of the "self-made man" has an element of nostalgic romanticism and is destined to become increasingly mythical, if by it is meant not just mobility from humble origins to high status, which does indeed continue to occur, but that the high status was attained through the "school of hard knocks" without the aid of formal education.

The structure of the public school system and the analysis of the ways in which it contributes both to the socialization of individuals and to their allocation to roles in society is, I feel, of vital concern to all students of American society. Notwithstanding the variegated elements in the situation, I think it has been possible to sketch out a few major structural patterns of the public school system and at least to suggest some ways in which they serve these important functions. What could be presented in this paper is the merest outline of such an analysis. It is, however, hoped that it has been carried far enough to suggest a field of vital mutual interest for social scientists on the one hand and those concerned with the actual operation of the schools on the other.

7

Youth in the Context of American Society

THE passage of time has recently been symbolized by the fact that we have elected the first President of the United States to be born in the twentieth century—indeed, well inside it. It is perhaps equally relevant to remark that we have recently entered an era in which a substantial proportion of current youth (rather than children) will experience a major part of their active lives in the twenty-first century. Thus a sixteen-year-old of today will be only fifty-five at the coming turn of the century.

It is possible that the twentieth century will be characterized by future historians as one of the centuries of turmoil and transition—in the modern history of the West, perhaps most analogous to the seventeenth. It is also likely, however, that it will be judged as one of the great creative centuries, in which major stages of the process of building a new society and a new culture, will have occurred. The tremendous developments in the sciences and in the technologies deriving from them, the quite new levels of industrialization, and the spread of the industrial pattern from its places of origin, together with the long series of "emancipations" (*e.g.*, women's suffrage and the rapid decline of colonialism) will presumably figure prominently among its achievements. At the same time, it clearly has been and will probably continue to be a century of turmoil, not one of the

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placid enjoyment of prior accomplishment, but of challenge and danger. It is in this broad perspective that I should like to sketch some of the problems of American youth, as the heirs of the next phase of our future, with both its opportunities and its difficulties.

In the course of this century, the United States has emerged at the forefront of the line of general development, not only because of its wealth and political power but also—more importantly in the present context—because it displays the type of social organization that belongs to the future. Since during the same period and only a little behind our own stage of progress a somewhat differing and competing version has also emerged in the Communist societies, it is not surprising that there is high tension at both political and ideological levels. Obviously, the meaning of American society presents a world-wide problem, not least to its own citizens and in turn to its younger ones: since they have the longest future ahead of them, they have the most at stake.

SOME SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

BEFORE we take up the specific situation of youth, it will be best to sketch a few of the main features of our society and the ideological discussions about them, with special reference to their effect on youth. The structural characteristic usually emphasized is industrialism. It is certainly true that the United States has developed industrial organization and productivity farther than any other society in history. Not only has it done this on a massive scale, both as regards population and area, but it has also attained by far the highest levels of per-capita productivity yet known. The salience of industrialism in turn emphasizes the economic aspects of social structure: a high evaluation of productivity, the free enterprise system, with the private, profit-oriented business firm as a conspicuous unit of organization, and with private consumption prominent in the disposal of the products of industry. This last feature includes both the high levels of current family income and what may be called the "capitalization" of households through the spread of home ownership, the development of consumer durable goods, and the like.

It would be misleading, however, to overstress this economic aspect. Economic development itself depends on many noneconomic conditions, and economic and noneconomic aspects are subtly interwoven in many ways. The same period (roughly, the present century) which has seen the enormous growth of industrial productivity has also seen a very large relative, as well as absolute, growth in the organization and functions of government. The largest growth of all, of course, is in the armed services, but by no means only there. State and local governments have also expanded. Another prominent development has been that of the legal system, which is interstitial between governmental and nongovernmental sectors of society. I mean here not only legislation and the functioning of courts of law but also the private legal profession, with professional lawyers employed in government in various capacities.

A consideration of the legal profession leads to one of the learned professions in general, the educational organizations in which men are trained, and the cultural systems that form the basis of their competence. The most important development has been the growth of the sciences and their application, not only in industry and the military field but also in many others, notably, that of health. Though they are behind their physical and biological sister disciplines, the sciences dealing with human behavior in society have made very great advances, to an altogether new level. To take only the cruder indices, they have grown enormously in the numbers of trained personnel, in the volume of publications, in the amount of research funds devoted to their pursuit, and the like. All this would not have been possible without a vast expansion of the educational system, relatively greatest at the highest levels. By any quantitative standard, the American population today is by far the most highly educated of any large society known to history—and it is rapidly becoming more so.

Furthermore, this has become in the first instance a society of large organizations, though the tenacious survival of small units (in agriculture, but more broadly in retail trade and various other fields) is a striking fact. (It is important to note that the large organization has many features that are independent of whether it operates in private industry, in government, or in the private nonprofit sector.) It is also a highly urbanized society. Less than ten per cent of its labor force is engaged in agriculture, and more than half the population lives in metropolitan areas, urban communities that are rapidly expanding and changing their character.

It is also a society with a great mobility as to persons, place of residence, and social and economic status. It is a society that within

about eighty years has assimilated a tremendous number of immigrants, who, though overwhelmingly European in origin, came from a great diversity of national, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Their descendants have increasingly become full Americans, and increasingly widely dispersed in the social structure, including its higher reaches. After all, the current President of the United States is the grandson of Irish immigrants and the first Catholic to occupy that office.

Overriding all these features is the fact that this is a rapidly developing society. There are good reasons for supposing that rapid change is generally a source of unsettlement and confusion, particularly accentuated perhaps if the change is not guided by a set of sharply defined master symbols that tell just what the change is about. The American process of change is of this type; but we can also say that it is not a state of nearly random confusion but in the main is a coherently directional process. Since it is not centrally directed or symbolized, however, it is particularly important to understand its main pattern.

