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THE POST-INDUSTRIAL FAMILY

We are all quite well acquainted with family life; some believe that they understand what goes on; and some are willing to hazard a guess as to the family's future. Will babies continue to suck firmly at their mothers' breasts independently of what is being said?¹ It's hard to tell.

I would like to discuss the future of the family in our society and treat, particularly, how the family might interact with certain societal systems that are being predicted for us.² After giving a brief summary of the most popular anticipated future society, I want to look at how this society would affect intra-family functions and how it might change the family-society relationship. As problems appear, I shall suggest likely resolutions for them.

The Future

What are the likely changes that will take place in society in the next thirty or forty years?³ The first that is conceded by almost all is the arrival of post-industrial society in its full strength. If we define post-industrialism as the state in which the majority of people

¹Although, as I shall discuss later, even this is part of the social system in Western life.

²The methodology employed here is simple. Taking the post-industrial world as a given, we see how family life might adapt. As Goode (in The Family, Prentice Hall, 1964, and World Revolution and Family Patterns, Free Press, 1963) keeps pointing out, there is an interaction of family and society which is one of mutual accommodation. What I hope to do here is to suggest, albeit indirectly, where the society may have to accommodate.

³See, for example, recent work of Daniel Bell, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Herman Kahn, J. K. Galbraith, P. F. Drucker.

work in the service sector rather than the manufacturing sector of the economy, we are there already. Yet, the style of post-industrialism is not here yet. Its characteristics are to be seen in some of the vanguard sub-cultures, though. Post-industrialism will mean the rise of knowledge as a major source of power in our society and the growth of rationalized techniques for dealing with problems that are presented to the society. Universities will become major power institutions, having roles similar to those played by corporate industry, banks and land holders in the past.

This growth of knowledge is changing our view of man's nature in a dramatic way. Genetic and behavioral engineering are realities today; in the future we shall be able to be more controlled and specific in the use of such engineering.¹ Chemical and physical techniques are being developed which will be capable of altering our behavior and even our general nature. Finally, it may be that a good fraction of behavior that was thought to be cultural in origin is sourced in hormonal and genetic factors. Our deep belief in the scientific method as a means of discovering the truth should make such evidence quite persuasive both on a technical and on a philosophical level.

Finally, some suspect that the rationale of change in large (bureaucratic) organizations will be efficiency and growth (knowledge factors) rather than profit maximization.

To summarize, knowledge will be much more powerful in the future, we will trust it more, and it may be more capable of fulfilling more trust. But whether or not new knowledge and scientific techniques will serve public purposes is another question.

¹See Science, Vol. 165, p. 442, 967.

The Family

First, I want to review current points of view about the family that are held by those in family sociology and related professions.¹ The extended kinship family is rapidly yielding to the nuclear family throughout the world. This is, in large measure, a response to the growing industrialization and urbanization throughout the world. In the United States it is a fait accompli. A concomitant of the growth of the nuclear family has been the decline of traditional modes of transmitting information to the new generation about bringing up a family. There has been a growth of expertise, whether it be the influence of Gesell, or Dr. Spock or the United States Government's book Infant Care, on how children are to be brought up. In the past thirty years, the alteration in the opinion of how children should be reared, its reflection in the literature for parents, and their ability to change their point of view, indicates that parents are perfectly willing to follow the ideas of the theorists and experts.²

Geniuses and Experts: The Children of the Future

What are the likely changes in family life in this century? I anticipate that the socialization and bringing-up of children will become more complex, require greater expertise and become more crucial to individual adequacy. To function within the post-industrial society, individuals will have to be more complex and better trained than they have been previously. Training will take place both at home and in school.

¹See W. Goode, op. cit.

²There have been some studies on the content of Infant Care through various editions.

The "baby watchers," those psychologists and educators who are watching the behavior of babies to try and understand how they learn and grow, are discovering that the early years are tremendously important for learning ability. What is becoming especially clear is that the early years are very early indeed; they may extend from the instant after birth or from before birth. Not only does learning take place at such early ages, but this learning turns out to be crucial for the total development of the child into a functioning adult; it may turn out that what happens in these early years determines the amount of "genius" that we see in adults.¹ This, combined with the likely need for great expertise in the ability to deal with future society, makes it clear that early learning experiences are crucial and their specification and control can become socially "necessary."

