchandising (retail display).<sup>7</sup> And an adequate model of lifestyle would also consider efforts to reinvent lifestyle by individuals (ethical self-design), lifestyles in flux because innovation is one of their defining elements

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<sup>7</sup> See Ewen (1976) on advertising, Stein (1979) and Ewen (1992) on cultural representation in visual media, and Underhill (1999) on merchandising strategies.



(the art and fashion worlds), and intentional efforts to collectively create new lifestyles (e.g., various sustainability and voluntary simplicity movements). Macro social trends also produce changes in the lifestyle matrix. Weiss in 1988 predicted at least eight new lifestyle clusters for the 1990s — all of which have now emerged. Finally — and to the primary point of this paper — we do have evidence that there are differential environmental effects of various lifestyles (Lutzenhiser 1997; Lutzenhiser and Hackett 1993; Uusitalo 1983), but we still need to catalog these in detail.

## **Toward a Working Definition of Lifestyle**

Based on the preceding, we boldly propose to define *lifestyles* as: “distinctive modes of existence that are accomplished by persons and groups through socially sanctioned and culturally intelligible patterns of action.” When we unpack this formulation, we find the following to be true. Lifestyles are fundamental building blocks of complex societies. They are meaningful to actors and to others — they distinguish social groups and “place” persons in the social landscape. They have a voluntary element, but are deeply engrained in habit, micro patterns of interaction and macro patterns of social possibility.

We extend this conception to the following observations. Lifestyle groups are continually targeted by advertising and other marketing appeals, and are routinely the subjects of media representations in news and entertainment. Therefore, lifestyles are partially products of image and meaning production by firms and other large-scale organizations. Lifestyle possibilities for individuals are constrained by available (and appropriate) choices. While durable, lifestyles are changing— historically, regionally, globally, and generationally. And different lifestyles have differing consumptive requirements and environmental impacts.

We can, therefore, offer some hypotheses about the relationship between lifestyle and environment. We venture, e.g., that lifestyles associated with higher positions in social stratification systems are likely to be more consumptive. Also, that consumption choices are more constrained for persons in lower status lifestyles, and that lifestyle experimentation and flexibility is more likely to occur in marginal lifestyle groups. The environmental effects of lifestyles are at least partially the products of “lifestyle engineering” by businesses, supported by government action (e.g., through subsidies for consumption of new housing, highways, fossil fuels, etc.). And lifestyles, and their environmental impacts, are also shaped to a significant degree by mass media portrayals of “how we live” and “how we want to live.” Other hypotheses are possible as well. But rather than spin those out here, we offer some examples of material consumption, culture and lifestyle to give a more tangible sense of what these abstractions mean.

The following illustrations draw upon data that are difficult to obtain. Almost all marketing research is closely held by firms. Public-use data (e.g., Federal energy consumption surveys) collect only superficial descriptions of household demographics and nearly no behavioral information. The data used in these illustrations are from the late 1980s, simply because this was a period in which access to such data was possible. But with those caveats in mind, the following offer fairly striking — characterizations of real, recent U.S. lifestyles.

Table 1 presents snapshots of some of the largest of the forty PRIZM clustering segments identified by Weiss. They are given fanciful, but immediately recognizable, names

with each cluster displaying significantly different patterns of action — in this case in their of automobile ownership, media exposure, food consumption, and material culture and behavior. Differences not reported extend to housing, household equipment, political views and expressed attitudes on an array of topics.