There has been the obvious aspect of growth that is expressed in sheer scale, such as the size of the population, the magnitude and complexity of organization. At the more specifically social levels, however, I should like to stress certain features of the process that may help to make the situation of American youth (as well as other phenomena of our time) more understandable. On the one hand, at the level of the predominant pattern, our value system has remained relatively stable. On the other hand, relative to the value system, there has been a complex process of change, of which structural differentiation is perhaps the most important single feature. It is associated, however, with various others, which I shall call "extending inclusiveness," "normative upgrading," and "an increasing conceptualization of value patterns on the general level." These are all technical terms which, if they are not to be regarded as sociological jargon, need to be elucidated.

Values generally are patterned conceptions of the qualities of meaning of the objects of human experiences; by virtue of these qualities, the objects are considered desirable for the evaluating persons. Among such objects is the type of society considered to be good, not only in some abstract sense but also for "our kind of people" as members of it. The value patterns that play a part in controlling action in a society are in the first instance the conceptions

of the good type of society to which the members of that society are committed. Such a pattern exists at a very high level of generality, without any specification of functions, or any level of internal differentiation, or particularities of situation.

In my own work it has proved useful to formulate the dominant American value pattern at this very general level as one of *instrumental activism.* Its cultural grounding lies in moral and (eventually) religious orientations, which in turn derive directly from Puritan traditions. The relevance of the pattern extends through all three of the religious, moral, and societal levels, as well as to others that cannot be detailed here. It is most important to keep them distinct, in particular the difference between the moral and the societal levels.

In its religious aspect, instrumental activism is based on the pattern Max Weber called "inner-worldly asceticism," the conception of man's role as an instrument of the divine will in building a kingdom of God on earth. Through a series of steps, both in internal cultural development and in institutionalization (which cannot be detailed here), this has produced a conception of the human condition in which the individual is committed to maximal effort in the interest of valued *achievement* under a system of normative order. This system is in the first instance moral, but also, at the societal level, it is embodied in legal norms. Achievement is conceived in "rational" terms, which include the maximal objective understanding of the empirical conditions of action, as well as the faithful adherence to normative commitments. It is of great importance that, once institutionalized, the fulfillment of such a value pattern need not be motivated by an explicit recognition of its religious groundings.

One way of describing the pattern in its moral aspects is to say that it is fundamentally individualistic. It tends to maximize the desirability of autonomy and responsibility in the individual. Yet this is an institutionalized individualism, in that it is normatively controlled at the moral level in two ways. First, it is premised on the conception of human existence as serving ends or functions beyond those of physical longevity, or health, or the satisfaction of the psychological needs of the personality apart from these value commitments. In a sense, it is the building of the "good life," not only for the particular individual but also for all mankind—a life that is accounted as desirable, not merely desired. This includes commitment to a good society. Second, to implement these moral premises, it is

necessary for the autonomous and responsible achievements of the individual to be regulated by a normative order—at this level, a moral law that defines the relations of various contributions and the patterns of distributive justice.

The society, then, has a dual meaning, from this moral point of view. On the one hand, it is perhaps the primary field in which valued achievement is possible for the individual. In so far as it facilitates such achievements, the society is a good one. On the other hand, the building of the good society (that is, its progressive improvement) is the primary goal of valued action—along with such cultural developments as are intimately involved in social progress, such as science. To the individual, therefore, the most important goal to which he can orient himself is a contribution to the good society.

The value pattern I am outlining is activistic, therefore, in that it is oriented toward control or mastery of the human condition, as judged by moral standards. It is not a doctrine of passive adjustment to conditions, but one of active adaptation. On the other hand, it is instrumental with reference to the source of moral legitimation, in the sense that human achievement is not conceived as an end in itself but as a means to goals beyond the process and its immediate outcome.

This value pattern implies that the society is meant to be a developing, evolving entity. It is meant to develop in the direction of progressive "improvement." But this development is to be through the autonomous initiative and achievements of its units—in the last analysis, individual persons. It is therefore a society which places heavy responsibilities (in the form of expectations) on its individual members. At the same time, it subjects them to two very crucial sets of limitations which have an important bearing on the problem of youth.

One of these concerns the "moralism" of the value system—the fact that individualism is bound within a strongly emphasized framework of normative order. The achievement, the success, of the individual must ideally be in accord with the rules, above all, with those which guarantee opportunity to all, and which keep the system in line with its remoter values. Of course, the more complex the society, the greater the difficulty of defining the requisite norms, a difficulty which is greatly compounded by rapid change. Furthermore, in the interest of effectiveness, achievement must often be in

the context of the collective organization, thus further limiting autonomy.

The second and for present purposes an even more crucial limitation is that it is in the nature of such a system that it is not characterized by a single, simple, paramount goal for the society as a system. The values legitimize a *direction* of change, not a terminal state. Furthermore, only in the most general sense is this direction "officially" defined, with respect to such famous formulae as liberty, democracy, general welfare, and distributive justice. The individual is left with a great deal of responsibility, not only for achieving *within* the institutionalized normative order, but for his own interpretation of its meaning and of his obligations in and to it.

Space forbids detailing the ramifications of this value system. Instead, it is necessary to my analysis to outline briefly the main features of the process of social change mentioned above. The suggestion is that the main pattern of values has been and probably will continue to be stable, but that the structure of the society, including its subsystem values at lower levels, has in the nature of the case been involved in a rapid and far-reaching process of change. This centers on the process of differentiation, but very importantly it also involves what we have referred to as inclusion, upgrading, and increasing generalization. I shall confine my discussion here to the structure of the society, though this in turn is intimately connected with problems concerned with the personality of the individual, including his personal values.

Differentiation refers to the process by which simple structures are divided into functionally differing components, these components becoming relatively independent of one another, and then recombined into more complex structures in which the functions of the differentiated units are complementary. A key example in the development of industrial society everywhere is the differentiation, at the collectivity level, of the unit of economic production from the kinship household. Obviously, in peasant economies, production is carried out by and in the household. The development of employing organizations which are structurally distinct from any household is the key new structural element. This clearly means a loss of function to the old undifferentiated unit, but also a gain in autonomy, though this in turn involves a new dependency, because the household can no longer be self-subsistent. The classical formula is that the productive services of certain members (usually the adult males)

have been alienated from the organization directly responsible for subsistence and thus lost to the household, which then depends on money income from occupational earnings and in turn on the markets for consumers' goods.