It is likely that we will all have to be geniuses and, what I think is most hopeful, is that we all can be. There may be evidence of inequality of ability, inequality of intelligence, and the importance of heritable characteristics for such factors.² Whether or not this is true or relevant evidence, inequality should not turn out to be limiting for several reasons. First of all, inequality usually refers to the maximum

¹I used genius here in a very simple way: an excellence in the ability to do something well. The "something" may be an integrative function--someone may live a life that is a "work of art."

In connection with this is the idea of "knowledge workers" as spoken of by Drucker in The Age of Discontinuity, Harper & Row, 1969. This is not necessarily genius. "Knowledge workers" manipulate (and create) knowledge rather than machines. The demand for increased education will be great, so that we can be "knowledge workers," whether we wish to be or not. But genius is a qualitatively different strength; it is more scintillation than bright light.

²A. Jensen, Harvard Education Review (1969)

potential of people; this may turn out to be so high that when learning and teaching techniques are improved, we will not care about extreme limits. Also, it is becoming clearer that intelligence is a multi-dimensional quality and that inequalities are not equally unequal in all dimensions.¹ We need not all become mathematicians, all become poets, or all become politicians. Studies of intelligence may indicate that some of us would best become mathematicians, others poets, and others politicians; we could all be geniuses at doing one of these tasks.

To summarize, getting along and "making do" need not be the norms in a highly technological highly knowledge-oriented, rich society of the future. We will be able to afford to let each person's genius bloom where it may. It is likely that children will have to be trained much better, more efficiently and effectively so that they can partake fully in the complex society. Education will have to be more broadly based and require greater expertise than ever before.

Child Society

A new subculture, which I call the "child society," may arise out of the need for expertise in the upbringing of children. Named in analogy with the "adolescent society" as conceived by James Coleman, this "society" too, will be based on the importance of the schools, both for their training function and their concentration of expertise in this training.²

It is not likely that two-month-old babies will be taking their cues from their peers, but it is quite possible that pre-adolescents, say those from eight to thirteen years old, shall be doing so to a greater

¹J. P. Guilford, Science, Vol. 160 (May 10, 1968).

²J. Coleman, The Adolescent Society, Free Press (1961)

extent than even today. The influence of parents as compared to peers will certainly decline. What is perhaps more interesting is the possible decline of the influence of the experts who originally set up the system, and suggested the need for more training: perhaps the system will get out of control. Children are becoming more knowledgeable than their parents and the adults who are supposedly training them. Effective, cheap communication systems (records, films, T.V., telephone, newspapers) should give them a lot more cohesiveness than pre-adolescent society of the past.¹ Their autonomy may be possible in this context. I doubt whether even adolescents will have very much influence on a pre-adolescent society.

Some of these trends are actually becoming quite strong nowadays, as an example will show. The seeming inability of families in the poverty sector of our society to mold their young in the patterns the middle class wants, and perhaps even they want, for their children has led to results of some import. A typical one is the setting up of private schools, whether they be all black or Indian or integrated, within the community, which can serve to train the children for the society that is here. These private schools are supposed to make up for the lacks that are perceived in the parents. If Exeter is for those who reside on lower Fifth Avenue, then these schools are for those who live in Harlem. We can see a real universality of the young in their pursuits -- their toys, their T.V., their games, their schoolwork. Now it seems that these are very much under our (adult) control; whether it will remain so is interesting speculation.

¹ Large network computer systems as part of the teaching apparatus, should facilitate communication somewhat. See Scientific Research, October 27, 1969, p. 9.

If we can all create geniuses, and there will be experts who know how to do this, there may develop an orthodoxy with respect to how to bring up children. There are fashions at all times in how we should bring up our children. What seems likely to me is the development of techniques which are significantly better than the ones that we have now, and that their power in training children for the future will be so great that we will tend to use them almost exclusively. I do not believe that this will herald a decline in argument about how we should bring up children; it is just that our arena for argument will have changed in a qualitative and deeply important way. It is not likely that parents will lose their significant roles within this changing society; however, I think their roles will change dramatically. As Pollack has pointed out, it is possible, for example, that parents will become merely managers of their child's early education.¹

In the Appendix, I will briefly discuss some characteristics of such a child society.

The Structure of the Family

Forty years ago, the pill was probably an aspirin, twenty years ago it was an antibiotic, today it's a contraceptive, and twenty years from now the pill should be more comprehensive. Today's "pill" has had a profound influence on mating and sexuality. Tomorrow's pill may have to deal with deeper problems related to stress in the husband-wife relationship. The family may be one of the few refuges where non-standard behavior may be exhibited.² We may well need certain chemical additives

¹Journal of Marriage and The Family, Vol. 29, p. 193.

