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The Study of Life History: Gandhi¹

by David G. Mandelbaum

I

LIFE PASSAGE AND LIFE HISTORY STUDIES

In their observation of the development of a person, anthropologists have used two main approaches: life passage studies and life history studies. Life passage (or life cycle) studies emphasize the requirements of society, showing how the people of a group socialize and enculturate their young in order to make them into viable members of society. Life history studies, in contrast, emphasize the experiences and requirements of the individual—how the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals. This difference in emphasis in anthropological studies is also found in sociological and psychological studies.²

Comparisons of life passage events in different cultures have brought out certain general similarities (see, for example, Van Gennep 1960); even more, they have highlighted the vast differences among peoples in their methods and standards of socialization (see, for example, Mead 1928, 1935, 1970). The life passage studies, in general, have made us aware of some constants in the life experience of man as a member of his species and of the enormous cultural variations that are possible in his experience as a member of his particular society (cf. Richards 1970; Clausen 1968:47-48). But these studies have not usually been concerned with the dynamic and adaptive aspects of the life experience, with the relations between one stage of life and the next, with the cumulative patterns of personal conduct, with the relevance

of personal experience to social institutions, and with the impact of personal choice on social change. Such questions are more likely to be raised by life history studies, those which follow the individual through the course of his career.

A life history is the account of a life, completed or ongoing. Such an account obviously involves some kind of selection, since only a very small part of all that the person has experienced can possibly be recorded. Certain salient facts about a person are likely to be recorded by any narrator, but much of any life history has to be chosen for inclusion according to some principles for selection. Often enough, such principles as are used are unstated or unwitting or inchoate. Most social scientists who have pointed out the great potential of the life history approach for their respective disciplines have seen as its chief difficulty the lack of accepted principles of selection, of suitable analytic concepts to make up a coherent frame of reference.

Three procedural suggestions are given here as a possible start for such a frame. The ideas of the dimensions, turnings, and adaptations in a life history may be useful as guidelines for the collection and analysis of life history data. These ideas are not intended to be inviolable classifications; nor are they substantive concepts, though using them may help us develop such concepts. Their applicability is illustrated with the life history of Gandhi, whose life bears such intrinsic interest that, in this study as in other contexts, it has become something more than an illustration, has taken on, as it were, a life of its own.

LIFE HISTORY STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The art of biography has long been cultivated by historians, and there is a considerable literature on the writing of biography for historians' purposes (cf.

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The present paper, submitted in final form 9 VII 71, was sent for comment to 50 scholars, of whom the following responded: Akinsola A. Akiwo, Michael M. Ames, Nirmal Kumar Bose, Charlotte Bühler, Fred I. Greenstein, George G. Haydu, L. L. Langness, Sidney W. Mintz, Herbert P. Phillips, Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, M. Brewster Smith, André Varagnac, and Jack Waddell. Their comments are printed after the text and are followed by a reply from the author.

¹ This study was begun in the spring quarter of 1969 when I was associated with the Institute of Human Development, University of California, Berkeley. The help of the Institute and its staff is gratefully acknowledged. Bibliographic assistance was most ably given by Kathryn Hansen.

² Thus Smith (1968:276) has noted that the psychological study of social competence should "keep in simultaneous view the two perspectives that are differently emphasized by Inkeles and by Foot and Cottrell; that of society and its 'manpower' needs, and that of the person himself as the locus of humanistic values."

Garraty 1957). But the study of lives for purposes of social science has been more advocated than practiced. At one time the Social Science Research Council gave special attention to the use of life histories and of related personal documents (see Blumer 1939, Allport 1942, Gottschalk 1945, Kluckhohn 1945, Angell 1945). Other psychologists and sociologists have also given directives for the study of life history and have outlined programs for research (cf. Park and Burgess 1924; Bühler 1933, 1968*a, b*; K. Young 1952; P. Young 1966; Becker 1966; Denzin 1970). But not many have as yet done much recording and analysis of life histories as wholes. Longitudinal studies, notably those conducted in the Institute of Human Development at the University of California, Berkeley, have yielded many significant observations of growth and social development, but these have yet to be placed in their social and cultural contexts.

Anthropologists have recorded life histories since the beginnings of the discipline. Many of these have been published (cf. Langness 1965: 54–82). Many have not, perhaps because the recorders have not been very clear about what to do with a life history in the way of anthropological analysis.

The stimulus to record them has been, I believe, not so much the outcome of a deliberate research plan as the result of a characteristic phase of the anthropologist's own life experience. When an anthropologist goes to live among the people he studies, he is likely to make some good friends among them. As he writes his account of their way of life, he may feel uncomfortably aware that his description and analysis have omitted something of great importance: His dear friends have been dissolved into faceless norms; their vivid adventures have somehow been turned into pattern profiles or statistical types.

This dilemma is not peculiar to anthropologists; in a way it is part of the human condition. Sapir (1949:590) once wrote that our natural interest in human behavior vacillates between what is imputed to the culture of the group as a whole and what is imputed to the psychic organization of the individual himself. In familiar circumstances and with familiar people, our interest usually centers on the individual. In unfamiliar circumstances and with unfamiliar roles, our perceptions are likely to be cultural rather than personal. "If I see my little son playing marbles" [he wrote], "I do not, as a rule, wish to have light thrown on how the game is played. Nearly everything that I observe tends to be interpreted as a contribution to the understanding of the child's personality."

To redress the balance between these two perspectives, a good many anthropologists have taken down the story of an informant's life. Radin (1913, 1920, 1926) was one of the first to give a rationale for doing so; his purpose was "to have some representative middle-aged individual of moderate ability describe his life in relation to the social group in which he had grown up" (1920:382). Radin noted how difficult it was to get "an inside view of their culture" from informants (1920:383) and showed that a life history narrative could add much to an ethnological account. Radin's footnotes tell a good deal about the culture

and about the narrator, but there is almost no analysis. Although a main theme of *Crashing Thunder's* story is his quest for a good way of life, Radin's notes are more on the culture than on the society or personality, more on cultural patterns than on social or personal adaptation, more on descriptive presentation than on conceptual development (cf. Lurie 1966:96–106).

Dollard's (1935) *Criteria for the Life History* was a major attempt to provide some theoretical underpinning for the use of life history data. Dollard formulated seven criteria for the study of life histories, of which the first six stipulate in various ways that the subject must be understood in his social and cultural context. The seventh is that "the life history material itself must be organized and conceptualized." Dollard recognizes that this is the crucial criterion. As he says, life history material does not speak for itself. But Dollard could then offer very little in the way of concepts or clues to organization.

Dollard's book reflected and also stimulated increased interest in life histories, or at least in the kind of perspectives on human behavior that life histories might yield. When Kluckhohn (1945) surveyed the use of personal documents in anthropology, a number of life histories had recently been published or were in preparation. Boas, among others, had been dubious about their scientific value, and in one of his last papers, published posthumously in 1943, concluded (p. 335) that "they are valuable rather as useful material for a study of the perversion of truth brought about by the play of memory with the past." But Kluckhohn's thorough and thoughtful survey reached very different conclusions. Kluckhohn recognized the many problems of reliability, validity, and interpretation that are involved in the use of life histories, but saw their potential advantages for studies of social change, as clues to implicit themes, as documentation on roles, as demonstration of socialization and enculturation, as an entry into understanding personality, as a view of the "emotional structure" of a way of life, as a means toward understanding variations within a society, and also of seeing the "common humanity" among peoples. Yet the use of life histories, as he appraised it in 1945, was more promise than actuality (p. 133): "Perhaps the most salient conclusion which emerged from our survey of published life history documents was the deficiency of analysis and interpretation." He added (p. 147) that personal documents had served as little more than interesting curiosities and that pitifully few new theoretical questions had been asked of them.

The other surveys in the series sponsored by the Social Science Research Council came to similar conclusions. Allport's (1942) appraisal of the use of personal documents in psychology ended with a recommendation that more conceptual, analytical work with such materials should be encouraged. Angell's (1945) review of sociological studies found that Thomas and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918–20) remained a monumental example of the method and that, while Blumer's (1939) appraisal of that work was relevant and stimulating, there had

been very little theoretical development of this field.

More than 20 years later, several updated reviews of the use of life history materials appeared. Becker (1966), considering the state of such studies in sociology, emphasizes the great importance of presenting the actor's subjective evaluations of his experiences and of giving the context in which he undergoes his social experience. He discusses the great potential of life history data as a wellspring for theory and as a means of testing concepts. He notes that such materials offer basic evidence about social interaction and process, that they can provide a vivid feeling for what it means to be a certain kind of person. "Given the variety of scientific uses to which the life history may be put," he observes (p. xvi), "one must wonder at the relative neglect into which it has fallen."

Becker attributes this, in part, to sociologists' greater concern with their own abstract categories than with those held by the people studied. Life history materials do not lend themselves well to sociological emphases on structural variables, on synchronic analysis, and on group attributes. A further reason, Becker notes, is that life history studies do not yield the kind of findings that sociologists have expected research to produce. The emphasis has been on the self-sufficient and self-contained single study, in which the researcher's hypothesis is tested against what is discovered in that one piece of research. A life history, like the life itself, is not so self-sufficient or self-contained, nor can it readily be deployed to prove or disprove any one hypothesis. Becker concludes (p. xviii) with the hope that "a fuller understanding of the complexity of the scientific enterprise will restore sociologists' sense of the versatility and worth of the life history."

Edinger (1964), in his survey of the use of political biography in political science, notes that while such study is generally accepted as vital, it has been much neglected. The reasons for this neglect are mainly in the discipline's preference for group rather than individual manifestations and for the "scientific" models of the behavioral approach. For behaviorally oriented American political scientists, Edinger observes (p. 426), "the most notable lack in modern political biography is that it has no explicit, conceptual framework for the selection, organization, and presentation of data." He offers a possible framework, but it has not been quickly seized upon by other political scientists. Davies (1967) calls attention to the research leads for political science in Dollard's work. Greenstein (1969) gives a fine overview, including a chapter on the biographical, "single-actor" study; he too mentions the lack of conceptual tools and recommends increased development of this approach in political science research.

The trends of research in anthropology have not raised the kinds of barriers to the use of life histories that have been noted for political science and for sociology. Anthropologists have generally been more aware of the people's categories and perhaps less attached to their own favorite abstractions. Nor have they commonly sought for self-sufficient single studies in the same way that some sociologists have done

or for mass behavioral analysis in the manner of some political scientists. Yet a resurvey of the anthropological use of life histories by Langness (1965) reveals little more development than has occurred in these other disciplines. Langness observes (p. 18), "Indeed, unfortunate as it seems, we can use virtually unchanged the summary statements made by Kluckhohn in 1945."

Many life histories were collected during the intervening two decades, and a number of excellent narrative accounts were published. But though they give the reader some insight into the central figure and a feel for his society and culture, they add little to a body of general concepts. Few have much to offer in the way of analysis, but those few show the life history to be a rich, though still largely untapped, vein for anthropological investigation. Thus Aberle's (1951) analysis of *Sun Chief* (Simmons 1942), the autobiography of a Hopi Indian, sheds new light on such aspects of Hopi culture as witchcraft and illumines certain general problems such as the diversity of interpretation of the same culture by different observers. Mintz's (1960) fine life history of a Puerto Rican makes vividly clear, as few other anthropological studies have done, the social factors and personal motivation that are involved in religious conversion.

The most extensive life history materials published in this period are those recorded on tape by Lewis and presented by him in a widely read series of books. In the introduction to his *La Vida* (1965), Lewis discusses the important concept of the culture of poverty, evidence for which he gained in considerable part from the autobiographies he collected in his studies of Mexican and Puerto Rican families. Langness (1965:14) says that these are masterful accounts, but that Lewis's work "is almost exclusively descriptive and involves very little in the way of analysis or 'problem-orientation.'"

The need for intellectual form in the study of life history was well expressed by Redfield (1955:56-65). This approach, he noted, could show the social life of a community not only as a structure of interrelated parts but more as a "succession of added comprehensions." It would raise new questions and problems, such as the changing states of mind in the span of a life, the prospective quality of a person's life, the influence of ideals on behavior, and the differences among what a man thinks ought to happen, what he expects to happen, and what he actually does. Such queries would bring the anthropologist to "the real and ultimate raw material" of his study; they would provide him with a direct means of examining social change. But they also involve the special difficulties of giving strong consideration to the people's modes of thought rather than assuming the more comfortable categories of the observer.

All these discussions of the use of life histories convincingly tell of the great potential benefits of the method and properly warn workers in this field of the precautions to be observed, but provide few guiding ideas for actually doing this research.

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS

The jumbled, often profuse flow of data in a life history that an anthropologist collects has to be channeled in some preliminary way before much analytic headway can be made with it. Three ways of doing so are suggested here beyond sheer chronological succession. They are in noting (1) the dimensions or aspects of a person's life; (2) the principal turnings and the life conditions between turnings; (3) the person's characteristic means of adaptation. The dimensions provide categories for understanding the main forces that affect a life. The turnings mark major changes that a person makes and thus demarcate periods of his life. A focus on adaptation directs our notice both to changes he makes and to continuities he maintains through his life course.

DIMENSIONS

A dimension of a life history is made up of experiences that stem from a similar base and are linked in their effects on the person's subsequent actions. One such dimension is the biological, based on the individual's organic makeup and somatic development. Other distinguishable dimensions I have labelled the cultural, the social, and the psychosocial. To these must be added the unique, individual aspect of each life that is a basic consideration in life history study.

The *biological* dimension is the best documented for the human species as a whole. Each person's biological development has been broadly programmed for him in the course of human evolution. Each one's programming is affected by his genetic constitution, and this differs among groups as well as among individuals, though the behavioral significance of the group differences is far from clear. And in discussing biological development, the inclusive pronoun "he" must be put aside in some respects since the biological development of males and females differs both in timing and in kind.

The biological factors set the basic conditions for a life course; cultural factors mould the shape and content of a person's career. The *cultural* dimension lies in the mutual expectations, understandings, and behavior patterns held by the people among whom a person grows up and in whose society he becomes a participant. Each culture provides a general scenario for the life course that indicates the main divisions, tells when transitions should be made, and imputes a social meaning to biological events from birth through death. Each scenario interprets and affects the biological dimension in its own way; each provides its own chart for the progress of a life.

This cultural life plan is more a schematic outline than a detailed code. Within this outline, more detailed prescriptions of roles and behavior patterns are stipulated for particular sections of the society. These specifications commonly provide options among which the individual can make some choice. Such narrower specifications and broader choices provide the individual with his principal guides to actual social interrelations.

The *social* dimension of a life history includes the

effective interplay and real relations in the course of which the actors may alter the roles, change the nature of the choices, and shift the cultural definitions. So the cultural expectations for a life course may be revised in midcourse of actual lives. In focusing on the social dimension, the observer studies those acts of personal choice that are characteristic of the person's group and the common ways of working out the recurrent conflicts of life. Some of these regularities are recognized by the participants, others are not.

The cultural and the social dimensions, as devices for analysis, often overlap, but the difference in emphasis is clear and the distinction seems to be analytically useful. The cultural dimension has to do with expectations and known forms shared by the people of a group with the cognitive and normative thought they have in common. The social dimension, in contrast, has to do with their social acts, conflicts, solutions, and choices. It includes the emotional experiencing of reward and penalty and the outcome of action in maintaining or changing behavior patterns.

Within the study of the *psychosocial* dimension, the observer focuses on the individual's subjective world, his general feelings and attitudes. These are individually experienced, but each individual's subjective experience is likely to be similar, in some considerable part, to that of others in his culture and society. Psychosocial development in the course of a life has been more extensively discussed than have characteristic developments in the cultural and social aspects (cf. Bühler 1967:83-85). Freud's formulations provided a foundation for Erikson's (1964, 1968*a, b*) influential scheme of the individual's development. Erikson outlines eight stages through which all persons pass, each characterized by a particular psychological encounter in which a person must somehow cope with opposing trends in himself. (In the earliest stage of infancy, for example, the encounter is between basic trust and mistrust [1968*b*:286-87].)

The sequence, Erikson says, varies "in tempo and intensity" according to cultural and personal differences. This outline resembles a profile of biological development in that it is postulated as universal to the human species and the development is taken to be epigenetic. That is, the organism is seen as unfolding gradually in time and becoming more differentiated by cumulative stages.

The psychological dispositions listed in this sequence have to do with a person's general attitudes toward others and with his feelings toward and image of himself. The observer's emphasis in this view is on subjective response more than on biological capacity, on introspective feeling more than on prospective pattern, on generalized attitudes more than on social interaction.

Other postulated sequences emphasize different psychological variables and deal mainly with the earlier years of life. Piaget (1968) has contributed a long and important series of studies in which he and his colleagues have formulated stages of cognitive development and of adaptive behavior. Kohlberg (1968) has worked out a series of stages in the development of moral judgments. Loevinger (1966) has sketched

an overview of stages of ego development. Leighton and his colleagues have done extensive research in social psychiatry, taking a psychobiological approach and using life history materials (cf. Leighton 1959). One contribution of this research is an extensive life history, with considerable analysis, of a Navaho Indian (Leighton and Leighton 1949). Important psychological studies on life history materials have been done by Bühler (1933) and Frenkel (1936). More recently, Bühler (1962:108-9) has formulated a chart of basic psychological tendencies in the development of the self which shows the stage at which each tendency is particularly important (see also Bühler and Massarik 1968).