These losses, however, are not without their compensations: the gain in the productivity of the economy and in the standard of living of the household. This familiar paradigm has to be generalized so as to divest it of its exclusively economic features and show it as the primary characterization of a very general process of social change. First, it is essential to point out that it always operates simultaneously in both collectivities and individual roles. Thus, in the example just given, a new type of productive organization which is not a household or (on more complex levels) even a family farm has to be developed. The local community no longer consists only of farm households but also of nonproducing households and productive units—*e.g.,* firms. Then the same individual (the head of the household) has a dual role as head of the family and as employee in a producing unit (the case of the individual entrepreneur is a somewhat special one).

By the extension of inclusiveness, I mean that, once a step of differentiation has been established, there is a tendency to extend the new pattern to increasing proportions of the relevant population of units. In the illustrative case, the overwhelming tendency that has operated for well over a century has been to reduce the proportion of households which are even in part economically self-sufficient, in the sense of a family farm, in favor of those whose members are gainfully employed outside the household. This is a principal aspect of the spread of industrialization and urbanization. The same logic applies to newly established educational standards, *e.g.,* the expectation that a secondary-school education will be normal for the whole age cohort.

Normative upgrading means a type of change in the normative order, to which the operation of units, both individual and collective, is subject. It is a shift from the prescription of rules by a special class or unit in a special situation to more generalized norms having to do with more inclusive classes of units in wider ranges of situations. Thus the law that specifies that a railway engine must be equipped with a steam whistle to give warning at crossings has by court interpretation been generalized to include any effective warning signal

(since oil-burning locomotives are not equipped with steam).[1] But in a sense parallel to that in which differentiation leads to alienation from the older unit, normative upgrading means that the unit is left with a problem, since the rules no longer give such concretely unequivocal guidance to what is expected. If the rule is general enough, its application to a particular situation requires interpretation. Such upgrading, we contend, is a necessary concomitant of the process of differentiation.

When we speak of norms, we mean rules applying to particular categories of units in a system, operating in particular types of situations. For example, individual adults may not be employed under conditions which infringe on certain basic freedoms of the individual. The repercussions of a step in differentiation, however, cannot be confined to this level; they must also involve some part of the value system; this is to say, the functions of the differentiated categories of units, which are now different from one another, must not only be regulated but also legitimized. To use our example again, it cannot be true that the whole duty of the fathers of families is to gain subsistence for their households through making the household itself productive, but it becomes legitimate to support the household by earning a money income through work for an outside employer and among other things to be absent from the household many hours a week. At the collectivity level, therefore, a business that is not the direct support of a household (such as farming) must be a legitimate way of life—that is, the unit that employs labor for such purposes, without itself being a household, must be legitimate. This requires defining the values in terms sufficiently general to include both the old and the new way of life.

The values must therefore legitimize a structural complex by which economic production and the consumption needs of households are met simultaneously—that is, both the labor markets and the markets for consumers' goods. For example, this structural complex is of focal importance in the modern (as distinguished from medieval) urban community. The value attitude that regards the rural or the handicraft way of life as morally superior to the modern urban and—if you will—industrial way (a common attitude in the Western world of today) is an example of the failure of the adequate

1. Willard Hurst, *Law and Social Process in United States History,* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1960, Ch. 2.

value generalization that is an essential part of institutionalizing the process of structural change.

To sum up, we may state that both the nature of the American value pattern and the nature of the process of change going on in the society make for considerable difficulties in the personal adjustment of individuals. On the one hand, our type of activism, with its individualistic emphases, puts a heavy responsibility for autonomous achievement on the individual. On the other hand, it subjects him to important limitations: he must not only be regulated by norms and the necessity of working cooperatively, in collective contexts; he must also interpret his own responsibilities and the rules to which he is subject. Beyond that, ours is a society which in the nature of its values cannot have a single clear-cut societal goal which can be dramatically symbolized. The individual is relegated to contributions which are relatively specialized, and it is not always easy to see their bearing on the larger whole. Furthermore, the general erosion of traditional culture and symbols, which is inseparable from a scientific age, makes inadequate many of the old formulae once used to give meaning and legitimation to our values and achievements. This is perhaps true in particular of the older religious grounding of our values.

Not unrelated to these considerations is the very fact of the *relative* success of the society in developing in relation to its values. Not only is there a high general standard of living, which, it should be remembered, means the availability of facilities for *whatever* uses are valued; *e.g.*, increased income may allow for attending prize fights or symphony concerts—a not inconsiderable amount has been going into the latter channel. There is certainly a much better standard of minimum welfare and general distributive justice now than in our past. However much remains to be done, and it is clearly considerable, it is no longer possible to contend that poverty, misery, preventable illness, etc., are the primary lot of the average American. Indeed, the accent has shifted to our duty to the less favored portions of the world. Furthermore, for the average individual, it is probable that opportunity is more widely open than in any large-scale society in history to secure education, access to historically validated cultural goods, and the like. But perhaps it can be seen that, in the light of this all too brief analysis, the great problem has come to be, what to do with all these advantages—not, as has so often been true, how to avoid the worst disasters and take

a few modest little steps forward.[2] To be sure, there is a very real danger of the collapse of all civilization through nuclear war; but somehow that danger fails to deter people from making significant investments in the future, not only for themselves as individuals, but also for the society as a whole.

THE POSITION OF AMERICAN YOUTH

IT is in this broad picture of the American social structure and its development that I should like to consider the position of American youth. Contrary to prevalent views that mainly stress the rising standard of living and the allegedly indulgent and easy life, I think it is legitimate to infer that the general trend of development of the society has been and will continue to be one which, by and large, puts greater rather than diminished demands on its average individual citizen—with some conspicuous exceptions. He must operate in more complex situations than before. He attempts to do many things his predecessors never attempted, that indeed were beyond their capacities. To succeed in what he attempts, he has to exercise progressively higher levels of competence and responsibility. These inferences seem to me inescapable when full account of the nature of the society and its main trends of development is taken.