²A theme stressed to me by Leonard Duhl.

to our lives to make family relationships sufficiently stable. It is not clear that these will lead to new states of consciousness or new degrees of perception, it may turn out that what we will obtain will just be adequacy; just as when we take an aspirin all we ask is relief from a headache, not nirvana.

Although the nuclear family seems to be a spreading phenomenon, the spreading is not a justification for its adequacy or its efficiency in the future. It seems likely to me that we will need to develop strong ties outside the nuclear family especially for adults, so as to relieve strains on the husband-wife relationship. Christopher Alexander has gone into this in detail in a recent paper and he gives some interesting discussion of the need for friends within a society.¹ The nuclear family may become less than adequate; we may, consequently, see a growth of a new kind of tribalism in the future. It will not be a tribalism based on kinship roles or on economic needs; it will be based largely on psychological and diffuse needs. What could hold things together would be a diffuse form of sexuality or perhaps cooperation in major tasks.² A multi-generational interaction can be a suitable goal for creating these larger groups, somewhat reminiscent of the old tribal societies. It seems to me that the strength of our society, especially in the technical realm, will make it possible for us to structure the society in such a fashion that this new tribalism will be very "practical." Perhaps we will have groups of people who are part of "a tribe" who will work together and,

¹C. Alexander, The City As a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact, University of California, Berkeley, Center for Planning & Development Research, WP 50 (1966).

²Recent articles on common enemies, whether Martians or the melting Ice Cap, suggest analogies.

when necessary to move, they will move together. The trend of using "groups" of workers to solve problems is not a new one, and, in fact, it has turned out to be a powerful technique to increase production and satisfaction in factories.

Work

A major characteristic of industrialized society is that work is outside the family and not within it. Nowadays, men and women leave their homes to go to work; very few have the luxury and privilege of working at home if they wish. The place of work may return to the home in the future. Sophisticated communications media will make it possible for groups of people to communicate easily, cheaply, and conveniently with each other even though well separated. The children of today may become quite satisfied with communicating by picture-phone rather than in person. If, in fact, a major kind of work in the future will be "think work," many people will not have to go to a factory or office building to use the means of production to earn their living. The factory or the office can come to them if it is, essentially, a computer or a library. We return to "cottage industry."

The character of work may alter dramatically. Among other things, the man or the woman of the household who makes the living is also at home, so the bringing up of children (which may or may not be relegated to other institutions) can be done at home by either or both parents. It may not be clear what is man's work and what is woman's work. It may turn out, based on genetic or hormonal factors, that certain kinds of work tend to be more appropriate for men or for women. There will be growing difficulty in identifying the true breadwinner. Only recently

have economists looked into the nature of women's work at home and done some fair evaluations of its worth.¹ It is no longer clear who brings home the bacon and who brings home the pig. It is likely that the notion of the head of the household, the man who rules the roost, will get some reformation. We may have ruling juntas of two rather than one. Will this be a stable configuration?

The Family in Society

A problem I have alluded to throughout this paper has been the stress placed on the family by the complex society or, I should say, the whole society outside of the family. The family will be the place where one goes to relieve the tensions of the outside world. I have implicitly subscribed to this view through much of this paper; however, I do not believe it is necessary. Perhaps we can develop other institutions which can take more of the stress. In fact, they can be made to absorb deviant behavior and somehow use that behavior in a positive way. An example of such an institution is the modern American university which, I think, has been remarkably successful in the last five years or so in dealing with student discontent and transforming it into powerful sources for positive change both within the university and society.

Death of the Family

Some say that the family will wither away soon enough.² It may be that the tasks imposed on the parents are essentially odious (diapers,

¹J. Mincer, NBER, has done this work.

²See B. Moore, in F. Lindenfeld, Radical Perspectives on Social Problems, MacMillan (1968).

etc.) and should be contracted out as soon as possible. It may be that the breadwinner's role will be killed off by a guaranteed income and the basis for family structure will die.