These studies of psychosocial aspects have dealt mainly with persons from European or North American societies; the research methods used have been more those of clinic and questionnaire than of long-term observation and direct recording in the context of reality. Their results should therefore be tested and amplified in the light of broader studies of life history.

Underlying all formulations about life development is that aspect of a life history that is special and unique. Out of the study of individual lives, all life history generalizations are distilled. General concepts must be tested against individual experience. Yet a person's life cannot be neatly summarized and totally wrapped up in our generalizations. Simmons (1942:388) notes that each person is a creature and carrier of his culture, a manipulator in his society and also, even if only in a minute way, a creator of culture. While illuminating studies can be made about the conditions and limitations of creativeness in a society, each person's creativity cannot be fully accounted for by such studies.

This limitation to generalization is no more than the limit on all social research that abstracts common features from particular instances. But it becomes more poignantly apparent to those who try to study the whole life of a real person. And in the study of a life, the student tends to become especially aware of the person as an active doer and seeker and not only as a passive recipient or a subject for scientific generalizations. Despite this ungeneralizable aspect of life history, cogent generalizations about a single account and comparative generalizations about many life histories, across cultural lines, can usefully be made. The guideline of dimensions is one sorting device for doing so; the ideas of turnings and adaptations complement it.

TURNINGS

The principal periods of a life are marked by the main turnings, the major transitions, that the person has made. Such a turning is accomplished when the person takes on a new set of roles, enters into fresh relations with a new set of people, and acquires a new self-conception. The turning thus combines elements of three dimensions, the new roles being mainly cultural, the new interactions being social, and the new self-conception being psychosocial. A turning may occur through a single event or experience, a

"turning point," or it may be a gradual shift. A marriage ceremony can be a turning point, while the shift from active adult to less active elder is often a gradual process. Some turnings are ascribed, others are more self-chosen. Certain turnings are quite absolutely ascribed, for example, entrance of every child into school in American society or early marriage for girls in the community in which Gandhi grew up. Other turnings are left to family or individual choice. The manner of carrying out some turnings may be prescribed in detail; other turnings are more improvised. Some improvisation takes place even in a closely prescribed ritual such as a funeral or a wedding. Conversely, a person who improvises a turning in his life commonly follows some established patterns. A person's own view of the watersheds in his life may not exactly coincide with the significant turnings that an observer may notice, but that view may nonetheless be important in the way in which he directs his life.

Any one turning, then, may be relatively more ascribed or self-chosen, prescribed or improvised, quick or protracted, but each provides an index to the person's conduct after the turning. Once we understand the major transitions we also know something about the main parts of his life, that is, about his salient roles, social relations, and self-conception from one transition to the next.

ADAPTATIONS

A life history develops over time, and so the parts entail periods of time. These periods are commonly drawn as segments along a curve, yet the depiction of a life as a trajectory, rising out of nothing, ascending to a zenith of something, and falling back to nothing, is not a very useful analogy. A life does not proceed in a projectable, unilinear curve like a cannon shot. Rather, it involves ongoing development in various spheres of behavior; it includes continuous adjustment and periodic adaptation. Personal adaptations are both the source of social adaptation and also responses to it.

Adaptation is a built-in process, because every person must, in the course of his life, alter some of his established patterns of behavior to cope with new conditions. Each person *changes* his ways in order to maintain *continuity*, whether of group participation or social expectation or self-image or simply survival. Some of these new conditions are imposed by his own physical development. Others arise from changing external conditions, whether of custom or climate, family or society.

Changes in behavior that remove particular stimuli to action have been labelled adjustments. Personal adaptations, by contrast, are changes that have major effect on a person's life and on his basic relations with others. Kluckhohn (1962) applied the term "adaptive" to behavior that contributed to the survival of the individual or the group.

Questions about adaptation in the study of a life history can be especially useful when an outline of the

turnings and dimensions is available. We can then look to the main opportunities and limitations that the person faced at each juncture and ask how and why the person adapted his behavior (or failed to do so) at this point, what he tried to change and what he tried to maintain.

These brief definitions of dimensions, turnings, and adaptations in life history study will have to be amplified as they are used in specific studies. To illustrate some potential uses, I turn to the life history of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who was born on October 2, 1869 and fell to an assassin's bullets on January 30, 1948. In the course of those 78 years the turnings of his life had much to do with some major turnings in the history of the people of India and perhaps, some say, with the future course of other peoples as well.

II

GANDHI'S LIFE HISTORY AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

Why begin with Gandhi? There are certain manifest advantages. Many able scholars and writers have contributed to the study of Gandhi; they offer a variety of approaches for viewing his career. Moreover, my own interest in him has grown in recent years, partly as I have learned more about his cultural background and social milieu, partly because of the current trend of world affairs, for which some of his concepts may be both relevant and revolutionary.

I saw Gandhi only once, at the railway station in Madras City in 1937. The station and the streets around it were thick with throngs of people waiting to demonstrate their allegiance to him and, in the Indian way, to take darshan, to acquire a bit of supernal merit through a glimpse of—even better, a touch of—the revered leader. He was duly greeted and garlanded by the notables who received him; there were, as I recall, enthusiastic shouts and a good deal of jostling for vantage as his procession passed by, but the general feeling was of worshipful respect rather than of political arousal. The power of his charisma lay thick upon the crowd.

Soon after that, I read his autobiography again and still later met and talked briefly about him with his son, Devadas.³ I was intrigued by him as a person and as a social force but also put off by some of his assumptions and procedures, so I was not then attracted to try to understand more about him. But as I learned more about his society and civilization and read more about his life and times, particularly in the writings of Bose (1953, 1966) and of Erikson (1966, 1968c, 1969), I became increasingly interested in working out some of the main themes in his life and

³ I was in India when Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, died. The newspaper accounts of their relationship that I read then led me to remark in a letter (written on February 25, 1944) that a study of his life would be anthropologically fascinating if he had done no more than sit all his days before a pile of cloth in a bazaar shop. With the effect he had on all of the people of India, I thought, his story should become a classic case in psychology and anthropology.

influence. My renewed interest led me to search out and talk with one of his grandsons and with a distant kinsman and also to discuss his impact with a few of those who had known him well.

The advantages of studying Gandhi for the purposes of life history analysis are considerable, but so are the disadvantages. His experiences are as fully documented, his thoughts and deeds as voluminously recorded, even his personal habits and whims as meticulously detailed as any man's have been in human history. He wrote a great deal during his 20s, and in the last 40 years of his life he systematically wrote every day. The 32d volume of his *Collected Works* appeared in 1969; it covers his writings of the year 1926. A total of more than 50 volumes is planned. He wrote his autobiography to "tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth," including personal motives and failings as well as public aims and accomplishments (1957:xii). There was little or nothing in his life that he wanted to keep private. He insisted on describing in detail, and frequently in writing, everything about himself from his peristalsis to his political dilemmas. He often presented himself in his writings as a case history from which he as well as others could learn.

Moreover, his life and work have been studied from many different approaches. I have mentioned the contributions of the anthropologist Bose and the psychoanalyst Erikson. To list just a few others, there are the works by the sociologist Unnithan (1956), by the historian and former member of the Indian Civil Service Moon (1969), by the political scientists Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) and Bondurant (1965), and by the writers Nanda (1968) and Ashe (1968). There are Tendulkar's (1960) eight-volume biography and three large biographical tomes by his longtime associate Pyarelal (1956, 1958, 1965). Gandhi was made known to a wide public in Europe and America through a number of writings about him beginning in the 1920s, particularly through a book by Rolland (1924). In the centenary year of his birth, 1969, there was a freshening of the flow of writing about him—the large book of essays edited by Biswas (1969) is one of several important contributions—and there is no sign that the flow will soon end.

The very bulk of text and commentary presents a formidable task to the enquirer. If the record is full, it is in some ways overfull. It is not easy to see Gandhi in a fresh view, without influence of one or another of the notions that have become common. For students from other societies, who have not known Gandhi either as charismatic presence or as official icon, it is not easy to sift the tales and testimonies, to distinguish the real man from the genuine myth. Even the manner of referring to him has come to carry certain connotations, at least in India. The respectful-affectionate suffix is usually used when he is referred to, as Gandhiji rather than just as Gandhi, and omitting it may imply some reason for not using the respectful form. And, as frequently happens to the memory of a founding father, disciples build up an aura and canonical lore at which detractors arise to scoff.

These conditions are not uncommon in historical-

biographic research. The more serious research question for our present purposes is whether the life history of so singular a man can be a useful source for general concepts about method, culture, society, personality. No person can be labelled "typical" in all respects, and students of life history must always grapple with the question of the typicality of their subjects (cf. Aberle 1951:118-19). As a renowned leader, Gandhi is by definition atypical. He was strongly aware of his uniqueness, or at least of highly unusual aspects of his conduct. Most of the critical turnings in his life after the age of 19 were self-chosen, and much of his role behavior was self-created. This was far from typical, particularly for a person of his society and culture.

Yet throughout his unique career he evoked ideas and emotions so deeply characteristic of his countrymen that millions of them recognised in him their own deep-rooted feelings. In some ways, too, his methods typified those used by religious reformers and social innovators in India before him as well as after. Like all other men, he was both typical and atypical, though each in an uncommon degree. But the examination of his life history does offer some especially good vistas for our study of life history in general.

Gandhi lived successively in four geographic areas, and it happens that the years he spent in each include a major turning and mark a principal phase of his career. The first phase covers the years of his development up to the age of 19 in the Kathiawad region of the present state of Gujarat. His birthplace and childhood home was Porbandar, a small seaport town on the northwestern coast of India. When he was seven, his family moved to Rajkot, an inland town 120 mi. from Porbandar and also the seat of a little princely state. There he went through primary school and high school and spent one term in a college at Bhavnagar. Then he had three intensive, critical years as a student in England. After a brief stay back in India he went to South Africa, where he worked as a lawyer and political leader from his 23d to his 43d year. On his final return to India from South Africa he made his home in Gujarat, but he quickly became a national leader and the scene of his work took in all of India, far beyond the Kathiawad towns of his youth.

Within each of these four periods he made other turnings, but the others can best be subsumed, I believe, in the four major periods. One exception may be the turning he was beginning to make in the last months of his life, when he worked, mainly in Bengal, at reconciling Hindus and Muslims. He seemed to be taking on new roles, social relations, and perhaps a revised self-conception in his 77th and 78th years, though he was not given time to develop this potential turning in his life.⁴ In each period he became something other than he had been before; in each he made a turning that developed out of his previous experience.

⁴ Dasgupta (1969) contends that Gandhi "adopted a true Gandhian attitude toward the Hindu-Muslim problem only in the years 1945-47 and not any earlier."

To the events and feelings of these times of his life, the general questions suggested above can be put. What turnings did Gandhi experience? What new roles, social relations, and self-image did he undertake? What adaptations was he making? That is, what was he trying to change, what was he trying to preserve, and why? What were the opportunities and limitations of each period? What dimensions were relevant at each of the major turnings and periods? We can try to answer only some of these questions in this illustrative overview, with particular attention to his youth and young manhood.

THE CULTURAL LIFE PLAN IN KATHIAWAD

Very little can be known about the biological dimension of Gandhi's development, though one salient feature is clear. He was endowed with great motor energy that he turned into an extraordinary capacity for work. His close associate, Pyarelal, wrote (1965:12) that Gandhi's energy was phenomenal: "He could go on working day after day and week after week with only three or four hours of sleep—sometimes without any sleep at all." His elder sister remembered that when he was very young, he "was restless as mercury, could not sit still even for a little while"; she and the maid, who also looked after him, had to be alert constantly because of his locomotor energy (Pyarelal 1965:194-95). To the end of his life, Gandhi could command the energy that the great tasks he set for himself required. Without such biological capacity, he might not have been inclined to say, as he often did, "God never appears to you in person but always in action" (cf. Erikson 1969:93, 108; Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:228-29).

Gandhi was much concerned with his own physiology, particularly with what he ate and when and how, and he liked to give advice to others about their personal biology. In part this was a reflection of the general concern with biological functions in orthodox Hindu circles. The people among whom Gandhi was reared assumed that the social rank of a person's group was a central element in his life, and this rank depended in part on what and how each member ate and how he controlled other biological functions. Gandhi created his own intense version of these concerns, but the concerns are in the cultural and personal domains rather than in the biological.

His development along the cultural dimension during his first 19 years followed quite faithfully the life plan expected for one of his varna category, of his jati (the endogamous group usually termed caste or sub-caste), and of his family. He was born into the third of the four varnas of Hindu scripture, the Vaishya, whose occupations are supposed to be in trade, with some allowance, especially in Kathiawad, for other occupations such as government service. Their traditional style is more in the quietist, ritualistically observant mode than in the more activist warrior-ruler tradition of the Kshatriya category or in the priestly-

learned mode of the Brahmin groups. Men of all these three higher categories should, according to scriptural precepts, pass through the life stages of student, householder, and (in two phases) religious recluse. Like other grand schemes of scripture, this four-stage plan is seldom followed literally, but it does provide some general notions of how a life should proceed. One such notion is that quite different lifestyles are appropriate to different times of life—an idea that Gandhi once emphasized in a letter to his son Manilal (Pyarelal 1965:207).

The actual course of one's life, for a person born in Kathiawad in 1869, was closely shaped by the expectations held by the people of one's jati and marked in the rites of passage observed by them. The jati includes all of one's kinsmen by descent and potential kinsmen through marriage. They are one's ritual equals vis-à-vis the other ranked groups of society and usually provide one's most dependable allies in the fierce competition for economic livelihood and social rank. A person's most intimate and supportive relations are commonly within his jati and not outside it.

Gandhi was a Modh Vania by jati. Though much has been written about this most illustrious of the Modh Vanias, very little has been written about the jati itself. From the evidence that is available, however, we can surmise that the Modh Vanias are much like the many mercantile jatis of northern and western India collectively known as Banias (Enthoven 1922:412-42; Nathubhai 1893:372-451; 1900:406-417). The word Bania (or Vania) is used by others to evoke the not-very-favorable stereotype that commonly adheres to tradesmen in agrarian societies. Shrewd, grasping, cool-headed, and cold-hearted are common elements of this image. The people of a Bania jati see themselves, of course, in quite a different light, as hardworking, frugal, warmly loyal to family and kin, fervent in religious observance. They tend to be strict vegetarians and Vaishnavas, followers of the Vishnu aspect of Hinduism in which personal devotion to a deity is especially valued (Toothi 1935; Enthoven 1922:423; Pyarelal 1965:178-79).

The traditional life plan prescribed for Modh Vanias, or indeed for anyone in the higher jatis, allowed for little self-choice. When Gandhi was growing up, a Modh Vania boy had no say about whom he should marry and when; he had little option about his life's work; he did not get much opportunity to assert an individual identity until quite late in his life. Not long out of boyhood a Modh Vania youth was married; Gandhi was 13 at his wedding. Marriage being a central event for the family and the jati, it was thought much too important to be decided by youngsters. The prospective bride and groom were only informed about their impending union, not consulted.

One of the first occasions when a man could openly make decisions about his own life course came when it was time for his own child to be married. The kind of match he could arrange reflected on his personal prestige as well as on the social standing of his family in the jati. He was expected to negotiate, to manage,

to manipulate in order to make a match that would do him credit. All the resources of wealth and power that he had been building in previous years could now be used to the advantage of his personal reputation as well as that of his family.

Another choice typically came after the death of his father. Then a man felt strong pressure, sooner or later, to set up a household with his own wife and children, to separate physically and legally from the joint family they shared with his brothers and their wives and children. In the end the decision was typically reached to make the break, but the process of arriving at it was often turbulent and troubled (cf. Mandelbaum 1970:125-30).

Both these major choices would normally confront a man when he was in his 30s or older. There were, in addition, two other kinds of choice, one having to do with religion and the other with social status. Both were important in Gandhi's family background.

In religion, a man or woman had some leeway to choose a particular deity for special devotion or to join with one of the Hindu cults or sects for style of worship. A person could also choose to be especially stringent in religious observance. Gandhi's mother came from a family that belonged to an eclectic sect whose founders had sought to reconcile Hinduism and Islam. She remained eclectic in her beliefs and was very stringent in her religious practices (Gandhi 1957:4-5, 33; Pyarelal 1965:213-14). The other options had to do with advancing the status of one's family within the jati and of one's jati in the local social system. Men could feel justified in choosing new roles and occupations if these might result in advancement.

One of Gandhi's ancestors, six generations before him, had given up trade (presumably that of grocer, as the name implies) and had become an official of the Rana's government. Gandhi's grandfather, his father's brother, and his father had further raised the reputation of the family by becoming chief ministers in small princely states (Porbandar State had a population of 72,077 in 1872; Rajkot State had 36,770). The actual rewards of high office in a little place were not enormous, as is attested by the fact that in Porbandar during Gandhi's childhood his whole family—the First Minister, his wife, and four children—lived in a room measuring 19½ ft. by 13 ft. with an attached kitchen “in which hardly two persons could comfortably sit” (Pyarelal 1965:191; P. Gandhi 1957:4-5). Nevertheless, the family had become a prominent one in its jati and in the principality.