If capacities and relevant opportunities developed as rapidly as do demands, it would follow that life on the average would be neither more nor less difficult. There seems reason to believe that, if anything, demands have tended somewhat to outrun the development of capacities—especially those for orienting to normatively complex situations—and in some respects even opportunities, and that this is a major source of the current unrest and malaise. My broad contention, taking due account of the process of change just outlined, is that this society, however, is one that is relatively well organized and integrated with reference to its major values and its major trends of development. If those values are intact and are by and large shared by the younger generation (there seems to be every indication that they are), then it ought to be a society in which they can look forward to a good life. In so far as their mood is one of

2. To sociologists, the frustrating aspects of a favorable situation in this sense may be summed up under the concept of "relative deprivation." See Robert K. Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier,"* New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1950.

bewilderment, frustration, or whatever, one should look for relatively specific sources of difficulty rather than to a generalized malintegration of the society as a whole.

It may be well to set the tone of the following analysis by an example of the ways in which current common sense can often misinterpret phenomena that raise distressing problems. American society, of course, is known for its high divorce rate. Until the peak following World War II, moreover, the trend was upward throughout the century, though since then it has appreciably declined. This divorce rate has widely been interpreted as an index of the "disintegration of the family" and, more importantly, of the levels of moral responsibility of married persons.

That it results in increased numbers of broken families is of course true, though the seriousness of this is mitigated by the fact that most divorces occur between childless couples and that most divorced persons remarry, a large proportion stably. In any case, the proportion of the population of marriageable age that is married and living with their spouses is now the highest it has been in the history of the census.

The main point, however, is that this point of view fails to take into account the increased strain put on the marriage relationship in the modern situation. In effect, it says, since an increased proportion fail in a difficult task relative to those who previously failed in an easier task, this increased rate of failures is an index of a declining level of responsibility; seen in this light, this interpretation is palpably absurd, but if the underlying situation is not analyzed, it is plausible.

The increased difficulty of the task has two main aspects. One is the increased differentiation of the nuclear family from other structures in which it was formerly embedded, notably the farm and other household or family enterprises from which economic support was derived. This differentiation deprives the family and the marriage relationship within it of certain bases of structural support. This is clearly related to the component of freedom mentioned above; the freedom of choice of marriage partners is clearly related to the spread of the view that really serious incompatibility may justify breaking the marriage tie.

The other factor is the enhanced level of expectations in functioning outside the family for both adults and children. For adults, particularly men, the central obligation concerns the levels of re-

sponsibility and competence required by their jobs; for children, these requirements of growing up in a more complex and competitive world, going farther in education, and undertaking substantially more autonomous responsibility along the way impose greater demands than before. It is my impression that the cases in which marriage was undertaken irresponsibly are no more numerous than in any other time, and that divorce is not often lightly resorted to but is a confession of failure in an undertaking in which both parties have usually tried very hard to succeed.[3]

I cite this example because it is a conspicuous special case of the more general considerations I wish to discuss. The first keynote here is the rising general level of expectations. The primary reference point, of course, is that of adult roles at their peak of responsibility in middle age. The most prominent example is that of the higher levels of masculine occupational roles, in which (in those with technical emphasis) the requisite levels of training and technical competence are continually rising. With respect to managerial roles, the size and complexity of organizations is increasing, and hence the requirements necessary for their successful management also. Similar things, however, are true in various other fields. Thus the whole range of associational affairs requires membership support for leadership as well as responsible leadership itself, both of which involve complicated responsibilities. These range from the many private associations and "good causes" through participation on boards and staffs (including university departments and faculties) to participation through voting and other forms of exercising public responsibility.

The family in this context is a further case. The feminine role is typically anchored in the first instance in the family. Family duties may not be more onerous in such senses as drudgery and hard work than they were, but they involve a higher level of competence and responsibility, particularly, though not exclusively, in the field of the psychological management of both children and husbands, as well as of selves—the latter because wives are now far more autonomous on the average than they were. What we may call the independence training of children is more delicate and difficult than was the older type of training in strict obedience—that is, if autonomy for the

3. See Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1955, especially Ch. 1.

young is to be accompanied by high levels of self-discipline and responsibility. But in addition, the typical married woman participates far more extensively outside the home than she formerly did, and in particular she forms a rapidly increasing proportion in the labor force.

Perhaps the central repercussion of this general upgrading of expectations (and hence of the norms with which conformity is expected) on the situation of youth is in the field of formal education. Here, of course, there has been a steady process of lengthening the average period of schooling, with the minimum satisfactory norm for all approaching the completion of high school, while nearly forty percent of the total age cohort now enter college, and a steadily increasing percentage complete college. Finally, by far the most rapidly growing sector has been that of postgraduate professional education. Uneven as standards are, and unsatisfactory as they are at many points, there is no solid evidence of a general tendency to deterioration and much evidence of their improvement, especially in the best schools at all levels.[4]

It seems fair, then, to conclude that in getting a formal education the average young American is undertaking a more difficult, and certainly a longer, job than his father or mother did, and that it is very likely that he is working harder at it. A growing proportion is prolonging formal education into the early adult years, thus raising important problems about marriage, financial independence, and various other considerations.

Furthermore, he is doing this in a context in which, both within and outside the school, he must assume more autonomous responsibility than did his predecessors. In the school itself—and in college—the slow though gradual trend has been in the direction of a mildly "progressive" type of education, with a diminution of the amount of drill and learning by rote. In certain respects, parents have grown distinctly more permissive within the family and with regard to their children's activities outside. This throws an important stress on the child's relations to his age peers, one that becomes particularly important in adolescence. This is the area least under adult control, in which deviant tendencies can most readily be mutually reinforced, without being immediately checked by adult

4. For example, I am quite certain that the general level of academic achievement on the part of students of Harvard College and the Harvard Graduate School has substantially risen during my personal contact with them (more than thirty years).

intervention. This is to say that in general the educational process puts increased demands on the younger group.