I don't know. But I think we should be careful about imputing a uni-dimensionality to the sources of cohesiveness of the family. The family "glue" restructures itself to meet the stresses placed on it. More significantly, the sociological definition of a family alters to meet the needs of the researchers. The death of the family may well be a sign of our inability to abstract some essential aspects of what we now call families so that the continuity is retained.¹

At this point, I want to deal with one prediction about the decline of the family which is of special concern since its starting point is so similar to my own. Robert Morison suggests that as formal education increases in importance and power the prestige of the family decreases.² The family is not too good at transmitting and assimilating new knowledge. Population problems make the family seem a source for trouble, rather than a source for a new generation. And, the developments in early childhood education result in further invasions into family life. Morison sees these invasions into the role of family life and parenthood as being so strong as to make it necessary for us to replace family life with much larger societal concerns of the individual (e.g., superordinate goals). I think, however, that this view ignores the family's function of security and shelter from the complex outside, the possibility of parents adopting new

¹In the physical sciences, the concept of energy has been expanded, properly to be sure, to make sure that energy is conserved.

²Science, v. 155, p. 429 (January 1967).

roles vis a vis their children, and the possibly liberating aspects of the societal invasions for the parent-child relationship.

Policies for Family Life

If the changes I have suggested are to result in better lives for people, they will require innovative policy responses rather than responses geared to the ethos of productivity (even defined in post-industrial terms).

1. Our educational systems will have to be more comprehensive; they will need to be geared to both the teaching of a child and his parents. If we do not wish to let the education experts operate without constraints, monitoring of the educational system by the citizenry will have to be more "on line," and better informed of the problems teachers face.

We will have to articulate a more diversified reactive system of schooling so that genius can go where it may. And this will require a statement of commitment that is different from one suggesting that we produce people trained to take the jobs of today.

2. A child society will again raise the question: when is a person responsible for his actions? There is now a movement toward adult treatment of students in the universities. Will we want to treat eight-year-olds similarly?

3. If we extend the nuclear family, then the structure of work, of play, and housing may need change. The "household" can be redefined legally to suit new social conventions.

4. If we want to develop geniuses we will need to be able to accommodate them into the work structure. A vast diversity of careers should arise, some of which may need explicit support by the government.

5. We will have to make a commitment toward the development of less stringent social inhibitions. Sin cities may not be too far off the

mark. Otherwise, the family may become overly burdened in having to deal with idiosyncratic behavior.

I have not chosen as a model for the future one that would suggest the spreading of affective familistic values to the rest of the social system. Rather, I have emphasized the reverse influence. This may well be a crucial problem in analysis such as mine. An emotive, self-motivated, cohesive society is possible and I should want to advocate it. But I think that the somewhat less sanguine picture presented here is "in the lead" at the moment. I would like to think that the "hippie alternative" has a viable future? It probably does for some; will it for many?

APPENDIX

The Child Society

Let me suggest a scenario that will lead to the child society. If it turns out that there are procedures by which we can make all of our children geniuses (i.e., exceptionally gifted) in some field, and if we still believe that being capable of doing things very well is a part of a good life, then it seems likely that we will want to develop these procedures. Since it is likely that these procedures will have to be initiated early in life, soon after childbirth, a substantial amount of this training will have to be done by the parents, as contrasted to the outside society such as the school system.

However, this training will have a certain amount of orthodoxy because the method that seems to work best at any one time will have the most adherents. Children four or five years old could have a very large capability in the standard skills as well as perhaps a great ability to learn more. It will soon be the case that we have exceeded the ability of the parents to fruitfully "feed" information to the children because of the time requirement and because they may not know enough. At this point, the children will go to a school. Schools for the pre-adolescent should become somewhat more pervasive than they are nowadays. This does not mean that children will play less and spend more time in school; the range of what they do in school will be expanded. When children spend more of their time and some of their most exciting moments in school, they start to take their standards from the school; parents then lose some of their ability

to influence their own children. Note that this is not happening to adolescents, but to children who are less than twelve and perhaps older than four years old.

To some extent this is happening today. The system as constructed here is not one where adults have been excluded. The conception of the system, at least the conception that would be held by those who originally put it into effect, was that the society has hired experts, namely teachers, to instill the necessary skills to its youth so that they can be effective in the society. It is certainly not conceived of as a sub-culture, independent of the whole society.

It seems likely to me, however, that this is not the outcome that we will have. We will have a situation very similar to the development of the adolescent society. I will go into the ramifications of such a concept here.