Gandhi's father had held his position for 27 years, even though he had little formal education and less English. But he apparently realized that if one of his sons were thereafter to hold a comparable position, under the tightened control of British officials, he would have to have an education in English, possibly even in England (cf. Pyarelal 1965:184). In the 1880s few Modh Vania boys had so far departed from the traditional life plan as to undergo an English education. To go to England and inevitably to be ritually defiled there was, in the views of influential elders of the jati, a cause for outcasting.

When Gandhi was ready to take that critical step,

his father had died, but his eldest brother, as head of the family and responsible for its welfare, supported and financed the move. Gandhi wrote (1958:4) that a family friend, a Brahmin elder, had advised his brother to sell their furniture if necessary, "but anyhow send Mohandas to study in London. I think that is the only way to keep [up the] reputation of your deceased father." Years later, Gandhi recalled (1957:36) that he would have preferred to study medicine, but his brother had objected that it was not a fit profession for a Vaishnava. The respected adviser had a different objection—that a medical degree would not make a Diwan (a chief minister) of him, "and I want you to be a Diwan, or if possible, something better. Only in that way could you take under your protecting care your large family."

His brother could justify the move for economic and status reasons, but Mohandas himself had to overcome other obstacles. Foremost was his mother's objection to his going abroad—that he would be defiled by contact with unclean things and impure persons. He overcame her qualms by taking a vow that in England he would not "touch wine, women, and meat" (1957:39). The objections of some of the jati elders were also formidable. They tried to block his plans in several ways and in the end the elders in Bombay formally cast him out of the jati. Gandhi made his way around the obstacles they set up and was not deterred by the outcasting, the most dire punishment at their disposal.

Up until the time of his decision to go, Gandhi's life experiences had been much like those of other youths of similar jati and family, of that time and culture. His family's social position had modified the usual Modh Vania life plan by providing an opening toward higher education. In high school, Gandhi acquired enough command of English and enough academic knowledge to open a way for him to vastly expanded social horizons. And in high school he made friends with classmates of other jatis than his own.

Outwardly Mohandas Gandhi had followed quite a normal cultural progression for one of his jati and a normal social development for a son of an eminent family. What his development was like inwardly, in the psychosocial dimension, Gandhi himself described at some length in his autobiography and elsewhere. This record has been ably discussed by Pyarelal, Erikson, and the Rudolphs, among others. But since there are so few comparable testimonies it is difficult to know whether Gandhi was as characteristic in this respect as he was in the cultural dimension. My own impression is that he was—that at age 19 he was quite similar, in his psychological makeup, to other young men of his culture and class.

Each cultural life plan has both explicit and implicit consequences for psychosocial development. One who was raised in Gandhi's cultural environment could scarcely avoid having explicit concern with such things as his ingestion and other bodily processes, with the importance of avoiding pollution, with the value of asceticism and the counterpart disvalue of some of the sensual satisfactions. Even if the person later rejected some of these taboos, as Gandhi rejected the idea that there were Untouchables, his whole

inner sensitivity had been moulded by the external insistences of those who trained him while he was young.

The explicit impress began in earliest infancy. The ritual of childbirth presaged the themes that would be repeated for a child constantly and intensively during his childhood. Mother and infant were secluded for 40 days, debarred from normal relations because they were considered to have been made vulnerable by the very experience of parturition. Their diet, their movements, their contacts were closely regulated until society deemed them to be rid of the birth pollution and fit for the company of family and friends (Enthoven 1922:416-17; see also Mandelbaum 1970:186). Thereafter the child learned over and over that what he ate, where he went, whom he touched had electric effect on his own goodness or badness and might even endanger the status of those who loved him. As a child Gandhi teased about these matters, in the way he later liked to tease his friends. His sister recalled that Moniya (his childhood name) would tell his mother that he had just touched an Untouchable and then, on being questioned, laugh and deny it (Pyarelal 1965:195). Though as a child he might tease about these touch taboos and in later years abjure them entirely, as a mature man he upheld much of the ethic concerning purity and pollution that he had absorbed as a child.

CRITICAL ROLES AND CONVENTIONAL TURNINGS OF YOUTH

A life plan also has implicit consequences for the person's social and psychosocial development. In Gandhi's case, the implicit forces became especially significant in connection with three roles that he played from ages 13 to 17, between his marriage and the death of his father. One of these roles was thrust upon him, that of husband; another he chose and maintained against his family's opposition, that of friend to a Muslim youth; the third was intensified by circumstances, that of devoted, nursing son to his ailing, failing father. The results of each encounter, Gandhi attested, deeply affected his lifelong attitudes.

In the brief chapter of the *Autobiography* entitled "Playing the Husband" Gandhi tells how he began his married life. Two aspects of the marriage are reported; one concerns the "devouring passion" of his sexuality, the other his efforts to dominate his wife, Kasturbai. (Kasturba is the more respectful, matronly form of her name.) In sexual matters, Gandhi's views in his mature years paralleled the precepts of Hindu scripture, though he followed them far more literally and rigorously than did most other Hindus. In the matter of marital dominance, his inclinations seem to have been quite characteristic of young husbands in that society.

Gandhi noted that in their sexual relations, Kasturbai was never "the temptress." She was illiterate, and he was anxious to teach her, "but lustful love left me no time." He says that he was saved from "the disasters of lustful love" by the custom that a young

couple were not allowed to remain together for long. During the first five years of their marriage, Kasturbai was away from him periodically in her parents' home for about two years. After that came his years in England, and on his return they were also not continually together. "Then came the call from South Africa and that found me already fairly free from the carnal appetite" (1957:13-14, 205).

He went to South Africa in 1893, when he was 23. Their four sons were born between 1888 and 1900. Increasingly he relinquished sexual relations, and in 1906, when he was 37, he finally took the vow of celibacy that he kept for the rest of his life. Celibacy, after the householder stage, is in the scriptural plan for the proper ages of man, though Gandhi never sought to become the totally withdrawn religious recluse which that plan proposes.

A young couple of the Modh Vaniyas, as in the higher jatis generally, began their marital relations at a relatively early age within a household where there was strong denigration of the couple's sexual interest in each other (cf. Madan 1965:134-37). Gandhi's first years of marriage followed this pattern, and he emerged from them with characteristic attitudes about sexual relations. He later wrote that a husband should avoid privacy with his wife because "the only possible motive for privacy between husband and wife is the desire for sexual enjoyment." He became unshakably convinced that love and lust go ill together, that love begins where lust ends (1957:278; 1958:56; Pyarelal 1965:204-5). This facet of Gandhi's belief may puzzle some today; but in the 1880s, in a Modh Vania household in a Kathiawad town, there were no recognized alternatives to the assumptions about sex and marriage that Gandhi accepted.

Of his struggle "to make good my authority as a husband" (1957:13), Gandhi wrote that he insisted that Kasturbai should not go anywhere without his permission, and she equally insisted that she could visit the temple or friends as she liked. He was most eager to teach her to read and write, but she was not an eager or successful pupil. There were quarrels, and he felt thwarted and defeated in these efforts. Since both were 13 at their marriage, Kasturbai would have been more mature physically for several years, and this would not have been to Mohandas's advantage. "In spite of all my pressure," he wrote (1960:v), "she would do as she wished."

We must note, however, that her scope for doing as she wished was exceedingly limited. A young wife of that society could do very little on her own. Within the household she was under the strict supervision of her mother-in-law. Whenever an older male came in view she had to cover her face, and in general she had to make herself as inconspicuous as she could. She could not venture beyond the house compound alone except perhaps, as Kasturbai did, to go to the temple or to the nearby homes of friends and relatives.

Yet Mohandas wanted to exert dominance even over the narrow choices available to Kasturbai. It may be that this also reflects a characteristic, though implicit, inclination. His whole society was hierarchically stratified; the question of who was dominant and who subordinate in social interaction was a prevalent and

critical one. Even in family relations, for example, among brothers, rivalry regularly appeared even though there was supposed to be none (cf. Pyarelal 1965:193; Mandelbaum 1970:63-66). In the wedding ceremony of Vaniyas of Gujarat there is a symbolic enactment of the struggle for dominance between husband and wife. At one point the couple sit before the family deity in the bride's home and play a guessing game of odds and evens with coins. The very last rite of the wedding is a second playing of the same game, but before the family deity in the bridegroom's house. "Luck in this game is an omen of luck in the game of life. The winner of the game will be the ruler of the house." (Enthoven 1922:420-21; see also Nathubhai 1893:389; 1900).

Although a young wife was required to give every sign of deference to her husband in the presence of others, that evidently did not obviate the possibility that she might exercise some control over him in private. Certainly the elders of a joint family were commonly concerned about that possibility. Perhaps some young husbands, at long last in a relationship in which they should be securely dominant, felt a deep chagrin that even in this role their dominance was not entirely firm. Perhaps also this helped them to feel that one could never get enough social dominance or that the usual quest for social dominance was part of a game they could never securely win. Whatever may have been the psychological outcome of such encounters for others, Gandhi later thought that his early tussles with Kasturbai had impressed him with the power of nonviolence (Nanda 1968:21; Pyarelal 1965:205).⁵ But he was able to learn from her example only later.

The second of the significant roles in these years was that of best friend. This relationship was not in the cultural life plan at all. Friendship is a voluntary bond; Vania expectations neither preclude nor prescribe it. There is a vague presumption among Indian villagers and townspeople that one's friends should be kinsmen or jati fellows. But high-school boys are likely to meet a wider range of their age-mates than uneducated boys meet, and classmates, of whatever jati, are united as fellow sufferers and allies against the tribe of teachers. Gandhi's friends in the Alfred High School in Rajkot in 1881 were of various jatis, and his best friend was a Muslim, Sheikh Mehtab. Under the heading "A Tragedy," Gandhi recounts the evil ways into which his friend led him, among them vicious suspicions about his wife, and concludes, "Whenever I think of those dark days of doubts and suspicions, I am filled with loathing of my folly and lustful cruelty, and I deplore my blind devotion to my friend" (1957:25). That devotion influenced his psychosocial development, perhaps in a way that was characteristic of other youths also.

Sheikh Mehtab was a classmate of Gandhi's elder brother. When his brother, his mother, and his wife warned him that he was in bad company, Gandhi

⁵ Not that he suddenly dropped his attempts to direct her or that she quickly acceded to all his directives. Even when both were 72 years old and in prison together, he set aside time each day to teach her "Gujarati, Gita, geography and sometimes history." By then she was more amenable but less teachable (Nayar 1960:45).

admitted his friend's "weaknesses" but pled, "He cannot lead me astray, as my association with him is meant to reform him" (1957:19). But as it turned out, the would-be reformer was himself caught up in a different kind of reform. Anti-British feeling was rising; high-school boys were excited by it. They seized the idea that Englishmen were physically superior because they ate meat and so Indians too should eat meat to increase their strength and thereby become powerful enough to wrest their country's independence (Pyarelal 1965:209-10). Mehtab, whose family and kin had no compunctions about eating meat, induced Mohandas Gandhi, whose family and kin had the strongest revulsion against doing so, to share half a dozen "meat-feasts" with him. Mohandas was so uneasy about lying to his parents about this that he soon forswore any more experiments of the kind. Mehtab also arranged for another experiment, with a prostitute, though Gandhi, as he relates, was saved from this iniquity through the grace of being struck helpless, presumably by fear. Finally, Mehtab diligently fanned the flames of Gandhi's suspicions of his wife.

The autobiography mentions other boyhood misdeeds. With a young kinsman he secretly tried smoking. With his brother he sold a piece of gold clipped from an armband, lied about it to his parents, then confessed in writing to his father and felt the joy of confession and forgiveness. There was no confession of the unconfessable escapades with Mehtab and no cleansing absolution. The friendship was evidently not a smooth and easy one; in describing the events just before his departure for England, Gandhi says, "I was always quarreling with my friend Sheikh Mehtab" (1958:6).

Why, then, did he keep up the friendship? Gandhi mentions his admiration of his friend's athletic ability and bravery. Erikson (1969:135) gives an insightful answer: ". . . Mehtab played perfectly the personage on whom to project one's personal devil and thus became the personification of Mohandas' *negative identity*, that is, of everything in himself which he tried to isolate and subdue and which yet was part of him." Through Mehtab, Mohandas could test some of the fundamentals of his culture to find out for himself what they really meant to him. The quarreling may well have been part of the continual testing of modes of social relations as well as of cultural verities.

The testing of limits—limits of precept and of self—is common in male adolescents in many, perhaps all, societies. For Mohandas Gandhi and for some of his contemporaries, that personal testing overlapped a wider testing of political and cultural realities. Reform was in the air. Speaking at a send-off party in his honor at the high school on July 4, 1888, he urged other boys to follow him and "to work wholeheartedly for big reforms in India" (1958:2). But it was not until his South African years that he found out what kind of reformer he wanted to be.

Mohandas came away from his adolescent experimenting unalterably convinced of the validity of the taboos he had tested. Though the friendship was not culturally prescribed and the testing was not socially sanctioned, this may have been the common upshot

of a young man's testing in the Kathiawad of Gandhi's youth, as it has been in other places and in others' times of youth.⁶

The third of the critical roles in his youth was that of son to his father. Gandhi tells how a drama about a son's extreme devotion to his parents left an "indelible impression" on his mind. His account of stealing and then confessing to his father ends with the words that the confession "increased his affection for me beyond measure" (1957:28).

His father had suffered injuries on the way to Mohandas's wedding (or so Gandhi later remembered), when the coach in which he was travelling overturned, and for the three years from then until his death he was sick and steadily declining. During those years Gandhi helped to nurse him; it was a kind of service he valued then as he did in his later life. But, as he tells in the chapter "My Father's Death and My Double Shame," on the "dreadful night" he had been massaging his father when his uncle relieved him. Gandhi went straight to his bedroom and woke his wife with his "animal passion." Within a few minutes came a knock at the door and the word that his father was dead. The shame of having left his dying father and having done so because of "carnal desire," Gandhi wrote, "is a blot that I have never been able to efface or forget . . ." (1957:30-31).

That experience and its consequences have been discussed most illuminatingly by Erikson (1969:128), who points out that the episode resembles similar encounters in the lives of other spiritual innovators. Erikson calls it "the curse," a charge incurred in childhood or youth that can never be settled and that remains felt as an unpaid debt through all the rest of a lifetime. While the blot is presented in the autobiography as the result of a single episode, it probably is, in the clinical term, a "cover memory," a condensation and projection of a long-term conflict in one dramatic scene.

This conflict rises out of a man's common difficulties in being a son to his father during his shift from childhood to manhood. It is part of the characteristic human dilemma that Erikson (p. 132) calls the generational complex because "it derives from the fact that a man experiences life and death—and past and future—as a matter of the turnover of generations." A man is apt to face questions of his own relation to time and tradition, of his separate identity, through encounters with his father. This common encounter and dilemma are generally included under the label of Oedipus Complex, though the usual connotations of that term are to the infantile and neurotic aspects of the experience rather than to the constructive and existential aspects. The interesting question, Erikson observes, is how Gandhi, like other

⁶ Disillusionment with friends was characteristic of the men Carstairs (1957) studied in a Rajasthan town. Carstairs mentions cases of "repeated disillusionments" and says, "When I introduced the theme of friendship into my interviews, the responses, though various, were unanimous on one point: none of my informants could say that he had ever had a *true* friend" (1957:44; see also 221, 235, 314).

highly uncommon men, could reenact this existential curse in a way that many of his countrymen could understand and use for socially constructive purposes.

Though Gandhi was to become a highly uncommon man, at the time of his father's death and in his response to it he was not so uncommon.⁷ Gandhi's relations with his father were quite within the usual expectations of his society. Among the Modh Vanias, as among the higher jatis generally, a father is supposed to receive utmost respect from his son and to command his obedience through most of the son's life. A son is duty-bound, dharma-directed, to be deferent always to his father in word and deed. As a youth Gandhi followed this pattern faithfully and seems to have taken it even more seriously than most others did. He was deeply shaken by his lapses from a son's dutiful conduct. He wrote that when his father forgave him upon his confession of theft, he took it then as an expression of his father's love, "but today I know that it was pure *Ahimsa*." His own confession showed, he later reflected, the power of truth; his father's response showed the power of *ahimsa*, nonviolence. And his shameful behavior at the time of his father's death demonstrated to him that he had to struggle always to free himself from "the shackles of lust" (1957: 28, 31).

Rudolph and Rudolph (1967: 206-7) conclude that the circumstances of his father's death "moved Gandhi toward celibacy and the consensual mode." They go on to explain cogently that when Gandhi spoke of each person's imperative need to control his "carnal self" he meant not only sexual desire but also hatred and anger. And he took his own relations with his father, as he vividly recalled them, as prototypical lessons to be applied over a vast scene of history and society. These lessons concerned ways of handling authority, lovingly but effectively; they were not about ways of mitigating the pervasive deference of son to father. Gandhi's relations with his father (and with his mother also) reinforced for him the traditional norms about this relationship, just as his experiences as husband and as friend bolstered in him attitudes that were common in his society.

In all, Gandhi's life course in Kathiawad up to the age of 19 had produced a young man who was quite typical of his region, his jati, his class. Looking ahead to the career he was to make, we can detect that he was different in some crucial ways, but the future Mahatma was scarcely visible to the young Mohandas Gandhi who sailed for England in 1888. When he was asked in an interview in 1891 why he had come to England to study law, he answered, "In a word, ambition" (1958: 53).