Three other factors seem involved in this situation of strain from the combination of enhanced expectations and autonomy. They concern one aspect of the psychological preparation for the tasks of maturing, one aspect of the choices that are open, and one aspect of the situation with reference to normative regulation.

First, with respect to psychological preparation, there seems to have been a trend within the family to *increase* the dependency of the young pre-oedipal child, particularly on the mother, of course. This trend is the consequence of the structural isolation of the nuclear family. There is less likelihood of there being close relatives either directly in the home or having very intensive and continual contact with the family. For middle-class families, the virtual disappearance of the domestic servant has also left less room for a division of responsibility for child care. Further, the proportion of very large families with five or more children has been sharply decreasing, while those with three and four children have been increasing. All these factors contribute to a concentration of relationships within the family and of the parents' (especially the mother's) sanctioning powers—both disciplinary and rewarding.

Psychological theory, however, indicates that under the proper circumstances this enhanced dependency contributes to developing motivations for high levels of achievement. These circumstances include high levels of aspiration for the child on the part of the parents and the use of the proper types of discipline. The essential point is that high dependency provides a very strong motivation to please the parent. This in turn can be used to incite him to learn what the parent sets him, if he is suitably rewarded by parental approval. The general findings of studies on the types of discipline used in middle-class families—the use of the withdrawal of love and approval as the predominant type of negative sanction—seem to fit in this picture.

The dependency components of motivation, however, are seldom if ever fully extinguished. The balance is so delicate in their relation to the autonomous components that it is easily upset, and in many cases this is a source of considerable strain. Attempting to maintain this balance, for example, may very well contribute to the great increase in the practice of "going steady" and its relation to the trend to early marriages. Emerging in adolescence, the dyadic heterosexual

relation is the main component of the relational system of youth that articulates most directly with the earlier dependency complex—though some of it may also be expressed in same-sex peer groups, and indeed in "crushes" on the teacher. It is striking that the main trend seems to be toward intensive, and not merely erotic but diffuse, dyadic relations, rather than to sexual libertinism. This is in turn reflected in the emotional intensity of the marriage relationship and hence in the elements of potential strain underlying the problem of divorce.

This brings me to the second of the factors mentioned above, the range of choices open. A progressive increase in this range is a consequence of the general process of social change sketched above, namely, differentiation in the structure of the society. As this process goes on, types of interest, motivation, and evaluation that were embedded in a less differentiated complex come to be separated out, to become more autonomous and more visible in that they are freed from more ascriptive types of control. Ties to class and family, to local community and region become more flexible and hence often "expendable" as more choices become available.

One of the most conspicuous cases in relation to the present interest is the erotic component of sex relations. In an earlier phase of our society, it was rather rigidly controlled even within marriage, indeed, not infrequently it was partially suppressed. The process by which it has become differentiated, allowing much greater freedom in this area, is closely related to the differentiation of function and the structural isolation of the nuclear family.[5] In a society in which autonomous freedom is so widespread, there is much greater freedom in this field as in many others, not only in practice but also in portrayals on the stage, in the movies and television, and in the press, magazines, and books.

In this connection, since much of the newer freedom is illegitimate in relation to the older standards (normative upgrading and value generalization take time), it is very difficult to draw lines between the areas of new freedom in process of being legitimated and the types which are sufficiently dysfunctional, even in the new state of society, so that the probability is they will be controlled or even suppressed. The adolescent in our society is faced with difficult

5. The emancipation of components that were previously rigidly controlled by ascription is of course a major feature of the general process of differentiation, which could not be detailed here for reasons of space.

problems of choice and evaluation in areas such as this, because an adequate codification of the norms governing many of these newly emancipated areas has not yet been developed.

The third factor, that of normative regulation, is essentially a generalization of the second factor. We have maintained (though of course without documentation) that, contrary to various current opinions, the basic pattern of American values has not changed. Value patterns, however, are only part of the normative culture of the society. At the lower levels, both at the more specific levels of values and of what we technically call norms, it is in the nature of the type of process of change we have been discussing that there should be a continual reorganization of the normative system. Unfortunately, this does not occur as an instantaneous adjustment to the major innovations, but is a slow, uneven, and often painful process. In its course, at any one time (as we have noted), there are important elements of indeterminacy in the structure of expectations—not simply in the sense that there are areas of freedom in which autonomous decision is expected, but also in the sense that, where people feel there ought to be guidance, it is either lacking altogether, or the individual is subject to conflicting expectations that are impossible to fulfill all at once. This is the condition that some sociologists, following Durkheim, call *anomie.*

There seems to be an important reason why this source of strain and disturbance bears rather more heavily on the younger generation than on others. This is owing to the fact that the major agents for initiating processes of change lie in other sectors of the society, above all, in large-scale organization, in the developments of science and technology, in the higher political processes, and in the higher ranges of culture. Their impact tends to spread, and there is a time lag in change between the locations of primary change and the other parts of the social structure.

Though there is of course much unevenness, it seems correct to say that, with one major exception, the social structures bearing most directly on youth are likely to be rather far down the line in the propagation of the effects of change. These are the family and the school, and they are anchored in the local residential community. The major exception is the college, and still more, the university, which is one of the major loci of innovation and which can involve its students in the process more directly.

By and large, it seems fair to suggest that adults are on the aver-

age probably more conservative in their parental roles than when their children are not involved, and that this is typical of most of their roles outside the family. Similarly, schools, especially elementary and secondary schools, are on the whole probably more conservative in most respects than are the organizations that employ the fathers of their children. In the present phase of social development, another important institution of the residential community, the parish church or synagogue, is probably distinctly on the conservative side as a rule.

This would suggest that, partly as a matter of generation lag, partly for more complex reasons of the sort indicated, the adult agencies on which the youth most depends tend to some extent to be "out of tune" with what he senses to be the most advanced developments of the time. He senses that he is put in an unfair dilemma by having to be so subject to their control.