Let me reiterate why I believe that this will be a society rather than a group of children controlled by their parents. First of all, they will be spending large amounts of time away from their parents. Secondly, they will be spending large amounts of time with other children, their peer group. Many of their rewards for success and failure will come from other children rather than from their parents. It does not seem likely to me that the adults in such an environment will demonstrate extraordinary amounts of affective quality. In fact, much of the affection that the children receive in this environment will come from each other. I do not think they will find it easy to relate to their elders, i.e., those over twelve. Their position in life depends largely on isolating themselves from others. The adult society will be ineffective because it does not provide the necessary things. It does not provide the education; it does not provide the rewards. The children will be doing that themselves.

Some may object that the characteristics of children that I demand for the child society are strangely adult, and not very much in accord with what we know about psychological development. Development is probably not canonical, however. The society gets a fair approximation of what it needs: the children will be smart enough to create new roles that will be consonant with the exchanges that will be demanded of them. They may not show affection, for example, in the ways we now know, but cross-cultural examination indicates the breadth of possibilities for such behavior.

Family Structure

An interesting outcome of such a society will be an important change in the quality of the intimate relationships in the family. There will be four groups: the adults, the adolescents, the children, and the infants. It is not clear to me that those who suffer most will be the children. It may turn out that the parents will suffer a great deal for they may lose the ability to relate to their children and to gain rewards for doing so.¹

The Sources for the New

I often wonder how many families have learned about the space explorations that the United States has done in the last ten years mainly from their children. It is interesting to ask whether this child society will be a source of introduction of the "new" into the society.² Will they

¹There exist many groups in society which send their children to boarding school at very early ages. A study of their relationship to their children should be very instructive in suggesting what are the alternative relationships that develop in the family when the adult-child relationship is severely constricted. Such a child society appeals to some as a solution to the poverty problem. See "Can a Kibbutz, American Style, Save the Children of the Slums?", New York Times, November 5, 1969, p. 50. This plan does not seem so super to me as a solution.

²See "When the Young Teach and the Old Learn," Time, August 17, 1970, p. 35.

acquaint their families, namely their constrained and rather old-fashioned brothers and sisters who are perhaps thirteen and fourteen, and their absolutely antediluvian parents, into the new technologies, into the new ideas and into the new possibilities of the society?

Another possibility is that the child society will provide the adult society with new models for how to live. Adolescents have been quite successful in showing adults how one can live without a job by going to school, by interacting with one's peers, by providing diversion for the over-burdened classes, namely their parents. Since they have not had the chance to be completely co-opted by the "system" they have most recently been a source for change within the society by asking embarrassing questions. The child society may be an especially exciting source of new ideas, new models for life styles for their parents and their adolescent brothers and sisters.

What seems more interesting to me is the possibility that this child society may be the new leading sector. It seems likely that the formative character of the early years will not decrease in importance; the quality of life that children are used to in their early years will be reflected in the kinds of lives they live as adults. It may turn out that the child society will make very strong demands on the adult society by this means. Finally, since the child society may be the most avant-garde part of the society, it will probably be the source of change. Insofar as it is recognized as the avant-garde, its changes will be reflected relatively rapidly in the rest of the society. The children will be sources of the adults of the future.

The Kibbutz as a Model for the Child Society

We can use the kibbutz experience to serve as a model for a future child society.¹ It is true that the kibbutz was originally started for ideological (socialist) and practical reasons (freedom of women, escape from the ghetto, etc.), quite different from the sources of the child society. But the kibbutz upbringing of children seems to be similar to what I have suggested here for the child society.

If the kibbutz is a good model, then it does suggest that the child society is viable. Children brought up in the kibbutz are somewhat different from those brought up in the nuclear family environment, but for their society it seems to be fine. The husband-wife relationship is stable and seems to work well. Parents seem to adjust to and become quite satisfied with their relationships with their children.

But I think some demurrers are in order here. Kibbutz society has only recently become industrial and some suggest that this will herald a decline of the kibbutz. The highly integrated quality of the life found in the kibbutz may make the child society work well there, but it may not succeed in a more fragmented diverse world. Also, the kibbutz is a self-chosen society.

The child society as it is envisioned here need not separate the children and family from each other as much as is done at the kibbutz. New experiments will need to be done for new societies.

¹B. Bettelheim, Children of the Dream, Macmillan (1969); M. E. Spiro, in N. W. Bell and E. Vogel, Modern Introduction to the Family, Free Press (1960). A critical review of Bettelheim by U. Bronfenbrenner appears in Saturday Review, Sept. 20, 1969, p. 72. See also Bronfenbrenner, U., Two Worlds of Childhood, New York: Russell Sage, 1970.