The turnings he had made up to then were largely those specified by his culture and inherent in his

society. We can say little about his development in terms of the epigenetic stages formulated by Erikson, since Erikson himself mentions such stages only incidentally in his long, clarifying look at Gandhi's life (cf. Erikson 1969: 180). We do have Gandhi's own testimony about the critical effect on him of his roles as son, friend, and husband. His enactment of these roles, together with his less-mentioned role as student, helped to transform him from a child to a young man. The rebellious gestures he made may have been characteristic, though implicit, means through which a young man came around to maintaining the ways and values of his fathers.

These values were largely the values expressed in religion. But there were other values also involved, values that were societal, such as those concerning status advancement, and are not formally prescribed in the sacred texts. In Gandhi's case, as we have seen, this meant an opening to English culture that became a passage to England itself. His development in the next phase of his life depended not only on what he found available to him in the new milieu but also on the constraints—or better, the parameters of action—that he brought with him from the previous environment. Out of his experiences in the next three years, he revised some of these parameters and created fresh opportunities for his subsequent development.

THE INNOVATIVE ADAPTATION IN ENGLAND

The youth who sailed from Bombay on September 4, 1888 was a very provincial student. Gandhi tells that he was unable to understand spoken English readily, that he had never read a newspaper, that he was "innocent of the use of knives and forks." On his arrival in England an Indian friend had to instruct him on such points of English etiquette as not to touch other people's things at first sight, not to ask personal questions at first acquaintance, not to talk loudly ever (1957:42, 44, 47).

The young man who returned to Bombay on July 5, 1891 was a certified barrister, potentially a member of the professional classes by virtue of his education and in fact a young man of metropolitan experience and cosmopolitan interests. He was quite uncertain of his future, but he had qualified himself for a wide potential achievement. He had made a major turning, away from the life plan of his Kathiawad society and toward some career line for an English-educated lawyer in India. Thereafter his roles were largely self-chosen and self-defined, his life plan self-wrought. The kind of personal adaptation he began to make in England was one for which there were few precedents.

The continuity with which he was preoccupied from the day he set foot on the ship to England was that of keeping his vow to his mother. Whether to eat meat, how to manage as a strict vegetarian, were the main questions. He had been deluged with advice on this while he was preparing for the voyage. Most of his advisers said that he would not be able to do

⁷ Erikson mentions that in his discussion with informants who had been among Gandhi's associates and followers, some of them spontaneously offered revelations about their own lives. One theme that came up in these recollections was of "a *deep hurt* which the informant had inflicted on one of his parents or guardians and could never forget. . ." (Erikson 1968: 716-17). Perhaps there was some cultural and social confluence that imprinted this kind of painful memory on a good many other men in India as well as on Gandhi.

without meat in the cold climate. He himself had not been sure he would be able to do so; but when he found himself in the totally alien world of the ship, his resolve stiffened (1958:61).

The question did not fade after his arrival. The impression one gets from his writing of that time and from his later recollection is that he brought up the subject of his diet with most of the people with whom he talked. With an Indian friend he had long discussions about the necessity of eating meat. To all the questions about diet that he himself raised, to all the counterarguments that friends and acquaintances proposed, he reached one final answer: "A vow is a vow—it cannot be broken" (1957:47). The vow was a continuous tie to his mother and motherland; he would not relinquish it nor relinquish his continuous concern with it. And he would thereafter come back repeatedly to the stand of being helpless to change his course once he had arrived at a moral position.

He had no difficulty about another part of his vow, abstaining from wine, and only passing embarrassment about the third element, women (1957:64–66, 70–71).

Not long after his arrival in London, his dietary determination brought him, happily, to a fine circle of friends, to exciting cultural discoveries, and to a reassuring personal solution. He discovered a vegetarian restaurant where he not only enjoyed the first hearty meal since his arrival but also found a book, *Plea for Vegetarianism*, by Henry Salt. This book showed him that he could be a vegetarian through rational, intellectual choice and not only because of filial obedience and cultural ascription. Its arguments demonstrated that at least this basic value of his Indian tradition was supported by some Westerners and advocated through modern, even scientific, Western arguments. Gandhi thereafter saw himself as a vegetarian by choice, exponent of a felicitous combination of Indian tradition and modern thought. The spread of vegetarianism, he recalled, "henceforward became my mission" (1957:48).

Later, Gandhi was elected to be a member of the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society, and this brought him in contact with the leaders of the vegetarian movement. Vegetarianism, for many of them, was only one aspect of a larger movement of reform and renaissance. Some of them were politically engaged in socialist activities, others worked for particular programs of reform such as women's rights and birth control (cf. Winsten 1951; Gandhi 1957:59–60; Pyarelal 1965:238–71).

The vow had given him an entry into effervescent intellectual circles and a supportive social sphere; he developed other resources as well. He carried on his formal studies as only a student of extraordinary energy, intelligence, and dedication could do. He quickly found out that the bar examinations were relatively easy and would not take up all the time that he was required to stay in England in order to be admitted to the Bar. For about three months he "undertook the all too impossible task of becoming an English gentleman." He bought an expensive hat and suit and began taking lessons in dancing, French, elocution, and the violin. But these efforts palled and

he gave them up: "If my character made a gentleman of me, so much the better. Otherwise I should forego the ambition" (1957:50–51).

He decided to sit for the London matriculation examination even though that meant passing university-level examinations in Latin, French, and other subjects he had not studied in India. In 11 months he had passed these examinations. He then prepared himself for the law examinations, not through the usual cram courses of a few weeks' duration, but by diligent, thorough, individual study. He read Justinian in Latin and worked through the Common Law of England in "nine months of fairly hard labour" (1957:80). He passed these examinations, too, though doing so did not give him the feeling that he was qualified to practice law.

Gandhi had relatively little to say about what he gained from his formal education, perhaps because, as Erikson (1969:144) comments, "Such a man never admits that he has learned anything essential from anybody except where he chooses to ascribe to somebody else what he has already figured out for himself." In any event, he absorbed a great deal during his three years in England, from his studies, from his vegetarian friends, and from other sources in the lively intellectual climate of London. He went to hear famous preachers, returning to listen to one of them, Joseph Parker, "again and again." He attended the funeral of a famous freethinker and friend of India, Charles Bradlaugh, and there caught a glimpse of militant atheists (Pyarelal 1965:260–61). He met some Theosophists and with them read the *Bhagavad Gita* for the first time. They introduced him to Madame Blavatsky, the famous mystic, and he read one of her books: "This book stimulated in me the desire to read books on Hinduism, and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition" (1957:68).

He acquired very little, to be sure, of any skills that would be immediately useful for the ostensible purpose of his study in England, the practice of law. But he did acquire much that was far more important. He learned to speak the language fluently and to write it clearly. He took on those minor appurtenances of English culture that are major social clues, the niceties of deportment and address, of friendly bearing and courtesy. He became familiar with the contemporary currents of English thought, political as well as philosophical, relating to practical household details as well as to grand moral schemes. He saw these ideas being tried and argued; they became live issues in his awareness and not just printed arguments in boring books. Moreover, he had discovered a kind of social relationship with Englishmen that he could not have glimpsed among the English colonial administrators in India. Englishmen and even Englishwomen, he found, could be his sympathetic friends, his admiring sponsors, his companions and colleagues (cf. Oldfield 1951).

He had made broad and full use of his opportunities in England. The constraint of his vow had turned out to be an avenue to intellectual adventure and

social enlargement. He had started on a personal adaptation that combined a thorough Indian identity with modern ideas and capabilities. Gandhi concludes the story of his three years in England by telling of his misgivings about whether he was clever and knowledgeable enough to earn a living in the law, "with just a little leaven of hope mixed with my despair" (1957:83). But he also returned secure of himself as an Indian and, as was to become apparent, turned into an augmented Indian.

TURNING AWAY: THE NEGATIVE ADAPTATION

Gandhi's new strengths and capabilities were not immediately apparent to him or to anyone else on his return to India. He spent the next 21 months in a kind of indeterminate state, trying out, not very successfully, various possibilities of what he would do. In England he had well begun on his choice of what kind of person he wanted to be, and back in India he was expected to decide what he would do. In the event, he decided what he would not do.

His elder brother met him at the docks with the news of his mother's death. It was a severe shock, he wrote, but "I could even check the grief and took to life as though nothing had happened" (1957:87-88). There was no carryover as with his father's death; he owed no unpaid and unpayable debt to his mother. What he felt pressed to do now was to pick up the strands of his career, to follow the career line indicated for a man of his profession, jati, and family. His elder brother urged that before anything else he repair the rift with the caste fellows.

The section of the jati at Rajkot was willing to readmit him, but the Bombay and Porbandar elders were adamantly against doing so unless he paid a heavy fine (Pyarelal 1965:281). To please the Rajkot group, his brother took him to the sacred center at Nasik, where Gandhi ritually purified himself. At Rajkot his brother gave a caste dinner as a rite of reintegration. Gandhi never tried to be restored to caste by the other sections, and in that refusal he made the first of a series of important negative decisions of this period. Had he fought to get the ban revoked, he would have admitted what almost all of his peers took for granted, that full jati participation was a status dearly to be cherished and vigorously to be defended if challenged. In doing nothing to remove the ban, he refused to bind his own identity closely to that of his jati. More than a year after his return to India he wrote in a letter to a friend that the caste opposition was as great as ever. He asked, "Is it not almost better not to have anything to do with such fellows than to fawn upon them and wheedle their fame so that I might be considered one of them?" He added, "However I have to work with the times" (1958:72).

The ban meant that his wife's parents and other relatives could not entertain him or his wife openly; but that was a problem for her rather than for him. Her relatives were willing to meet with him secretly, but he would not consider doing anything in a clan-

destine way. "The result of my scrupulous conduct," he wrote, "was that I never had occasion to be troubled by the caste . . ." (1957:91). He never allowed himself to be close to or dependent on them either, a very uncommon posture and a considerable break with cultural expectations.

His brother's rosy hopes that he would quickly set up a lucrative professional practice came to very little. After a stay with the family in Rajkot, he moved to Bombay by himself to study Indian law, to gain experience by attending the High Court, and to get what briefs he could attract. He learned very little Indian law on his own; he did not know enough about it to benefit much from daily attendance at the High Court; and the one small case he obtained resulted in humiliating failure. Erikson (1969:160-61) notes that "a stubborn inner voice obviously did everything to sabotage any success as a lawyer either in Rajkot or in Bombay." Again, Gandhi was choosing what he would not do. Certainly he would not pay the commissions and tip the touts, as was the common lawyers' custom, because he thought it dishonorable to do so. He was dead against engaging in *khutput* (machination and intrigue) as a successful lawyer was supposed to (cf. Gandhi 1958:71).

His aversion to the expected procedures was deepened by a distasteful encounter. His brother had incurred the displeasure of the English political agent in Rajkot because of suspected complicity in an affair of some missing state jewels. It so happened that Gandhi had met this officer in England, and his brother urged him to go to the political agent to plead his case. Gandhi reluctantly did so, was received coldly, continued to argue after the political agent told him to leave, and was finally pushed out by the agent's servant. He thought of suing the agent, but when he sought advice from the leading Indian lawyer of Bombay he was told that he would accomplish nothing by pursuing the matter and that he should pocket the insult (1957:97-98). Gandhi writes that he did pocket the insult but also profited from it. He determined never again to place himself in such a false position. That is, he would never allow family obligations and cultural expectations to press him into acts that conflicted with his own sense of public obligation and personal conduct. He concludes, "This shock changed the course of my life" (1957:99). Other passages in the autobiography also proclaim life changes; most of them, like this one, confirm an ongoing direction, indicating general turnings rather than sudden swervings. In these months, Gandhi was turning away from the course that was culturally indicated and from conduct that was socially convenient (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:242-55).

He found one person during this time from whom he could learn, but in the end he could not take up the traditional role which that relationship implied. In Bombay he met a remarkable man, Raychand, who was not much older than he was but who impressed Gandhi greatly by his brilliant intellect, his modest demeanor, and his profound religiosity. Raychand made his living as a jewel merchant, but immediately after business hours he would turn to religious discourse and thought. He was a poet, had a phe-

nominal memory, and was a skilled expounder of religious philosophy, especially that of his sect of Jainism (cf. Pyarelal 1965:273-81). Through his discussions with Raychand, Gandhi clarified and strengthened his ideas about religion. Gandhi recalled, "Though I was then groping, and could not be said to have any serious interest in religious discussion, still I found his talk of absorbing interest" (1957:89).

A man who felt so drawn to such a teacher usually took him as his guru, his spiritual mentor, guide, and preceptor. Gandhi wrote that he believed in the Hindu theory of Guru, but said of Raychand, "in spite of my regard for him I could not enthrone him in my heart as Guru. The throne has remained vacant and my search still continues" (1957:89). Even in this matter, in which he felt a need, he could not accept the common custom.

In England, Gandhi had begun to combine his commitment to traditional Indian values with his selection of Western ways. He wanted to use this fusion in the service of his countrymen in some program of reform. But as an unknown young man, alienated from part of his jati, and a briefless barrister to boot, he had little scope for reformist activities. He could begin with his family, and he did so then as he was to do again later. He took a hand in the education of his small son and of his brother's children, emphasizing physical exercise. He introduced oatmeal porridge and cocoa into the family's meals and brought in some items of European dress. He tried again, with little success, to teach his wife to read and write.

Such familial reforms were not, in Gandhi's eyes, trivial or makeshift gestures. In later years he took continuing interest in the affairs of all his family, both immediate and extended. He frequently gave advice when asked in the family affairs of others, even of strangers who poured out their problems to him in letters. As for his immediate family, he made no distinction between his public ethic and his private ethic. At one time during this period Gandhi sent Kasturbai back to her father's house; "for he could not come to terms with her," Erikson comments, "until she would accept the fact that his family, to remain his family, would have to become part of a reform community reformed by him" (1969:159; also see Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:159, 245).

He held fast to his self-image as a reformer, but it was, in all, a bleak time. A year later, after this interval was behind him, he wrote out some advice for beginning barristers like himself. Writing as "one who has undergone the bitter experience" (Pyarelal 1965:285), he emphasized that a reserve of money was essential to tide them over until they could get their practice well started. Yet money was not the root cause of the problems he had had with the caste elders, or of his aversion to the usual lawyers' manipulations, or his need to place public ethic above familial obligation. These were all part of a rejection of the cultural course laid out for him. In a kind of negative adaptation, he was trying to preserve the roles, the relations, the self-image he had begun to fashion in England and to shift away from some of

the basic patterns of social life in Kathiawad and Bombay.

STIMULUS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Then, suddenly, the way to combine profession, religion, and reform became clear and feasible. Gandhi's brother unexpectedly heard from a firm of Muslims from Porbandar that they could use the legal services of Mohandas Gandhi in South Africa. The new experiences in South Africa, where he was to remain for 21 years, amounted to a new vocation. He became a successful lawyer, a well-known reformer, a strong political leader. He created new roles for himself, in part following the traditional Indian model of religious teacher, in part resembling that of a practical party organizer, and in all bearing the promise of a liberator.

The story of Gandhi's life from the South African years on becomes part of the story of a great political and religious enterprise. These periods are amply documented and have been described in a number of excellent studies. This summary outline of them necessarily passes over very much of consequence in detail and interpretation.

Within a few hours of his arrival at Durban Gandhi sensed the plight of the Indians in South Africa; within a few days he had taken a stand on a matter of symbolic civil rights, his right to wear a turban in court; and within two weeks he felt himself faced with a critical decision. On his first trip away from Durban, to Pretoria, he was thrown off the train at night because he insisted on occupying a first-class compartment, as the ticket he had bought entitled him to do, even though a European passenger was in that compartment. Through the cold dark hours of that night at the lonely Maritzburg station, he debated his course. "Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case?" He decided to take the next train to Pretoria and to fight, not only for his rights, but also to root out "the deep disease of colour prejudice" (1957:112).

Years later, when a visiting American religious teacher asked Gandhi what had been the most creative experience of his life, he recalled that winter night when he sat and shivered in the waiting room. That, he said, was the one experience that had changed the course of his life: "My active non-violence began from that date" (Pyarelal 1965:298; Erikson 1969:47, 166-67). If there were any sharp turning points in Gandhi's life, this was certainly one, but in the longer perspective we can see that the night in the Maritzburg station symbolized the kind of dilemma Gandhi frequently encountered and that his decision was of a kind he had made earlier and would go on to make time and again.

His first weeks in South Africa showed him how much he could accomplish that was fully in keeping with his inclinations and capacities. He found himself to be the entire Indian professional middle class

(Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:182). He was the only articulate spokesman for many thousands of Indians of all creeds and classes. From them he won a strong and immediate response to his first efforts at raising their status. The mere fact that he tried to get legal aid for an indentured laborer who had been beaten by his European master became widely known and, as Gandhi wrote, "gave the indentured laborers a joyful surprise and inspired them with hope" (1957:111).

In a very short time he became the principal leader of all his fellow countrymen in South Africa. In the three years 1893–96, he worked out the foundations of his new definition of courage, of his new technique of satyagraha ("truth-force" in nonviolent struggle), of his new roles, personal and political. In that turning period he turned himself into a *modern* leader. He became a man of purposeful action, of egalitarian reform, of mass politics. In some ways, particularly in his bodily ethic and his transcendental outlook, he was and remained, as he put it, as ancient as the hills. But in his political action he became as modern as any great political leader of the 20th century. He not only used but created mass media; he not only taught radical ideas, but developed techniques by which to get them realized (cf. Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:216–17).