If we are right in thinking that special pressures operate on the younger generation relative to the general pressures generated by social change, on the other side of the relationship there are factors which make for special sensitivities on their part. The residua of early dependency, as pointed out above, constitute one such factor. In addition, the impact on youth of the general process of social differentiation makes for greater differences between their position and that of children, on the one hand, and that of adults, on the other, than is true in less differentiated societies. Compared to our own past or to most other societies, there is a more pronounced, and above all (as noted) an increasingly long segregation of the younger groups, centered above all on the system of formal education. It may be argued especially that the impact of this process is particularly pronounced at the upper fringe of the youth period, for the rapidly increasing proportion of the age cohort engaged in higher education—in college, and, very importantly, in postgraduate work. These are people who are adults in all respects except for the element of dependency, since they have not yet attained full occupational independence.

THE YOUTH CULTURE

THE question may now be raised as to how young people react to this type of situation. Obviously, it is a highly variegated one and therefore occasions much diversity of behavior, but there are certain

broad patterns which can be distinguished. These may be summed up under the conception, now familiar to social scientists, of a relatively differentiated "youth culture." Perhaps S. N. Eisenstadt is its most comprehensive student, certainly in its comparative perspective.[6]

It is Eisenstadt's contention that a distinctive pattern of values, relationships, and behavior for youth tends to appear and become more or less institutionalized in societies that develop a highly universalistic pattern of organization at the levels of adult role involvements. Since all lives start in the family, which is a highly particularistic type of structure, there is not only the difficulty of rising to higher levels within the same type of relationship system, but also of learning to adjust to a very different type. What has been discussed above as the enhancement of dependency in early childhood is a special case of this general proposition. Totalitarian societies attempt to bring this period under stringent centralized control through officially organized, adult-directed youth organizations such as the Soviet *Komsomols,* or earlier, the *Hitlerjugend.* In democratic societies, however, it tends to be relatively free, though in our own it is rather closely articulated with the system of formal education through a ramifying network of extracurricular activities.

As a consequence of youth's being exposed to such strains, it might be expected that youth culture would manifest signs of internal conflict and that it would incorporate elements of conformity as well as of alienation and revolt. In nonrational, psychological terms, rather than in terms of rational aims, youth culture attempts to balance its need for conforming to the expectations of the adult agencies most directly involved (parents and the local residential community) with some kind of outlet for tension and revolt and with some sensitivity to the winds of change above and beyond its local situation.

For two reasons, one would expect to find the fullest expression of these trends at the level of the peer group. For one thing, this group is the area of greatest immunity to adult control; indeed, the range of its freedom in this respect is particularly conspicuous in the American case. The other reason is that this is the area to which it is easiest to displace the elements of dependency generated in early experience in the family—on the one hand, because the strong

6. S. N. Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation,* New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1956. See also his paper "Archetypal Patterns of Youth," *Daedalus,* Vol. 91, no. 1 (Winter, 1962).

stress on autonomy precludes maintaining too great an overt dependence on parents or other adult agencies, and, on the other, because the competitive discipline of school achievement enforces autonomous responsibility in this area. The peer group then gradually differentiates into two components, one focusing on the cross-sex relationship and one focusing on "activities," some of which occur within the one-sex group, others, relatively nonerotic, in mixed groups.

In general, the most conspicuous feature of the youth peer group is a duality of orientation. On the one hand, there tends to be a compulsive independence in relation to certain adult expectations, a touchy sensitivity to control, which in certain cases is expressed in overt defiance. On the other hand, within the group, there tends to be a fiercely compulsive conformity, a sharp loyalty to the group, an insistence on the literal observance of its norms, and punishment of deviance. Along with this goes a strong romantic streak. This has been most conspicuous in the romantic love theme in the cross-sex relationship, but it is also more generalized, extending to youth-culture heroes such as athletes and group leaders of various sorts, and sometimes to objects of interest outside the youth situation.

It is my impression (not easy to document) that important shifts of emphasis in American youth culture have occurred in the last generation. For the main trend, notably the increasingly broad band we think of as middle class, there has been a considerable relaxation of tension in both the two essential reference directions, toward parents and toward school expectations—though this relaxation is distinctly uneven. In the case of the school, there is a markedly greater acceptance of the evaluation of good school work and its importance for the future. This, of course, is associated with the general process of educational upgrading, particularly with the competition to enter good colleges and, at the next level, especially for students at the better colleges, to be admitted to graduate schools. The essential point, however, is that this increased pressure has been largely met with a positive response rather than with rebellion or passive withdrawal. The main exception is in the lowest sector, where the pattern of delinquency is most prominent and truancy a major feature. This is partly understandable as a direct consequence of the upgrading of educational expectations, because it puts an increased pressure on those who are disadvantaged by a

combination of low ability, a nonsupportive family or ethnic background.

As to youth's relation to the family, it seems probable that the institutionalizing of increased permissiveness for and understanding of youth-culture activities is a major factor. The newer generation of parents is more firmly committed to a policy of training serious independence. It tolerates more freedom, and it expects higher levels of performance and responsibility. Further, it is probably true that the development of the pattern of "going steady" has drained off some tension into semi-institutionalized channels—tension formerly expressed in wilder patterns of sexual behavior. To be sure, this creates a good many problems, not only as to how far the partners will go in their own erotic relations, but also possibly premature commitments affecting future marriage. It may be that the pendulum has swung too far and that adjustments are to be expected.

Within this broad framework, the question of the content of peer-group interests is important. What I have called the romantic trend can be broadly expressed in two directions; the tentative terms "regressive" and "progressive" are appropriate, if not taken too literally. Both components are normally involved in such a situation, but their proportions and content may vary. They derive specifically from the general paradigm of social change outlined above, the former, at social levels, tending to resist change, the latter to anticipate and promote it.