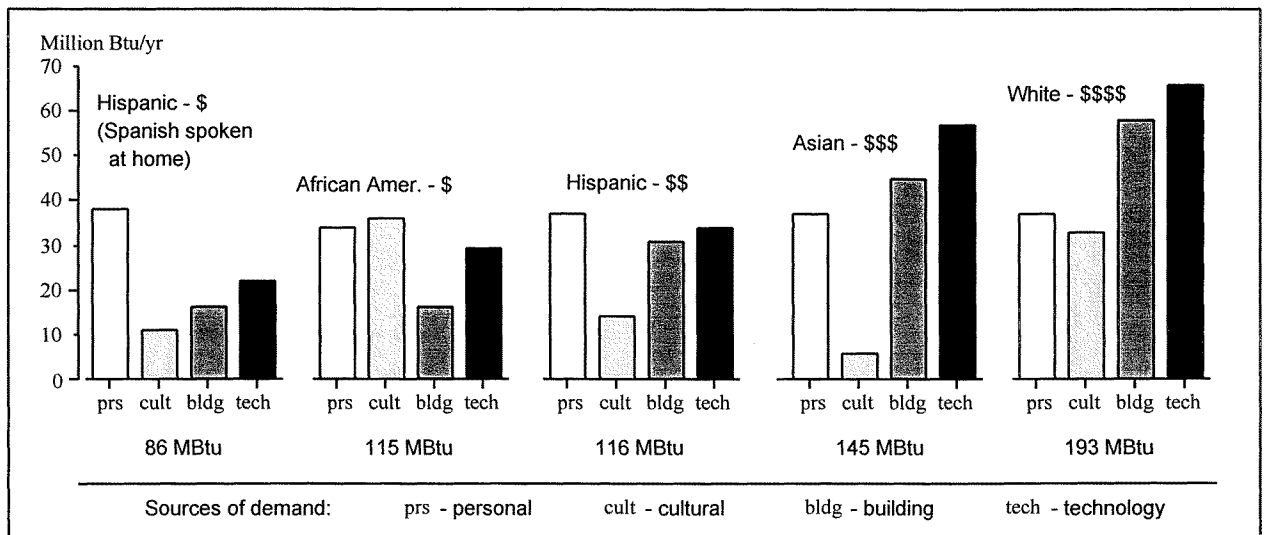
**Table 1. Lifestyle Clusters with Social Preferences**

Cluster	Autos	Print Media	Food	Culture
Money & Brains	Mercedes BMW	<i>Forbes, Barrons, the New Yorker</i>	natural cold cereal	valid passports, sailing, jazz CDs
Pools & Patios	Mercedes BMW	<i>Sunset, WSJ, Natural History</i>	skim milk, instant ice tea	health clubs, cruises, money-mkt
Blue Chip Blues	Saabs Peugeots	<i>Atlantic, Harpers, GQ, New Yorker</i>	Frozen waffles, Whole wht brd	envir. orgs., Irish whiskey, stocks
Levittown, USA	Dodge Mercury	<i>Industry Week, Stereo Review</i>	instant ice tea, stuffing mix	ale, knitting, ice hockey, bowling
New Beginnings	Hundai, Isuzu	<i>Rolling Stone, Shape</i>	bottled water, natural cheese	Backpacking, civic clubs, tequila
Young Suburbia	SUVs minivans	<i>Skiing, Golf</i>	cheese spread, frozen waffles	mutual funds, racquetball
Towns & Gowns	Subaru Toyota	<i>Nat. Hist., GQ, Modern Bride</i>	Mexican food, whole wht brd	civic clubs, folk music, tennis
Blue-Collar Nursery	Ford Exp Chevy	<i>Boating, Industry Week</i>	canned stew, pretzels	campers, 60s rock, tupperware
Emergent Minorities	Chevy Yugo	<i>Jet, Ebony, Essence</i>	canned OJ, frozen yogurt	contemp. music, track & field
Coalburg & Corntown	Mercury Chevy	<i>Hunting, Four Wheel, Boating</i>	frozen pizza, powdr drinks	canning jars, toy- sized dogs
Golden Ponds	Dodge Plymouth	<i>Family Food, True Story</i>	canned meat, TV dinners	hand tools, civic clubs, campers
Shotguns & Pickups	Chevy Pontiac	<i>Grit, Organic Gardening</i>	frozen fries, whip'd topping	chain saws, snuff, wood stoves
Hard Scrabble	Chevy Dodge	<i>Field &amp; Stream, Prevention</i>	dry milk, cold cuts	Latin music, campers, boats