During this turning period he added to the strengths he had developed in Kathiawad as a son of his society and in London as a creative combiner of two cultures. He chose a new role and defined its dimensions. He was rewarded by great success, in popular response and in monetary earnings. He took the personal hardships he endured as necessary ingredients of his gains for his people. Yet great as was his popular acclaim among Indians of South Africa, the social consequences of his efforts there were limited. The South African scene was still a narrow stage for social action, the Indians there were not a main part of South African society, and powerful social forces eventually reduced the gains made by Gandhi's movement.

NATIONAL POLITICS, WORLD IMPORTANCE

The gains of the turning period of 1917–19 were never to be so eroded. These were the years after Gandhi had left South Africa for good and had spent three comparatively quiet years establishing himself and his ideas in the Indian milieu. Then, in three campaigns, Indian politics were brought to a new level of activity and Gandhi entered a new stage of his life. He took the center of the national scene. He became the acknowledged leader of a vast political movement. He began to be a world figure.

The new role he assumed is indicated in the title *Mahatma* (Great Soul), popularly bestowed on him and permitted by him though never prized. ("Often the title has deeply pained me," he wrote, "and there is not a moment that I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me" [1957:xii].) Gandhi was seen by many as a saint who lived a moral life worthy of emulation and at the same time a political activist who was conducting an effective struggle. There have been few other saint-politicians in world history, and Gandhi had to create the dimensions and conditions

of that role. From this time to the end of his life, he was powerfully engaged in the political destiny of his countrymen. His teachings began to reach far beyond India and impressed some thinkers with their relevance for the development of the whole of mankind. After these turning experiences, he was no longer merely one among a number of Indian political leaders. He became the central leader, and his notions came to be taken seriously by millions, though few adopted them in their entirety.

In the spring of 1917 Gandhi led a satyagraha campaign to secure the rights of workers in the indigo plantations at Champaran in Bihar. In February 1918 he led a millworkers' strike at Ahmedabad and in the next month a campaign for tax relief for cultivators in Kheda. These were campaigns on local issues, but they drew national interest and awakened nationalist aspirations. Then in the spring of 1918 he led his first all-India satyagraha campaign, against the Rowlatt Bills, a nationwide issue.

If any one of these events was a key experience for Gandhi, it probably was the Ahmedabad strike. Erikson takes it to be such and makes it the focus of his book on Gandhi. It was there that Gandhi established the pattern of his later satyagraha campaigns. With the development of satyagraha, as Erikson (1969:191) puts it, Gandhi confronted the world with the strong suggestion "that a new political instrument, endowed with a new kind of religious fervor, may yet provide man with a choice."

The great social consequences, notably national independence, that Gandhi helped to bring about in the years following 1919 were accompanied by other social consequences, notably the violence that came along with the partition. These events then led Gandhi into the final turning period of his life, between 1946 and his death in January 1948. An activist to the end, Gandhi was still determined to take on a new role in the political order he had helped to create. Nirmal Kumar Bose reminded Gandhi in a letter that in the early morning of December 12, 1946 "you had been telling Manu how your old life had ended and a new chapter had begun. You were going to conduct a new experiment in non-violence of the brave . . ." (Bose 1953:184). A few days before that, Gandhi had told an interviewer that he had come to Bengal to try to halt the riots: "My own doctrine was failing. I do not want to die a failure, but as a successful man" (Bose 1953:252). A few weeks later he stated again, "I do not want to die a discredited or defeated man," and went on to say that he was trying to reach the state of mind and personality described in the *Gita* but was still far from it (Bose 1953:159).

To be sure, Gandhi did not want to abandon the principles that he had developed for himself and had taught to others. But he wanted to strengthen and adapt them and to adapt his life course into the next stage of his active involvement. That stage was never to come, but we can discern the direction he was taking. His new role would extend the principles of satyagraha—for example, respecting one's opponents and letting them know that they are worthy of respect—across national boundaries. He hoped that his new conduct would somehow be more effective than

he had previously been in his relations with Muslims. His new course of action would build new political and social institutions.

The nature of the man and the quality of his career are well reflected in his last will and testament, dated the day before the fatal bullets struck him. It begins with the statement that the Indian National Congress, the institution he did most to develop, "has outlived its use." It goes on to sketch a plan for a new political and social organization and to stipulate the requirements for active membership in it. Then follows a list of existing agencies to be affiliated with the proposed one and a final sentence on how to finance this new organization. The stage that Gandhi was then preparing to enter was not that of a retired recluse but that of an activist whose purpose would be to reconcile, through the principles of satyagraha, opponents of different nations and cultures. Insofar as he sought that goal, he may be called a postmodern man, because in what are called modern times men have not yet evolved adequate ideas and models for this purpose.

III

LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

The procedural guidelines seem useful in sorting out the copious information on this life history. By sketching in the cultural dimension, we describe a people's expectations for a life course, their plan for lives. A cultural life plan, however, is not a single, clearly demarcated sequence of expected development like the four ideal stages of Hindu scripture. The actual expectations are more like a broad design of which some sections are only dimly indicated while others are sharply drawn. An observer may find clear regularities where the participants can give only blurry anticipations. Conversely, some of the participants' firm forecasts may turn out on examination to be quite differently enacted. Alternate paths are recognized at certain junctures and for different kinds of participants. Despite such vagueness and vagaries, a people does guide itself by its cultural design for a life course. In using it, people take account of biological growth as they interpret the somatic unfolding; in it they assume the available technological and ecological resources; they assign different life progressions according to the structure of their society.

What I have included in the social dimension has mainly to do with those of a person's relations, choices, and decisions that are not culturally stipulated, yet are characteristic of behavior in his society. Gandhi's experiences with his classmates or, say, the consequences of his birth order in his family fall within this category. Whether it is better for purposes of analysis to separate the cultural and social dimensions or to use a single sociocultural category remains to be worked out in further life history studies.

The psychosocial dimension is quite practicable as a separate category. It includes the person's subjective views in their constancy and in their successive phases. Gandhi's views of himself and of the world

remained quite constant after he came to manhood. He wavered very little in his attitudes about the value of work, say, or the disvalue of sensuous pleasures.

Gandhi himself pointed out a number of watersheds in his career; we have discussed a few of them as truly major turnings, times when he took on new roles and new social relations and saw himself in a new light. Such major turnings mark off the main time periods and stages of any life history. At each stage a person adds new capacities (or limitations) and reintegrates his earlier resources into his current state of being. Yet we must also recognize, as each of us does for himself, the unity of a life. What a man adds up to he builds up in stages, but no one stage explains the man. In each stage he develops some qualities that are new, and in each he uses capabilities, attitudes, memories of his earlier experience (cf. Erikson 1969:98; Bühler 1968b:9).

At no stage is a person merely an inert recipient of the cultural and social stamp, but in childhood he has less scope for choice, less capacity for social maneuver. We have seen that Gandhi underwent a major turning between the ages of 13 and 17, growing from the child to the young man. In part this turning was prescribed; he was suddenly plunged into the rigidly defined role of husband. But even in that stipulated role there was much that remained to be worked out between husband and wife. And in the self-chosen role of friend, Gandhi's experiences seem to have been more characteristic than he realized. Indeed, through most of his youthful turning, Gandhi made the kinds of adaptation that were indicated in his culture and society.

The idea of adaptation focuses our attention on the dual consideration of what the individual changes in his life and what he maintains through each turning. In England, Gandhi kept to his vow and so to the core of his indigenous values. To them he added new skills and knowledge and an inclination toward certain modern values. Upon his return to India, he made a negative adaptation, deciding what he would not be. Then in South Africa he carried on with the kind of adaptation he had begun in England. He quickly established his position as a man of religion and politics as well as a practicing lawyer and held that position for two decades. When he returned to India and rose on the national scene there, his mode of personal adaptation became widely known among his countrymen. But though his example had great influence in politics, few could take on his demanding model of religious life.

This trial run of the procedural suggestions suggests the wider relevance of life history studies. In commenting on Gandhi's life, I have touched on several levels of analysis and have opened some interesting leads for further exploration. Perhaps the fresh angle of approach provided by almost any coherent and cogent study of life history gives rise to such leads more than does any special potency of these particular suggestions. From this examination of one extraordinary life we have been led to consider

broad questions of Indian culture and society, of primordial human relations and common human experiences, and of some of the postulates of life history study itself.

Thus enquiry into the life plan, in its several versions, that Gandhi's family followed in his upbringing yields understandings of the local society and of certain features of Indian society in general. The ideal life design of Hindu scripture was too remote to be followed closely, even by Gandhi, who was apt to take religious precepts more literally than did most of his contemporaries. Yet certain of the precepts embedded in this life progression, such as the high value of asceticism, did register strongly with him. More compelling in his early course was the progression expected by his jati, of which the rites of passage were prime symbols and important substance. This traditional life plan, like those of other jatis, provided relatively few alternatives and choice points for the individual. It was intended to produce religiously devout tradesmen living in a stable caste society in an agrarian civilization. One way of keeping a society stable is to keep the life plan for its recruits stable and effective. Modh Vania children were expected, in Gandhi's childhood, to do and to be just what their elders had done and had been.

Yet even in traditional Kathiawad society, there was the competition for higher status that is characteristic of Indian society, and new conditions for achieving status had been introduced with British rule. Hence Gandhi's family made some modifications in the jati's life design, setting him onto a variant of it whereby he would remain a devout Modh Vania while becoming a Western-educated professional man. In the event, as we have seen, Gandhi did not follow either the traditional design or this modified, updated version. But in the modification we can sense how people in India managed to absorb and adapt to alien elements. Gandhi's self-design was a created personal adaptation on a new scale that not only helped to bring about great political movement but also, in its way, maintained a traditional kind of adaptation to bring about change within continuity.

In the sphere of personal development, we have noted Mohandas's reactions in some of the primordial human relations and his passage through some of the generic human experiences. Sons in many cultures encounter the problems of personal identity, generation succession, and life values in the figure of the father, encounters that typically become most sharply etched in the adolescent passage from boyhood to manhood (cf. Erikson 1970:732-34). In the culture of Gandhi's boyhood, the tribulations of the adolescent turning were mingled into an early transition from boy to husband. Relations between father and son were placed on a special plane by magnifying the reverence expected of the son for the father and the authority of father over son. Gandhi, as we have seen, did not consciously question the precepts about father-son relations and testified that he incorporated their meanings deep within his being. His adolescent testing of other precepts, including some of the deep-seated taboos concerning touch and ingestion, resulted in renewed allegiance to most of them. Yet

during this period he also began to cast himself in the role of reformer, one who could help change certain of his countrymen's ways and so help bring about a better life for them. As he later developed his vision of the better life, he urged the abandonment of certain of the cultural precepts, notably the notion of untouchability.

Gandhi seen as a special and rare kind of person, as a great religious innovator, involves another level of analysis. Erikson (1969:183) notes that such men have the ability to reenact a characteristic personal difficulty, "a curse," in such a way "that its communal experience becomes a liberating event for each member of an awe-stricken audience." About this mode of analysis, Erikson (1968a:718) wryly comments, "The psychoanalyst, it seems, makes a family affair out of any historical event." Yet every figure in a critical event is in some part a product of his family experience, and so family affairs are not irrelevant to an understanding in depth of socially momentous affairs. So the full life history of a great man like Gandhi necessarily takes into account the small circle from which he sprang. Conversely, the life study of an ordinary man, such as Mintz's (1960) study of the Puerto Rican worker Taso or my (1960) sketch of the Indian villager Sulli, can relate such a man to the larger society and great civilization in which he participates.

The shape of a personality, great or ordinary, is defined by the priorities and importance that a person gives to attitudes, emotions, experiences, and thoughts that are known to most people in his culture but differently weighed among them. And the shape of a culture can be defined in the same way, by the priorities assigned to humanity's common experiences by those who carry on that way of life (cf. Freud 1963:138; Kluckhohn 1945:134-35).

Each person is both a bound actor and a free agent. In the study of life history we can consider the degree to which he is either and the importance of both. This approach enables us to see that an individual has some opportunity for self-direction within the unwritten scenario of his culture and the open-ended drama of his society. It is a means of understanding his point of view, the choices of which he is aware, the indeterminacy that he perceives.

Taking this dual view means combining methods that are sometimes defined as contrasting rather than compatible, such as the idiographic and the nomothetic, the posture of the humanist and that of the social scientist (cf. Weil 1970). Moreover, the life history approach is dual in another sense; in using it we are obliged to keep track of the changes in the subject's view and in his objective circumstances as he grows from stage to stage, and we are also kept alert to those constant themes of behavior that pervade and bind together the whole of a life.

Such constant themes are postulated by Bühler's (1968a; 1968b:1-10) idea of intentionality as the integrating principle in a life course. Her emphasis that each life has a structure, that it can be understood as a system with consistent properties and potentialities, and that personal creativity is a central

element, is fundamental to life history studies. One element of such constancy is the process identified by Freud as transference and defined by Erikson as "a universal tendency to experience another person (unconsciously of course) as comparable to an important figure of the preadult past" (1970:737).

The view of a life as a system of action entails the premise that an individual tries to maintain a certain order in his behavior, whether as an individual or as a member of a group, and that he maintains certain priorities of action. Clausen (1971:79) has discussed the ways in which a person establishes his role priorities and the characteristic ways by which he resolves role conflicts. An integral element in my own use of the concept of system is the redressive action that is put into play when an expected order of behavior is disturbed (Mandelbaum 1970:4-5, 660-63; see also Leighton and Leighton 1949:33 and Leighton 1959).

One of the benefits of using the life history approach is that in doing so we are better able to bring out the coping, creative aspects of a person's behavior. This approach helps to rectify what has been called the "oversocialized" image of man that commonly is found in the social sciences (cf. Wrong 1961). It does not deny the observer's view of the analyzed Ego, but rather supplements it with the crucial perspective of the actor's "I."

The image of man held by an observer necessarily influences what he makes of the life of the particular man he is studying. That image is moulded partly by his culture and, if he is a scholar or scientist, more directly by the state of his academic discipline. Garraty (1957:160), in discussing this aspect of the writing of biography, specifically mentions Gandhi and asks, dubiously, whether a Western European Christian could produce a satisfactory biography of the Hindu, Gandhi. But while there are, to be sure, special advantages in having an empathetic, existential understanding of the person being studied, there are also advantages in having a less adhesive perspective. Best of all is to have contributions of both kinds about a person's life and about his culture (cf. Srinivas 1966:147-63).

On Gandhi's life we do have books of both kinds, and from them we can begin to put together a comprehensible life history that will show his personal qualities—spritely humor and firm determination among them—as well as his political impact and social relevance. Each author gives his own Gandhi, his own version of the recorded or remembered testimony. All have been influenced by Gandhi's own version of Gandhi, since he was the selector and

source of much that is known about him. Every succeeding account has necessarily had to come to terms with this one. Because Gandhi was so strong a figure, his life and work are linked to the whole view of recent Indian history and of India as a nation.

Two views of Gandhi that are current among educated people in India are noted by Dasgupta (1969). One view is that Gandhi was primarily a politician, solely concerned with the ousting of the colonial regime and with political independence. The other view is that he was essentially a saint and that as a man of God he was neither wholly of this earth nor of very much earthly relevance. Dasgupta discusses both these views and advocates another—that Gandhi's main role was that of a fighter for the raising of the oppressed. As a champion of the poor of this world "he had sought to 'seize' no power but to create a new form of it for an altogether new type of decision-maker."

This interpretation is now of special interest, not only because problems of unalleviated poverty and unmanageable power are central issues in the world, but also because the view of Gandhi as one who was creative in the face of faceless custom and was effective against bureaucratic power is an image that many find cogent today.

Such interpretations are part of the contemporary experiments with truth. If we can study the lives of men and women in the perspectives here suggested, if we can view them as persons more than as objects, as adapting social beings as well as actors repeating cultural roles, we may arrive at a wider knowledge not only of the life and times of great men like Gandhiji but also of our own lives and times.

Abstract

The study of lives as wholes has not yet been well developed in the social sciences, though a good many anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, and sociologists have written about its importance. These authors agree that a main shortcoming in such study is the lack of suitable concepts to make up a coherent frame of reference. Three procedural suggestions, the ideas of adaptation, dimension, and turning, may be useful for the beginnings of such a frame. These suggestions are intended as guidelines for the collection and analysis of data. Their applicability is illustrated in the life history of Gandhi, a man whose life is worth studying for a number of reasons.

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by AKINSOLA A. AKIWOWO

Ibadan, Nigeria. 30 ix 72

Mandelbaum commendably seeks to synthesize some of the best thoughts of two approaches, the life passage approach and the life history approach, into a new theoretical and research direction. He has rightly recognized the lack of a general conceptual scheme for the convergence of the two approaches. Perhaps this is because there is still more to be done in weaving the threads of the two approaches into a recognizable pattern. It is with this in mind that I raise the following issues.