One of the most striking interests of American youth culture has been in masculine physical prowess, expressed in particular in athletics. It seems quite clear that there has been a declining curve in this respect, most conspicuous in the more elite schools and colleges, but on the whole it is a very general one, except for the cult of violence in the delinquent sector. The cult of physical prowess has clearly been a reflex of the pressure to occupational achievement in a society in which brains rather than brawn come increasingly to count. From this point of view, it is a regressive phenomenon.

The indication is that the lessened concentration on this cult is an index of greater acceptance of the general developmental trend. Alcohol and sex are both in a somewhat different category. For the individual, they are fields of emancipation from the restrictions of childhood, but they are definitely and primarily regressive in their significance for the adult personality. However, as noted above, the emancipation of youth in this respect has been connected with a

general emancipation which is part of the process of differentiation in the adult society, which permits greater expressiveness in these areas. I have the impression that a significant change has occurred from the somewhat frenetic atmosphere of the "flaming youth" of the 1920's and to some extent of the 1930's. There is less rebellion in both respects, more moderation in the use of alcohol, and more "seriousness" in the field of sexual relations. Youth has become better integrated in the general culture.

On the other side, the progressive one, the most important phenomena are most conspicuous at the upper end of the range, both in terms of the sociocultural level and of the stage of the life cycle. This is the enormous development of serious cultural interests among students in the more elite colleges. The most important field of these interests seems to be that of the arts, including highbrow music, literature, drama, and painting.

The first essential point here is that this constitutes a very definite upgrading of cultural standards, compared with the philistinism of the most nearly corresponding circles in an earlier generation. Second, however, it is at least variant and selective (though not, I think, deviant) with respect to the main trends of the society, since the main developments in the latter are on the "instrumental" rather than the "expressive" side. As to the special involvement of elite youth in the arts, it may be said that youth has tended to become a kind of "loyal opposition" to the main trends of the culture, making a bid for leadership in a sphere important to a balanced society yet somewhat neglected by the principal innovating agencies.

The question of youth's relation to the political situation is of rather special interest and considerable complexity. The susceptibility of youth groups to radical political ideologies, both left and right, has often been remarked. It appears, however, that this is a widely variant phenomenon. It seems to be most conspicuous, on the one hand, in societies just entering a more "developed" state, in which intellectuals play a special role and in which students, as potential intellectuals, are specially placed. In a second type of case, major political transitions and instabilities are prominent, as in several European countries during this century, notably Germany.

Seen in this context, American youth has seemed to be apathetic politically. During the 1930's and 1940's, there was a certain amount of leftist activity, including a small Communist contingent, but the main trend has certainly been one of limited involvement. Recently,

there seems to have been a kind of resurgence of political interest and activity. It has not, however, taken the form of any explicit, generalized, ideological commitment. Rather, it has tended to focus on specific issues in which moral problems are sharply defined, notably in race relations and the problems of nuclear war. It does not seem too much to say that the main trend has been in accord with the general political characteristics of the society, which has been a relatively stable system with a strong pluralistic character. The concomitant skepticism as to generalized ideological formulae is usually thought deplorable by the moralists among our intellectuals. In this broad respect, however, the main orientation of youth seems to be in tune with the society in which they are learning to take their places.

The elements in youth culture that express strain because of deviations from the main standards of the adult society are by no means absent. One such deviation is what we have called the "romantic," the devotion to expectations unrealistically simplified and idealized with respect to actual situations. A particularly clear example has been the romantic love complex. It is interesting, therefore, that a comparable pattern seems to have appeared recently in the political field, one that is connected with a pervasive theme of concern: the "meaningfulness" of current and future roles in modern industrial society.

As Kenneth Keniston has recently pointed out[7] in the field of politics, one not very explicit interpretation of a meaningful role for youth in general is to exert a major personal influence on determining the "big" political decisions of our time. The realistic problem, of course, is the organization of large-scale societies on bases that are not rigidly fixed in tradition, not authoritarian, and not unduly unstable. In this respect, public opinion (though in the long run extremely important) is necessarily diffuse and, with few exceptions, unable to dictate particular decisions. The main policy-making function is of necessity confined to relatively few and is the special responsibility of elected representatives who, in large-scale societies, become professionalized to a considerable degree. The average adult citizen, even if high in competence and responsibility, is excluded from these few. Yet this is not to say that in his role as citizen his responsibilities are meaningless or that his life in general can become

7. Kenneth Keniston, "Social Change and Youth in America," *Daedalus*, Vol. 91, no. 1 (Winter, 1962).

meaningful only if his principal concerns (*e.g.*, his nonpolitical job) are sacrificed to the attempt to become a top "influential" in national politics. If this were true, representative democracy as we know it would itself be meaningless. The alternative, however (if large-scale society is to exist at all), is not populistic direct democracy but dictatorship.

This particular syndrome, of course, is a part of a larger one: the general difficulty of accepting the constraints inherent in large-scale organizations—in particular, the "instrumental" aspect of roles other than those at the highest levels. We have already pointed out some of the features of our developing social system that make this a focus of strain. Equally, through the development of institutionalized individualism, there is a whole series of factors making for an increasing rather than a diminishing autonomy. The question, however, concerns the spheres in which the autonomy of various categories of individuals can operate. Differentiation inevitably entails mutual dependence: the more differentiation, the more dependence. In a system characterized by high levels of differentiation, it is to be expected that organizational policy making will also become differentiated. Hence, only a few will become very intimately concerned with it. The problem of what mechanism can control these few is indeed a complex one which cannot be analyzed here. The political role, however, seems to provide particularly striking evidence of a romantic element in current youth ideology.

Perhaps the most significant fact about current youth culture is its concern with meaningfulness. This preoccupation definitely lies on the serious and progressive side of the division I have outlined. Furthermore, it represents a rise in the level of concern from the earlier preoccupation with social justice—even though the problem of race relations is understandably a prominent one. Another prominent example is the much discussed concern with problems of "identity." This is wholly natural and to be expected in the light of *anomie*. In a society that is changing as rapidly as ours and in which there is so much mobility of status, it is only natural that the older generation cannot provide direct guidance and role models that would present the young person with a neatly structured definition of the situation. Rather, he must find his own way, because he is pushed out of the nest and expected to fly. Even the nature of the medium in which he is to fly is continually changing, so that, when he enters college, there are many uncertainties about the nature of

opportunities in his chosen field on completing graduate school. His elders simply do not have the knowledge to guide him in detail.