Source: Adapted from Weiss (1988)

While the lifestyle distinctions between these groups are clear, we don't really know how these differences might affect their relative environmental demands, pollution, etc. However, Figure 1 draws upon other data to compare the energy use (from which CO2 emissions can be inferred) of households in Northern California (see Lutzenhiser 1997). For simplicity's sake, households of the same type were selected — in this case, two-parent households with pre-teen age children. They differ only in lifestyle terms — here measured by income (\$ = lowest, \$\$\$\$ = highest) and ethnicity. Ethnicity is a crude measure of cultural and social capital, but one that reveals interesting differences nonetheless. Based on regression estimates for each household type, energy use is disaggregated into four categories

of demand: *personal* (energy use attributable to number of persons in household for bathing, dishwashing, clothes washing, basic heating/cooling energy), *cultural* (associated with income, ethnicity, persons being at home during the day, air conditioning in mild climates), *building* (heating and cooling as a function of dwelling size, age, energy conservation features), and *technology* (small and large appliances, ranging from stereos to hot tubs and pools). These comparisons present striking differences in terms of both *total consumption* and *types of consumption* — suggesting a strong link between lifestyle and environmental impact.



Source: Adapted from Lutzenhiser (1997)

**Figure 1. Estimating the Environmental Impacts of Varying Lifestyles, Annual Household Energy Consumption for Selected Social Class/Ethnicity Groups**

## Conclusion

If there is anything to this lifestyle business, what are the implications for energy efficiency and environmental policy? Where do we go from here? Three directions come to mind. The first is *research* — serious and rigorous studies of how the U.S. and other societies are internally socially differentiated. We need to ask “how consumptive are various groups?” What are their internal logics of consumption, display, identity, etc.? How do they see and understand the world and the other groups within it? What are their material endowments (housing, cars, appliances, land use)? How does their environmentally-significant behavior differ from one another? What are their differential environmental impacts (e.g., in terms of energy, water, land demands, pollution rates)? What are their histories and where are they going (aging plays a role here, as does migration, changing consumption standards, etc.)? What new groups are emerging, by virtue of either market influences or intentional efforts by persons to reconstruct their own lifestyles?

The second area of work that follows from taking lifestyle seriously is *policy* — new attempts to address the roots of consumption in fair and democratic, but forward-looking ways. If lifestyles are real and potent, then we ought to consider how technologies might be

better designed to fit into particular lifestyles while using fewer resources. Government and NGO appeals to consumers might be more intelligently tailored and persuasively made. Programs and interventions could be more appropriately targeted at various lifestyle groups, with taxes and subsidies differentially applied, and equity problems anticipated and mitigated much more thoughtfully than they are now. Agents of lifestyle change could be identified, supported where appropriate, and monitored and regulated where their efforts are bent upon inducing environmentally damage. The market transformation movement could clearly benefit from a richer understanding of consumers and the lifestyle basis of their action in markets and in their interactions with other market actors.

Some of these proposals may be controversial, and we are not suggesting unilateral government action. Since the patterns of consumption that are now so problematic were largely (although not exclusively) the creation of the civil society (i.e., businesses, consumers, communities, status orders), the solutions largely lie there. The third direction involves, then, the *expansion of discourse* — on a global scale — about lifestyles and the environment. The contents of that discourse will include the results of research and policy topics outlined above. But rather than waiting for those inputs, larger questions can be posed now. These include: “Who is doing what to whom with what environmental and equity effects?” “Is this fair to both persons living now and to those who will inherit a much poorer environment?” “Who should act in the area of consumption and lifestyles and how?” “Who is getting in the way of change and why?” “Who profits from the present materially-based status orderings?” “Who loses?” “Can we think of better (or at least less environmentally damaging) ways to create status, cultivate identities, foster diversity, and protect tradition while promoting individual and group distinction?” One would hope so.

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