1. Every life history study entails selection of the information which serves as input into the analysis. What are selected for evaluation are "life passage events" and the preceding activities of the person whose life is being studied. It is this purposeful selection which accounts for the distinctiveness among life history studies. Mandelbaum seeks to minimize this distinctiveness by creating a general framework of dimensions as a tool of analysis. In the curriculum vitae one submits from time to time in one's passage through the academe, the positions one includes or excludes depend upon the aspect of the self one wishes to present to the institution or body of evaluators. It is, in part, this purposeful selection which makes one curriculum vitae different from another in essence, but in the final analysis it is often the perceptual scheme of the evaluators which decides. The nexuses between the dimensions have yet to be identified, described, and illustrated.

The section titled "Turnings" provides Mandelbaum an opportunity to map out the network of interrelations among dimensions. This mapping, however, does not take place, even though he recognizes its importance in saying that "the turning thus combines elements of three dimensions." It should have been shown how, for example, the cultural dimension interrelates with the psychological, the biological with the psychological and/or the cultural, etc. What trait in one dimension interacts with what other in a second or third dimension when a person makes a transition in his life? How does one describe each pattern of interrelated traits?

In Lee's (1959) *Freedom and Culture*, there are several illustrations of this line of thought. For example, Lee remarks (p. 6), "We find ourselves asking questions such as: to what extent can we allow a child to make his own

decisions, to speak and act for himself? And: at what point do we begin to allow him to do so? For example, obviously when the mother first takes her infant to the pediatrician, she has to speak for him. Exactly when does she begin to remain silent, waiting for him to understand and answer the doctor's questions and to express his own likes and opinions and conclusions?" The turnings in the life of the child and of the mother occur within the framework of dependence to autonomy. Both certainly involve physiological and cultural dimensions. Both entail changing of roles, the operationalization of expectations, and an "awareness context" (Glaser and Strauss 1967). How many such relations among dimensions occur in a life history? Most likely, an unwieldy number. *Dependence-autonomy* and "awareness context" are some core categories for generating substantive and formal propositions.

Mead and Macgregor (1951), in their study of physical growth and culture among the Balinese, make the point clearer: each child studied maintained his individuality through the stages of "the Balinese version of the developmental progression from sitting with support to walking." Could the approach being developed by Mandelbaum be regarded as a framework for studying such versions of developmental progressions?

2. According to Mandelbaum, adaptation is "a built-in process"; but it is not clear if it is a process whereby the human organism copes with new conditions only or a process whereby continuity of self-image or survival is maintained. Could it be conceptualized as both? Whatever it is, the task remains of indicating the intercorrelated dimensions of adaptational processes.

3. Does the section on Gandhi represent a life history, or only some sort of curriculum vitae (i.e., selected performances and achievements presented to an evaluator)? My position is that it is the latter and that the events selected indicate Mandelbaum's own concerns.

4. What does the atypical personality tell us about his culture and society? If we regard geographic area of residence as an intervening variable, how do we explain or predict the interrelations between it and the turnings and adaptations—positive and negative—in a person's life? and does being a member of a particular age-group or sex make a difference in interpreting the impact of change of area of residence? If every society designs a life plan for its members and then builds

into this design a limited degree of freedom for the individual to self-design his life (and in turn help society bring about change in continuity), is it reasonable to generalize from the life of Gandhi that the *choice* an individual makes at a given time or place plays a more important part in the life of the extraordinary person than it does in that of an ordinary person? Might one even say that the extraordinary person in any society is one who more than most people maximizes his freedom of choice? This observation is intended to suggest that the convergence of the two approaches provides a very promising basis for generating grounded theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967) from life histories and life events.

5. In analysing Gandhi's "re-enactment of personal difficulty," Mandelbaum seems to me to be dealing with the phenomenon that Cumming and Cumming (1962) have identified as "ego growth through crisis resolution." His discussion of Gandhi's innovating religious behaviour seems to need further development. The Cummings refer to Caplan's (1961) definition of crisis as a situation [which] offers both danger and opportunity. They also draw our attention to his concepts of openness and vulnerability during crisis, which he regards as key variables in the theory of prevention of ego damage in children. Again, the Cummings point to grief as a variable in crisis resolution, particularly in individual persons who are bereaved. The religious innovation of Gandhi may be viewed, therefore, as a positive adaptive act of ego restitution and milieu reconstitution in response to his grief at the loss of his father and the "ego diffusion" (Erikson 1950) due, in part, to the guilt he felt when his father's death was announced to him. The innovative nature of this act is a result of his not having followed the traditional design for producing changes in himself and his community. Thus Gandhi confirms Mandelbaum's statement that "each person is both a bound actor and a free agent."

6. Mandelbaum's systemic view of human action bears some resemblance to the system of programmed activities one encounters in planning (PERT). An important basic difference is that the human system of action is one of far greater freedom, a far wider range of options, and therefore a far more complicated flow-chart and a critical path of analysis less easily determined than in cybernetics. This, as he himself has suggested, may be due to the fact that our ultimate concern here is more

with persons than with objects. The approach detailed by Mandelbaum is of special value in the study of man in society and culture because of its emphasis on man as a creative being "in the face of faceless custom" and an effective actor "against bureaucratic power."

A few core categories of concepts emerge—dependence-autonomy, awareness context, versions of development progression, and so on—for labelling the interrelations between dimensions and traits. As the literature is combed, more may be found, or new ones come to mind, with which to build the theoretical framework of this important approach.

by MICHAEL M. AMES

Vancouver, Canada. 13 IX 72

An interesting contrast emerges between the first sections of this essay, where Mandelbaum outlines the role of life histories in the social sciences, and a later section where he discusses the life of Gandhi.

In the earlier part, Mandelbaum conveys the impression, though perhaps unintentionally, that the appropriate model for social science, and thus the only one to which biography should also aspire if it is to be useful to social science, is one concerned with the development of general concepts, explanations, and laws. In his review of Gandhi's life, on the other hand, Mandelbaum weaves neatly between this generalizing analytic mode and a more particularizing (or historical) method of analysis. In the case of the former approach, individual life histories (like ethnographies) typically provide case materials for the development of general or analytic concepts; in the case of the latter, general concepts may provide materials for the interpretation of concrete individual cases. Except possibly by radical positivists, who would restrict scientific credibility to the generalizing mode alone, both are usually considered to be respectable scientific orientations and, as Mandelbaum himself demonstrates, can be useful in combination (cf. Aron 1964:68-69).

So despite the essay's positivistic beginnings, Mandelbaum remains a good historical scientist (read "ethnographer") as well. His essay nevertheless reflects a dilemma many cultural anthropologists back into: how to reconcile their aspirations to emulate the positivist model of science with their traditional grounding in the historical-ethnographic mode of analysis. If one takes what Mandelbaum does rather than what he says as the guide, then the combination of the two ap-

proaches, rather than the transformation of one into the other, would appear to be the way to reconciliation.

by NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

Calcutta, India. 21 I 72

Mandelbaum has shown how the study of a life like that of Gandhi can demonstrate the way in which a personality may develop in the culture in which it was born and the way in which innovations and departures may take place. In Gandhi's case, the culture was the subculture of the Modh Vania Vaishya trading community in Kathiawad, Gujarat. But Gandhi was influenced by his home-culture also; the particular family to which he belonged had deviated from the norms and expectations of the jati to an appreciable extent by assuming administrative work in the princely states, and his mother belonged to a rather unorthodox Vaishnava sect. Over and above all this, Gandhi was an innovator on his own account. His life took sharp turns when he left home for education in England, when he took up the legal profession in South Africa, and when he came back to India and took up the role of reformer and political leader.

Mandelbaum's analysis of all this is most satisfactory, but my feeling is that it leaves one aspect of Gandhi's cultural universe inadequately described. The culture of the people of Gujarat (and of the Modh Vanias) was itself under strain on account of the imposition of British rule over several generations. The old culture was losing prestige, and new ways had arisen for the sake of gaining prestige. It was not true that integration of old and new was taking place, even in the personal life of Indians in Gujarat. Rather, there was replacement of one culture by another, resulting in discontinuity and logical disconformity between the ruling ideas of what remained of the old and the ruling ideas of the new, which enjoyed prestige because of its association with the economically and politically dominant rulers. This conflict between cultures that was taking place during Gandhi's boyhood and youth has not, I believe, been adequately brought out. The universe in which Gandhi lived, made up of conflicting cultures, gave him a wide choice in building his own. Values and prestige were shifting, and Gandhi obviously reacted to this. Mandelbaum has been more concerned with showing continuity and change in Gandhi's life. I would call his attention to the ways in which the atmosphere of India in the late 19th century afforded various kinds of choices.

by CHARLOTTE BÜHLER

Stuttgart, Germany. 15 IX 72

Mandelbaum's paper combines a careful and comprehensive account of the data of Gandhi's life history with a valuable attempt at the organization and conceptualization of this material. As the author points out correctly, there is still a great dearth of theoretical concepts and models for the handling of life history data. Such concepts and models as have been proposed have usually been determined by the general psychological outlook of the author. Thus, there is up to this point no unanimity on the question of which concepts and models to apply.

Mandelbaum has chosen "the ideas of adaptation, dimension, and turning" as the beginnings of a frame. The definition of the concept of "dimensions" with which the author begins his study appears to be useful and satisfactory, at least until we know more about genetic determinants. The concept of "turnings" may be a good alternative to the controversial concept of "stages" or "phases," as it seems more neutral and more dynamic. My argument is with the concept of "adaptation," with which the author covers at least two opposite modes of being or of relating to the outside world.

"Adaptation," says the author, "is a built-in process, because every person must, in the course of his life, alter some of his established patterns of behavior to cope with new conditions." However, "creativity" is also a "built-in process," and this not only may manifest itself when change is necessary to cope with new conditions, but may be the generator of the change of conditions because of—as far as we know at this point—internal processes in the individual. The author deals with these creative procedures in Gandhi's life as "negative adaptations" or as due to the "stimulus of South Africa." Yet he himself says that "most of [Gandhi's] role behavior was self-created" and speaks of roles as "self-chosen and self-defined" and of "his self-image as a reformer."

Creativity, which in outstanding recent research has been shown to appear in personality structures fundamentally different from that of adaptive individuals (Getzels and Jackson 1962, MacKinnon 1961), is in my opinion misconceived if it is characterized as "negative adaptation" or as due to outside stimuli. A reformer of Gandhi's stature is the epitome of a creative person though one who, because of the strong traditions of his background, probably had more intense conflicts about his nonconformity than a person less embedded in

tradition. This may explain his exceedingly strict adherence to traditions wherever they did not interfere with his reform ideas, as for example in regard to vegetarianism and the disavowal of sensual pleasure.

In spite of these different interpretations, I consider Mandelbaum's study highly stimulating, scholarly, and valuable.

by FRED I. GREENSTEIN

Middletown, Conn., U.S.A. 1 ix 72

One hopes that Mandelbaum's valuable review of the field of life history studies will help resurrect this (relatively) neglected genre. His essay is of particular interest to political scientists, since from the standpoint of political analysis life history data are relevant to both emphases noted in Mandelbaum's opening passage—not only "how the person copes with society" but also "how society copes with the stream of individuals." The latter is germane because individual political actors (and hence the life history antecedents of their personal qualities) can be so politically consequential (Greenstein 1969). It is fashionable in the social sciences to stress that social role requirements tend to mitigate the effects of the personal qualities of role incumbents on their behavior. Yet many political roles leave room for the personal qualities of the actor to affect his behavior. And even if individuals were randomly distributed in social roles it would follow that over time a role might be filled by very different individuals.

A recent example, almost too striking to give, is the differences in approach to the American Presidency of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. It would not be difficult to defend—even though it is inevitably impossible to demonstrate—the counterfactual proposition that if Kennedy had lived the Vietnam conflict would not have been drastically escalated. Critical in such an argument would be a life history analysis of the two men such as appears in Barber's *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (1972). This allusion to the American Presidency further helps to pin down why life history analysis contributes to the study of politics. Needless to say, American Presidents have extraordinary powers. The more powerful the role, the more it is the case that the life history of the incumbent is of interest, even if "role constraints" leave only modest room for the play of individual qualities.

In the light of these reflections, it would be interesting to have an expan-

sion of Mandelbaum's brief reference to the connection between the turnings of Gandhi's life and the turnings of India. If Gandhi had not lived . . . ?

by GEORGE G. HAYDU

Queens Village, N.Y., U.S.A. 29 viii 72

This article deals with the central question of the life history of the individual and its relationship to events of his culture. To some degree it takes us back to the 19th-century preoccupation with the exceptionally potent man (the hero) and society. Mandelbaum places the problem convincingly into our contemporary frame of knowledge. To me the chief problem of individual life and cultural history, both as to meaning and as to methodology, is this: What are the structures (and corresponding conceptual constructs), in a culture and in its members, which constitute an interrelated mutuality and underlie their interrelated transformations? Mandelbaum chooses the ideas of dimension (cultural, social, and psychosocial), turning, and adaptation in individual life history. This is a good start. In my view (Haydu 1958, 1961, 1970, 1972) the loci of this mutuality are the experiential entity patterns. These are alive only in individuals, yet can be discovered through the "artifacts" that each individual produces and the artifacts of past patterns that he is heir to.

Experiential entity is that contexture (functional individuality) which a person forms in a particular intention process. (An intention process is an organismic, goal-directed activity based on past outcomes.) A person's experiential entity patterns can be discovered in his productions. These personal productions—the results of a particular way of seeing and seeking, the establishing of particular human relationships, a particular method of handling his ambience, an object of art—are inconceivable without the huge wealth of past productions preserved and embedded in the nonliving structures of his culture. These past productions become alive only in a living person and thereby undergo transformation even in the most stable stretch of a cultural trajectory. Each person recreates (always in a modified form) the cultural nonliving structures as experiential structures of his own, and these structures are transmitted to his cultural ambience and carried by it. Here is the scope and limitation an individual has for altering the structures of his culture. In my opinion, this is the locus of these mutually

interrelated transformations, and it is amenable to experimental or at least empirical study.

There is one very strict proviso in this respect. Factors and forces can be discovered both in personal life and in society, but the shape (to use Mandelbaum's expression) of experiential structures can never be truly perceived by enumerating factors or other elements. Factors and vectors may all be very true in a particular instance, but the shape, as configuration of a structure, must be discovered qua shape and not as a summation of forces or an arbitrary "profile" gained by some astute juxtaposition of factors.

Experiential entities integrate biological needs and instrumentalities, their modifications as they constitute individual enculturation, ambient opportunities and adversities, and conceptual certainties. They are the smallest units (psychemes) that are yet full-blown life events. Each can be analyzed as to the factors that contribute to its form, and each can be shown in many structural equivalents of its particular shape (configuration). To my mind, much has been already achieved in the study of these matters, and Mandelbaum's present article is a very welcome contribution.

by L. L. LANGNESS

Seattle, Wash., U.S.A. 6 ix 72

One can only agree with Mandelbaum that in spite of ever increasing numbers of life histories, including a few recent and exceptionally good ones, there continues to be little effort towards the systematic analysis of such documents. This may be due to certain incompatibilities between the writing of life histories and the broader goals of anthropologists. Mandelbaum notes that one of the motives for doing a life history is the uncomfortable awareness that "his people" would otherwise be reduced to "faceless norms." But such a motive, it seems to me, would hardly lead one to want to analyze and classify. As he also notes, when it comes to the study of persons, there have been two main approaches—life passage studies and life histories. But life passage studies have tended to concentrate on children, whereas life histories deal almost exclusively with adults. There is also the problem of combining the idiographic with the nomothetic, as well as the attempt to reconcile the "great man" view of history and culture with the more Tolstoyan, Kroeberian view of the inexorable march of events independent entirely from the influence of individuals, however strong or

famous. All the more reason, perhaps, to welcome and respect Mandelbaum's current attempt.

The notion of a "cultural life plan" is an interesting one. Presumably it would be possible to cross-culturally compare such plans just as it would be possible to determine how far any individual's life departed from the relevant plan. The "dimensions" Mandelbaum discusses—biological, cultural, social, and psychosocial—appear to be unusual only in his attempt to apply them formally to a life history. "Turnings" and "adaptations," although interesting in this specific case, would be difficult, I believe, to use elsewhere. The lives of ordinary men probably do not involve such obvious or so many turnings and adaptations. Nor do most men's lives divide themselves so neatly into time spent in different geographic areas. Interesting questions to ask, however, might be how flexible cultural life plans are with respect to their tolerance for turnings, and what adaptations, if any, are required to maintain continuity in one's life course. Finally, it might be desirable to add to dimensions, turnings, and adaptations a further category, "consequences." It is clear the Gandhi's "failure" to adapt to the meat-eating habits of his English hosts had consequences every bit as significant as his "failure" to participate in the system of commissions and tips that was part of the Indian legal system of his time—yet both of these "failures" stemmed from his consistent and predictable beliefs about honor and dishonor. In any event, Mandelbaum's attempt and Gandhi's life history make for a fascinating combination.

by SIDNEY W. MINTZ

New Haven, Conn., U.S.A. 11 ix 72

Mandelbaum's essay breaks new ground. Most anthropological life histories are based on lengthy face-to-face encounters between anthropologist and informant—that is, between solicited autobiographer and amanuensis. This attempt to expose the relationship between life trajectory and sociocultural framework is of a different order. Gandhi was a witting autobiographer, and he was a "famous man" whose understandings of himself were shaped by a recognition of his own historic role. Such differences will affect the insights anthropologists may bring to their work, if research of this kind continues.

The anthropological life history has always said a great deal about the anthropologist, and not only about his subject. A wide variety of methodological questions is raised by the relationship between informant and re-

order. It may be argued that friendship between them can "distort" the final product, suggesting the somewhat curious conclusion that scientific "objectivity" in such work requires mutual ignorance. When the interpretation is based on published materials, this criticism may seem less substantial. But even such an interpretation involves the scholar in the use of his own judgment; and whether he finds his subject sympathetic or unlikable, heroic or pathetic, will surely influence his reading of character and act. Perhaps one positive methodological consequence of work of the sort Mandelbaum does here will be the recognition that the face-to-face recording of life histories is no more "subjective" or "objective" than any other biographical-autobiographical undertaking. The interpreter must do his best to make clear what he thinks *he* is like, so that readers may better judge his interpretation of the life of another. The frequent lack of such material in life histories strikes me as remarkable—perhaps even slightly suspicious.

Mandelbaum's distinction between cultural and social dimensions is promising. It is, I think, precisely in the disjuncture between the cultural and the social that the distinctive individual quality of the life history can best be revealed. But to do so, the recorder must have substantial prior knowledge of the sociocultural setting; many life histories have been written as the recorder's single major (and often first) experience of an alien cultural and social context. Prior knowledge may also free the recorder from what might be described as an aesthetic compulsion to "round out" the life history—to inform it with a completeness and perfection pleasing to the literary eye, but ultimately unfaithful to the often ragged character of ethnographic truth.

While each individual is by definition unique, the anthropologist usually proceeds on the assumption that culture and society provide some man-made order within which the individual functions. A life decision, then—one of Mandelbaum's "turnings"—should partake of both the unique and the regular. The question then becomes, What are the sociocultural guidelines by which individual perceptions and decisions are shaped? Thus, for instance, toward the end of my own work with a Puerto Rican convert to a Pentecostal sect I was moved to ask myself what my friend may have shared with other converts like himself. Were I to return to the unanswered questions the delineation of his uniqueness gave rise to, I would want to collect three, four, or a dozen such life histories, from

persons with similar sociocultural characteristics (Puerto Rican, rural proletarian, male, middle-aged, and converted to Pentecostalism), to seek to discern any life regularities that might unite or differentiate them. The goal of such an undertaking would not be to deemphasize individual uniqueness or to eliminate the significance of personality in the study of change, but rather to specify with more confidence the way individuality plays itself out against terms set by sociocultural forces. Mandelbaum's sensitive treatment of a person produced—like all of us—by his culture, yet a remarkable world figure, dramatizes the problem. His intriguing essay suggests that we have come a long way since the spate of life history studies of the 1940s.

by HERBERT P. PHILLIPS

Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A. 31 VIII 72

Mandelbaum has provided us with an extremely useful framework for organizing life history materials. I find most provocative, however, his comment "that a study of [Gandhi's] life would be anthropologically fascinating if he had done no more than sit all his days before a pile of cloth in a bazaar shop." The vast majority of life histories collected and analyzed by anthropologists are about people much more like this imagined cloth vendor than like Gandhi, who is by any measure one of the major personalities, if not institutions, of the 20th century. Of course, Gandhi was still a man, and from his own point of view perhaps of no greater or lesser intrinsic merit than any random Indian cloth seller. Probably most of us wish to see him as no more extraordinary, descriptively and analytically, and the work of Mandelbaum and the other biographers demonstrates that it is possible to do so.

I would suggest, however, that methodologically the life history of Gandhi is essentially *sui generis*—that as a research problem it presents a strikingly different series of intellectual and interpersonal opportunities and hurdles than are met in most life history studies by anthropologists. The kinds of data available to Mandelbaum and the others, the types of negotiations these scholars make with their data, the kinds of expressiveness and resistance they encounter from their "subject" are all clearly of a different order than in the life history studies of, for example, Kluckhohn (1945), Lewis (1961), or myself (Hanks and Phillips 1961). The differences have to do not so much with the stature of the person whose life is being studied or the social forces swirling around

him as with the simple realities of the research situation. With Kluckhohn, Lewis, and most of us, the anthropologist's solicitation of the life history is usually the only reason for its existence, and his raw data comprise all the known information on the person being described. If Gandhi had in fact been a bazaar vendor, precisely these kinds of realities would have obtained. Under such circumstances, the critical methodological issues relate primarily to the events of the interviewing sessions: the interactive style of the participants; the informational and emotional exchanges they make; the motivations they bring to the situation and the satisfactions and frustrations they derive from it; and the distortions, described most brilliantly by Devereux (1967), that most persons, but especially those from different cultures, bring to their encounters with others.

While these considerations attend all forms of ethnographic inquiry, they probably loom largest in the life history situation, if only because their disposition literally determines the kind and quality of data obtained. What kind of essay would Mandelbaum have given us if he had decided to do an anthropological life history of Gandhi based upon interviews in the late 1930s rather than documents in 1971? Would Gandhi have even received him? Would he have treated a young professor from the University of Minnesota any differently than he would treat one of America's premier scholars on the culture and society of India? In their evolving interaction, would the two have dealt with each other as colleagues, guru and disciple, politician and journalist, or confider and confidant? Would Mandelbaum's manner and intellectual interests have induced Gandhi to open up on matters of "carnal desire" and peristalsis but to slough off queries concerning his interest in Thoreau or his meetings with the British Viceroy? Would Gandhi have come to perceive Mandelbaum as a charming but obtrusive Boswell, as an Ernest Jones who would defend him against all critics, or as an Oscar Lewis, who we are told was later admired by some but condemned by others for having published things that the latter felt might better have been left unsaid?

There are more subtle matters involved here. For all of his openness and self-reflection, Gandhi must have had some experiences about which he felt sufficiently anxious (or guilty or ashamed) to resist discussing them with others. The importance of this is not the obvious fact that Gandhi, like all human beings, had things that he wished to repress, but rather the likeli-

hood that some of these repressions had a significant bearing on those dimensions of his character that dominated his public life, and which made him into the person the world "knows." What is involved here is suggested by Erikson's effort, cited by Mandelbaum, to link Gandhi's spiritual innovativeness to that "dreadful night" when he had felt "double shame." When reading Erikson's interpretation, however, one wonders whether there were other "dreadful nights" and other such experiences that Gandhi declined to relate in his autobiography or tell friends but that nevertheless were more influential to the formation of his public character. Could a sensitive or talented investigator (or even a bumptious or manipulative one) in constant contact with Gandhi have broken through such resistance? And would the results have been worth it—to Gandhi himself, to students of life history, or to intellectual history?

These questions represent precisely those kinds of questions that a scholar involved in the interpersonal dynamics of a life history study must constantly ask himself. The answers determine when and how the investigator probes or holds back; whether he sees the person he is encountering as a "friend," a representative of some abstract social category, or the means of fulfilling his own needs (professional or personal); whether he is willing to modify, or insists upon maintaining, his own patterns of interaction—and whether this is done in the service of the research or of the human relationship upon which the research is based. (The "informant," meanwhile, is making his own decisions, based upon similar questions.) Obviously, there are no absolute answers to any of these queries. The answers that are made probably depend ultimately upon the characters of the people who become anthropologists and collect life histories.

A few other considerations should be noted. Mandelbaum says little about the amount of time and effort that must be given to obtaining adequate life history information. As a researcher who has gathered life histories from both Thai villagers and Thai intellectuals, I would underscore the temporally demanding nature of the life history enterprise. Although it is probably the most enjoyable of all ethnographic tasks, it is also the most time-consuming. I would estimate that to gather the kind of descriptive and expressive detail suggested by Mandelbaum's framework would typically require a minimum of 30–50 hours

for each informant. If this is multiplied by the time required to fulfill sampling demands and the time needed for accurate translation, the collection of a representative series of life histories could become very formidable indeed. Thus, if my estimates are correct, merely to collect from 20 informants the kind of data suggested by Mandelbaum (excluding translation, checking, analyses, and write-up) would require a minimum of four months of fieldwork.

The critical question is whether such an expenditure of time and energy is warranted. My own view is that the life history is still the most cognitively rich and humanly understandable way of getting at an inner view of culture. Folklore materials might be more pithy, and religious behavior or belief more dramatic. But none can equal the life history in demonstrating what the native himself considers to be important in his own experience and how he thinks and feels about that experience. This is not to deny that natives can and do distort, avoid, or idealize in their life history reports—to themselves as well as to anthropologists. But such contrivance occurs in almost every mode of human expression; indeed, folklore and ritual are probably the most frequent forms for expressing such contrivance in an institutionalized, culturally acceptable manner. To the extent that the life history is more reflective and conscious than these other forms, it is probably also more controlled and artificial. Its strength lies in the fact that it is the native who is doing the reflecting and who decides among all those things that have happened to him what are to him the more or less significant, unusual or commonplace, exciting or dull. Mandelbaum has provided us with a comprehensive and highly usable scheme for making sense out of these reflections.

by SUSANNE HOEBER RUDOLPH and
LLOYD I. RUDOLPH

Chicago, Ill., U.S.A. 12 ix 72

Mandelbaum is inclined to see Gandhi's early biography and personality formation as wholly conventional for his culture. If the young man—and the older one—has a strong concern for purity and pollution, so does everybody else of his class, caste, religion, and region in Gujarat; if sex seems to him an animalistic drive, to be rejected with guilt and disgust, and celibacy the only path for a moral man, that is attributable to the norms of those like him; if he tries to dominate

his wife, that too is culturally predictable. Implicitly Mandelbaum is mounting a counter-argument to those accounts of Gandhi's early life (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, Erikson 1969) which stress the idiosyncratic, with respect either to cultural themes embraced or the ways in which the cultural themes are played.

When Gandhi as a postadolescent embarks on a "rejection of the cultural course laid out for him," the question arises, Why should any young man who had most compliantly responded to the conventional demands of his culture suddenly embark on such a rejection of them? Mandelbaum's explanation hinges on the concept of "turnings" and the idea of adaptation. In his view, Gandhi, having gone to England¹ and exposed himself to different sets of cultural norms, thereafter "tried to preserve the roles, the relations, the self-image he had begun to fashion in England and to shift away from some of the basic patterns of social life in Kathiawad and Bombay." This explanation of change again invokes cultural patterns. It says that he who complied conventionally at point *a*, in the Modh Banya Vaishnava cultural setting, complied conventionally at point *b*, in the England of the 1890s, and began to shape out of these dual demands some sort of synthesis which would, as it were, allow him to comply with both.

This account raises the question how such compliant responses could have produced a personality which was felt by all observers to be extraordinarily creative and original, even unique. Further, it would appear to align Mandelbaum with that view which finds personality to be primarily the product, where the writer is an anthropologist, of cultural rules and values or, where he is a social psychologist or sociologist, of roles. This view deemphasizes the man behind the cultural or role mask, the player of the cultural and social game. And yet this is by no means what Mandelbaum intends: "Each person is both a bound actor and a free agent. In the study of life history we can consider the degree to which he is either and the

importance of both." Mandelbaum emphatically dissents from the oversocialized man much of social science has constructed, but the account he renders of Gandhi does not take quite seriously what Mandelbaum the methodologist says.

The account fails to take Gandhi seriously as a manipulator and moulder, not just a receiver and adherent, of cultural norms and rules. While recognizing a measure of choice, Mandelbaum does not give sufficient weight to the exercise of purposive choice in the framework of culturally and historically conditioned options. Personalities not only adopt culture and roles; sometimes they create them. Gandhi did both. Mandelbaum sees the flow of causation as mainly one-way, from culture and role (society) to personality; personality, at best, is able to "turn" or "adapt." In Gandhi's case, the flow was mainly the other way; he treated culture and role as resources to be employed and reshaped. For a few, like Gandhi, culture and role are redefined through leadership, example, and ideological innovation.

The account also fails to credit the importance for the formation of the Mahatma of historical accidents and conjunctions, for which neither culture, society, nor personality can account. This failing, as Mandelbaum himself suggests, is probably general to all the social sciences, inimical as they are to the exogenous domain of "chance." This domain resists the imposition of "universal" regularities based on the simplifying assumptions of models, the abstract and selective variables they organize, and the synthetic or manufactured data that feed them. And the account does not sufficiently recognize autonomous realms of meaning and action, realms that can transcend culture, society, and psyche and in so doing explain the why and the how of personality and history.

In reformulating Mandelbaum's explanation, we do not assume, as he does, that compliance with cultural norms is to be expected. Full compliance—meaning behavioral, psychological, and normative agreement—with cultural prescriptions is as rare as it is hard to define. Such a proposition makes more sense, perhaps, to a political scientist, whose "field" is complex societies with numerous and often conflicting options, than it does to an anthropologist, whose "field," despite recent changes, tends to be less-complex societies in which options are relatively few and authoritative allocations of values less common. Mandelbaum certainly sees Gandhi's society as belonging to the latter variety: "This traditional life plan

. . . provided relatively few alternatives and choice points for the individual. . . . Modh Vania children were expected, in Gandhi's childhood, to do and to be just what their elders had done and had been."

Cultural norms are as much an opportunity as a constraint, and "compliance" can take so many forms that the word may lose its meaning in some contexts. Compliance can, for example, be of the "work to rule" sort, where a perverse overcompliance becomes an act of violation, overriding the adherence "normally" required. There is a good bit of "work to rule" overcompliance in Gandhi's relation to most of the cultural norms he encountered. As Erikson suggests, those reformers who "mean" it, who insist on the literal or inner meaning of norms, are anything but compliant. There is too the more frequent rhetorical or overt compliance, the Good Soldier Schweik mode of "compliance." Cultures can also be mocked or profaned; orientations like "work to rule" are often the source for stylistic or ideological counter-cultures. "Playing" the culture, as a harp with diverse strings, is, we assume, as frequent a relation to culture as being molded and programmed by it; the spectrum from compliance to noncompliance to counter-cultural innovation suggests the myriad possible relations of the individual to culture.

These views of compliance have certain implications for Mandelbaum's interpretation of young Gandhi. Since celibacy and asceticism were so significant in Gandhi's private and public life, how they were created in him remains a central problem. For Mandelbaum, these commitments flow almost directly from his culture:

A young couple of the Modh Vanias, as in the higher jatis generally, began their marital relations . . . within a household where there was a strong denigration of the couple's sexual interest in each other. Gandhi's first years of marriage followed this pattern, and he emerged from them with characteristic attitudes about sexual relations. . . . He became unshakably convinced that love and lust go ill together, that love begins where lust ends. . . . This facet of Gandhi's belief may puzzle some today; but in the 1880s, in a Modh Vania household in a Kathiawad town, there were no recognized alternatives to the assumptions about sex and marriage that Gandhi accepted.

This interpretation does not recognize that taking the culture that seriously may itself have been idiosyncratic. We do not have enough life history material, particularly in the realm of sexual relations, to understand the consequences for sexual drives and sexual

¹In his admirable review of the Gandhi (and life history) literature, Mandelbaum may have overlooked Devanesen's (1969) *The Making of the Mahatma*, which focusses on his early life and gives particular attention to his experiences in England. The Jain dimension of his Kathiawad cultural background is perhaps overemphasized in Hay's (1972) interesting article on that subject. More recent books of interpretation that may have appeared too late for Mandelbaum to include are those by Ray (1971), Kumar (1971), Powers (1971), Hutchins (1971), and Brown (1972).

relations of the systematic denigration of sexual interest and its dissociation from love. They may be as negative as Mandelbaum implies. Some sparse medical evidence points in that direction. Carstairs (1957) reports frequent complaints of spermatorrhoea and impotence among upper-caste men in Rajasthan who live under such normative constraints. Drysdale (1852), an extraordinarily perceptive and "liberal" medical writer of Victorian England, reports exactly the same complaints among his British middle-class patients, subject to similar constraints. Yet the opposite possibility is certainly viable. De Rougemont's *Love in the Western World* elevates cultural and social obstacles to sex into a universal explanation for romantic feeling; constraints may enliven rather than deaden sexual attraction.

The as yet unpublished diary of Amar Singh, a Rajput nobleman and military officer who produced his "life history" between 1898 and 1942, suggests that De Rougemont's view may be as viable as its opposite. The cultural norms with respect to sexual behavior that Gandhi worked with were similar to those prevalent among Rajasthan Rajputs. Numerous daily entries report Amar Singh's vexation at having to wait until midnight when all the adults have gone to bed and cannot witness his approach to his wife's room. He reports his mother's unmasking his circumventions when he tries to visit his wife in the zenana at noon on the pretext of having his dinner there. He reports the elaborate ruses employed to get permission from father or grandfather to visit his wife at her parents' home. His attitude throughout is that of a man faced with a cultural chess problem: how to observe certain forms expressing disinterest in his wife while arranging to be with her. The elaborate forms and rhetorical simulations of disinterest neither affect that interest nor make him believe that it is wicked. The constraints of the culture produce no guilt and no disgust. We have no reason to believe that Amar Singh's cheerfulness about sex is any less characteristic of west Indian upper-caste adaptations to a difficult norm than Gandhi's guilty "lust."

Finally, the life history highlights two elements that are not exhausted by culture, role, or psyche: the chance or idiosyncratic event and the realm of meaning that frames a particular kind of activity. An unpredictable event or conjunction—the casting together of two particular people, as lovers, teacher and student, friends; the creation of a particular human mix in the home, in a circle of friends, or in a hierarchy of authority—provides the occasion for

an actor to work out a balance among cultural, social, and psychological inputs. The way an event or conjunction shapes choice and experience may well load the dice in fateful ways thereafter. Erikson has seen each life-stage as providing the opportunity for such reckonings. But the life-stage is still a generic category in which enduring aspects of the psychosomatic self meet the shifting definitions of life-stages among different cultures. Exogenous events and conjunctions cannot as such be anticipated.

Realms of meaning that frame particular kinds of activity focus attention on the context of experience by emphasizing the independent explanatory significance of the rules and requirements peculiar to that realm. To accept the validity of art for art's sake, or sport for sport's sake, or science for science's sake is not to argue that the play of social forces in shaping these realms is not also significant, but to accept the possibility that the individual experience in them can also shape personality and history.

The significance of these two elements that lie between culture and psyche becomes plain when we ask what the outcome for Gandhi's celibacy and asceticism would have been if Kasturba had liked her husband, thought him a charming friend, and liked going to bed with him. It seems at least plausible that Gandhi's radical dichotomizing of love and lust was as situational as it was cultural in origin, arising proximately out of the particular conjunction of Kasturba and Mohandas in the realm of sex. He and his wife plainly did not get on as adolescents; there was nothing between them but "lust." If he was eager to "dominate" her, it was partly because mutuality was ruled out. The Amar Singh diary suggests that this outcome was by no means a necessary consequence of the cultural norms that Amar Singh and Gandhi shared. Amar Singh provides extensive evidence—of a delicately indirect sort, to be sure—that he and his wife were delighted with each other. The particular conjunction of Amar Singh and his wife in the realm of sex taught him different lessons than Gandhi. Lecturing to a young friend a few years after his marriage about love in the married state, Amar Singh stresses the great importance of keeping a wife sexually happy. Mutuality rather than dominance, at least in the realm of affect, is central. Some of his attitudes, it is apparent, come from the more liberated versions of Victorian literature that he reads, notably the extraor-

dinary and pro-female Drysdale. But some of his notions, such as the affectively and sexually egalitarian idea of simultaneous orgasm, come from no reading at all, nor from anything anyone has told him. They come, he says, from experience.

"The Study of Life History: Gandhi," by complementing psycho-history with an anthropological dimension, further invigorates an approach to social science theory and methodology that has of late been gaining adherents. Mandelbaum has thrown conceptual bridges to the past and to other disciplines, illustrating their use in a difficult application to a particular significant life. The result should strengthen biographical studies by social scientists and encourage them to do more.

by M. BREWSTER SMITH
Santa Cruz, Calif., U.S.A. 17 VIII 72

I shall not comment on Mandelbaum's treatment of Gandhi, though it strikes me as very informative about the interplay of individual life experience and action, on the one hand, and cultural forms and normative expectations, on the other. It is much more than an obligato on Erikson's (1969) masterpiece. I focus rather on Mandelbaum's proposals for the systematic treatment of the life history.

Mandelbaum's scholarly synthesis of discussions of the life history method is valuable and fair. But has the contribution of life histories to anthropology and the social sciences been disappointingly minor primarily because of the absence of a suitable conceptual scheme, as Mandelbaum claims, and are his own proposals with respect to dimensions, turnings, and adaptations a major step toward the provision of such a scheme? I have my doubts on both scores.

Life histories have been effectively used to complement ethnographic description with idiographic portrayal, from the "inside," of what it is like to participate in a particular culture. For this purpose, a conceptual scheme is important only as a presentational scaffolding and as a scanning device to encourage representativeness of coverage. Mandelbaum's proposed scheme, as illustrated in the case of Gandhi, serves that purpose well. It is probably even an improvement on other schemes that have been used.

Life histories have *not* been used, however, for systematic empirical comparative analysis. Facilitating such analysis would be a major potential value of a general-purpose conceptual framework for the life history. I doubt

its practicality. Not only are there large obstacles in the way of attaining adequate and comparable data on adequate samples, but there is question in principle as to whether useful "etic" analysis is feasible for something as inherently "emic" as human lives, except in specifically defined realms or in regard to specifically focused questions. An example of effective "etic" treatment of aspects of qualitative life history data for psychological purposes may be found in Block (1971).

If we are asked to consider Mandelbaum's scheme as more than a convenient scaffolding, I see problems in his proposed "dimensions." There are the usual ambiguities in distinguishing the cultural and the social—slightly different angles of perspective, I should think, rather than separable areas of content. Further, I would see the "individual" dimension or aspect, with Allport (1937), as a unique integration of all the others, not as an additive residual. Mandelbaum's characterization of adaptation strikes me as phrased more than I like in terms of passive adjustment. It would accord more with the spirit of his undertaking to incorporate Piaget's idea of balance between processes of "accommodation" and "assimilation" (see Flavell 1963). I very much like Mandelbaum's concept of turnings.

Mandelbaum has shown the utility of his scheme for organizing a sensitive presentation of a life that has uncommon interest in its own right. The proof of the pudding, so far as his more ambitious claims are concerned, would be its employment in the comparative analysis of ordinary lives. But comparison *for what?* This question

suggests to me the greater promise of specifically devised and more fully elaborated schemes, not broad, general-purpose ones like this.

by ANDRÉ VARAGNAC

Paris, France. 10 ix 72

This paper is both thoughtful and learned. I would only suggest adding to the "cultural dimension" the historical aspects of the people's collective praxis (Cipolla 1962), which react on the aims of its culture. In the present case, one can observe that Gandhi acted among societies in which hand-labour was prominent. Such a state of things always favours religious feelings (Varagnac 1972). Gandhi himself seems to have felt this when he tried to promote the use of the spinning wheel and hand weaving.

by JACK WADDELL

Lafayette, Ind., U.S.A. 11 ix 72

These days methodological refinement usually involves consideration of sample sizes, sampling procedures, eliciting techniques, statistical control of variables, hypothesis formulation and testing, and other forms of data quality control. Mandelbaum suggests that refinement of concepts and analytical procedures is also basic to good methodology. The life history can indeed be of scientific value when concepts as well as procedures are well grounded. Mandelbaum simply reminds us once again that it is, after all, the human individual life that underlies the social and the cultural, playing a

major although not always an easily discernible part in the social and cultural configurations and processes.

Mandelbaum's three analytic concepts, dimensions, turnings, and adaptation, seem new only in terms of the extent to which he crystallizes and consciously employs them. His efforts to sharpen the concepts are commendable, and his application of them to the life of Gandhi is insightful. If there is a shortcoming, it is his failure to provide guidelines for using these concepts to elicit information from an informant that will facilitate such analysis. Mandelbaum makes a good case for the utility of the concepts in the analysis of already available data; he might have gone on to show us how they can be used to obtain new life history data that lends itself to such treatment. Without procedural guides in the eliciting phase of life history work, we will not be able to avoid the trap of providing a good narrative but one lacking a body of concepts. Nor will we be able to make our own life experience as anthropologists something more than a phase in our own fieldwork upbringing. Without greater procedural refinement, there can be no such "deliberate phase" of the life history research enterprise as Mandelbaum envisions.

I have one other question that Mandelbaum does not quite answer for me. His example emphasizes the value of an atypical case. What of the typical lives, the ones we might be more apt to deal with in the daily run of our experiences with informants? Do the same procedures apply, or are the only cases to which we can apply this analytical approach the atypical ones?

Reply

by DAVID G. MANDELBAUM

Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A. 17 xii 72

These comments address some basic problems of social science method. Brewster Smith doubts that the study of life histories can facilitate systematic comparative analysis. He does allow that life histories can complement ethnographic description and that the suggestions in the paper do provide a presentational scaffolding and scanning device for such complementation. If these ideas do indeed turn out to be useful for that purpose, we should all be well content. Smith's main questions are about "emic-etic" relations, whether the study of individual lives can contribute significantly to broader analyses and, further, what a compar-

ative analysis of ordinary lives would be good for. A reasonable reply to the latter question is the remark by Mintz that one goal of such comparisons would be "to specify with more confidence the way individuality plays itself out against terms set by sociocultural forces." That will have to be done, as Smith notes, through more specific and detailed research designs than could be given in the paper, but procedural suggestions of this kind may be useful, perhaps even necessary, in providing a common starting ground for more incisive analyses.

As for the possibility of constructing any useful design for the comparative analysis of life histories, Akiwowo, Bühler, Langness, and Phillips agree that it should be attempted, though they point out some inherent difficulties in the attempt. Langness mentions

the perennial problem of combining the idiographic with the nomothetic and of reconciling an emphasis on the influence of the individual with the more common anthropological presentation of the "inexorable march of events." Ames notes that many anthropologists "back into" the dilemma of how to reconcile a positivist, scientific model with a particularistic, historical-ethnographic mode of analysis. He finds that the first part of the paper conveys the impression that the generalizing model is the only valid one but that the later sections on Gandhi's life weave together the two approaches and combine them usefully. The essence of a sound conceptual design in this matter, Ames indicates, is in the combining of the two rather than in the transformation of the one into the other. I would add that creating this

combination and maintaining the interplay is a continuing anthropological concern, whether so articulated or not. How to abstract the general from the particular, how to illumine the particular from the perspective of the general, is not only a basic but an unending question. The answers that may do at one time or for one enquiry may not suffice for other research circumstances. What is constant is the need to make a clear determination on this question that meets the needs of one's research purpose.

An important aspect of this is the sequence of presentation. Mintz states that the recorder must have substantial prior knowledge of the person's socio-cultural setting if he is to reveal the distinctive individual quality of the life history. The anthropologist, Mintz continues, assumes that culture and society provide some man-made order within which the individual functions. In other words, both the writer and his readers have first to learn about the cultural and social forces that have influenced the individual before they can confidently assess how he manipulated these forces and met them with creative response. Before we can adequately understand what is unusual and atypical about a life history we must gain some idea of what is regular and typical.

This idea applies also to Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph's remarks on the importance of "historical accident." Before we can gauge what has been accidental, we must have some notion of what is not accident. In this assessment a good deal depends on how one defines accident. Was the original invitation to go to South Africa an accident? In some lights it was, in others it was not. The road mishap that Gandhi reports his father to have suffered may have been a traffic accident, but the nature of Gandhi's recollection of it may have been less accidental.

The Rudolphs see in the presentation of social and cultural dimensions an implicit counterargument against their own account that stresses the idiosyncratic in Gandhi's early life. I had not thought of it in that way at all, but rather as an illustrative example and a possibly useful supplement to the several fine studies of Gandhi, including their own. As they indicate, I did not know of the book by Devanensen, and did not use a number of interesting writings that have appeared since the paper was completed. The Rudolphs note that the paper "does not sufficiently recognize autonomous realms of meaning and action, realms that can transcend culture, society, and psyche and in so doing explain the why and how of personality and histo-

ry." Such realms sound enticing, but we need a bit more explanation of what and where they are.

The Rudolphs also find that the paper appears to favor the view that personality is primarily the product of rules and roles. The intention, if not the outcome, was to present life history study as a heuristic corrective to extreme views of this kind. Like Ames, the Rudolphs point out an inconsistency between the methodological and the case history sections of the paper, but do so for quite opposite reasons; they find the methodology part reasonable but the case analysis oversocialized, Ames finds the methodology too positivistic and the case presentation to be a useful combination of the two approaches.

A number of the comments raise questions about selection—of the person to be studied, of the data to be emphasized, of the concepts to be applied. On the selection of persons, Phillips cogently tells of the difference between compiling the life history of an ordinary person through direct interviews and writing the life history of an extraordinary person out of a vast array of published sources. Relevant to this is a remark by Mintz. The criticism about the special relation between interviewer and subject distorting a life history account, he notes, seems less substantial when the interpretation is based on published materials. Mintz adds that if he were to follow up on the life history he has published, he would want to collect perhaps a dozen life histories from persons of similar sociocultural characteristics. While a dozen might not satisfy some standards for an adequate sample, a dozen studies would undoubtedly further enrich Mintz's perceptive analysis of the single life history.

Both ordinary and extraordinary persons are worth study; what can be learned from the lives of the one kind should illumine our understanding of the other. Waddell asks whether the same procedural suggestions can be applied in the study of typical lives; my opinion is that, in general, they can. Although Langness says that the lives of ordinary men probably do not involve so many or such obvious turnings as the lives of extraordinary persons, surely all adults have experienced turnings and have made adaptations, some of the unrenowned perhaps as much as the renowned. Waddell's request for guidelines in eliciting life history data is not fully met in the existing literature, but Langness's monograph discusses the matter and

provides bibliographic leads to other sources.

Phillips asks whether the data on Gandhi and the analysis might have been significantly changed if I had interviewed Gandhi or had worked with him as closely as, say, Nirmal Bose did. The idea of trying to get life history data from Gandhi did cross my mind, as I recall, but was promptly crossed out when I remembered that my mail and movements were evidently being closely watched and that a foreigner who showed interest in Indian political figures at the tense juncture of the British Raj was not likely to remain in India for long.

Akiwowo's comments on the selection of data deal with some basic issues. He notes that any life history study involves some selection and that the paper seeks a general framework for analysis so that there may be more common procedural ground and comparability among life history studies than there has been so far. But Akiwowo finds the sections on Gandhi to reflect "the author's own concerns." Perhaps the central question here is whether these procedural concerns are broad and cogent enough to be shared by other students of life history and also inclusive enough to allow for differences in culture and personality, both of the subjects and of the authors.

The personal bent of the anthropologist is of special importance in life history studies, Mintz writes, such studies having "always said a great deal about the anthropologist, and not only about his subject." True enough, but this is a matter of degree, since a good deal of anthropological writing also tells something about the author, as the variety of the comments on papers in this journal attests. Mintz recommends that one who records and interprets a life history do his best to make clear what he thinks he is like. A few anthropologists have tried to do so, and it is useful information, though the reader still has the problem of interpreting the author's interpretation of himself.

In anthropological as well as in other writings, the selection of data is likely to be influenced by the intellectual currents of the author's time and place. Haydu and Langness mention the alternation between emphasis on the influence of the great individual and insistence on the inexorable power of anonymous social forces. Greenstein notes that it is fashionable in the social sciences to stress that role requirements mitigate personal qualities, although many political roles do leave room for personal qualities to affect

behavior. Fashions in this change in different ways in different fields and societies. In the novel, Solzhenitsyn has recently written what critics take to be a challenge to Tolstoy's view of the dominance of social forces. In political journalism, Fitzgerald and Halberstam have written about the American involvement in Vietnam in ways that emphasize cultural and social forces. The further development of life history studies in anthropology could provide a perspective on such issues that would help balance the thinking about them against the vagaries and parochialisms of short-lived fashions.

On the selection of concepts in the paper, the opinions of the comments vary. Mintz writes that the distinction between social and cultural dimensions is promising; Smith finds it ambiguous. Smith says that he very much likes the concept of turnings; Langness believes both turnings and adaptations would be difficult to use elsewhere. Akiwowo concludes that the approach suggested in the paper is of special value because of its emphasis on man as a creative being; Smith finds the concept of adaptation too weighted toward passive adjustment. Which of these views are the more cogent remains to be ascertained by those who may try to apply the proposed approach. It may be that the separation of the cultural and social dimensions does involve awkward am-

biguities but is nonetheless useful. The idea of turnings may well have to be more fully elaborated to be a serviceable tool for analysis. Charlotte Bühler objects to the concept of adaptation as defined in the paper because it covers "at least two opposite modes of being or of relating to the world." She would separate creativity, the key concept in her view, from adaptation. Akiwowo similarly asks if adaptation is defined as a process of coping or maintenance or both. The concept as presented tries to direct attention to behavior that does both, that copes with new conditions creatively and in so doing maintains certain core continuities.

The comment by Bose deserves special attention because he was an anthropologist who had worked closely with Gandhi and wrote one of the very best first-hand accounts of him. I was able to discuss the subject of the paper with Bose before his recent death (and made note of some of his unpublished anecdotes and views), but we did not touch on the consequences for Gandhi of the cultural conflict and discontinuity that Bose notes in his comment.

The Rudolphs make considerable use of the term "compliant" and show why that term (and its grammatical variations) do not suitably characterize Gandhi's life and work. It is not a term or a concept that I would prefer for

much the same reasons that the Rudolphs give, nor do I use it centrally in the paper and perhaps do not use it at all. They also note that the account fails to take Gandhi seriously as a manipulator and moulder. It is evident that I did not make my views on this sufficiently clear in the several passages on Gandhi's creativity, although Bose's remarks on Gandhi as an innovator are followed by the note that the analysis of all this in the paper is "most satisfactory." I cannot say much about the Rudolphs' references to the unpublished diary of a Rajput nobleman, but it should be said that Rajput and Vania life-styles in matters of sensuous enjoyment differ markedly not only in ideal, but in observed practice as well.

I agree with Smith that the "individual" dimension should be understood as a unique integration of all the others and not merely as an additive residual. The writing of this part of a life history should evoke the best of an author's own integrative abilities. Finally, several of the comments note interesting leads for future research. Akiwowo mentions the nexus between dimensions, Langness the flexibility of life plans, Phillips the influence of the recorder. As life history studies are further developed, it seems likely that many promising new leads will be opened.

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