It is highly significant that the primary concern has been shifting since early in the century from the field of social justice to that of meaningfulness, as exemplified by the problem of identity—except for the status of special groups such as the Negro. In terms of the social structure, this enhances the problem of integration, and focuses concern more on problems of meaning than on those of situation and opportunity in the simpler sense. It is a consequence of the process of social change we have outlined.

It is also understandable and significant that the components of anxiety that inevitably characterize this type of strained situation should find appropriate fields of displacement in the very serious, real dangers of the modern world, particularly those of war. It may also be suggested that the elite youth's resonance to the diagnosis of the current social situation in terms of conformity and mass culture should be expected.[8] Essentially, this diagnosis is an easy disparagement of the society, which youth can consider to be the source of difficulty and (so it seems to them) partially unmanageable problems.

CONCLUSION

THE above analysis suggests in the main that contemporary American society is of a type in which one would expect the situation of youth to involve (certainly, by the standards of the society from which it is emerging) rather special conditions of strain. As part of the more general process of differentiation to which we have alluded, youth groups themselves are coming to occupy an increasingly differentiated position, most conspicuously, in the field of formal education. Though an expanding educational system is vital in preparing for future function, it has the effect of segregating (more sharply and extensively than ever before) an increasing proportion of the younger age groups. The extension of education to increasingly older age levels is a striking example.

The other main focus of strain is the impact on youth of the pace and nature of the general process of social change. This is especially observable in the problem of *anomie*. In view of this change, youth's

8. For an analysis of this complex in the society, see Winston R. White, *Beyond Conformity*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

expectations cannot be defined either very early or very precisely, and this results in considerable insecurity. Indeed, the situation is such that a marked degree of legitimate grievance is inevitable. Every young person is entitled in some respects to complain that he has been brought into "a world I never made."

To assess the situation of American youth within the present frame of reference presents an especially difficult problem of balance. This is an era that lays great stress, both internally and externally, on the urgencies of the times, precisely in the more sensitive and responsible quarters. Such a temper highlights what is felt to be wrong and emphasizes the need for change through active intervention. With reference to the actual state of society, therefore, the tendency is to lean toward a negative evaluation of the status quo, because both the concrete deficiencies and the obstacles to improvement are so great.

That this tendency should be particularly prominent in the younger age groups is natural. It is both to be expected and to be welcomed. The main feature of the youth situation is perhaps the combination of current dependence with the expectation of an early assumption of responsibility. I think that evidence has been presented above that this conflict is accentuated under present conditions. The current youthful indictments of the present state of our society may be interpreted as a kind of campaign position, which prepares the way for the definition of their role when they take over the primary responsibilities, as they inevitably will.

It seems highly probable that the more immediate situation is strongly influenced by the present phase of the society with respect to a certain cyclical pattern that is especially conspicuous in the political sphere. This is the cycle between periods of "activism" in developing and implementing a sense of the urgency of collective goals, and of "consolidation" in the sense of withdrawing from too active commitments and on the whole giving security and "soundness" the primary emphasis. There is little doubt that in this meaning, the most recent phase (the "Eisenhower era") has been one of consolidation, and that we are now involved in the transition to a more activistic phase.

Broadly speaking, youth in a developing society of the American type, in its deepest values and commitments, is likely to be favorable to the activistic side. It is inculcated with the major values of the society, and strongly impressed with the importance of its future responsibilities. At the same time, however, it is frustrated by being deprived of power and influence in the current situation, though it recognizes that such a deprivation is in certain respects essential, if its segregation for purposes of training is to be effective— a segregation which increases with each step in the process of differentiation. A certain impatience, however, is to be expected, and with it a certain discontent with the present situation. Since it is relatively difficult to challenge the basic structure of the youth situation in such respects (*e.g.,* as that one should not be permitted to start the full practice of medicine before graduating from college), this impatience tends to be displaced on the total society as a system, rather than on the younger generation in its specific situation. From this point of view, a generous measure of youthful dissatisfaction with the state of American society may be a sign of the healthy commitment of youth to the activist component of the value system. However good the current society may be from various points of view, *it is not good enough to meet their standards.* It goes almost without saying that a fallibility of empirical judgment in detail is to be expected.

The task of the social scientist, as a scientific observer of society, is to develop the closest possible approach to an objective account of the character and processes of the society. To him, therefore, this problem must appear in a slightly different light: he must try to see it in as broad a historical and comparative perspective as he can, and he must test his judgments as far as possible in terms of available empirical facts and logically precise and coherent theoretical analyses.

Viewed in this way (subject, of course, to the inevitable fallibilities of all cognitive undertakings), American society in a sense appears to be running a scheduled course. We find no cogent evidence of a major change in the essential patterns of its governing values. Nor do we find that—considering the expected strains and complications of such processes as rapid industrialization, the assimilation of many millions of immigrants, and a new order of change in the power structure, the social characteristics, and the balances of its relation to the outside world—American society is not doing reasonably well (as distinguished from outstandingly) in implementing these values. Our society on the whole seems to remain committed to its essential mandate.

The broad features of the situation of American youth seem to

accord with this pattern. There are many elements of strain, but on the whole they may be considered normal for this type of society. Furthermore, the patterns of reaction on the part of American youth also seem well within normal limits. Given the American value system we have outlined, it seems fair to conclude that youth cannot help giving a *relative* sanction to the general outline of society as it has come to be institutionalized. On the other hand, it is impossible for youth to be satisfied with the status quo, which must be treated only as a point of departure for the far higher attainments that are not only desirable but also obligatory.

Clearly, American youth is in a ferment. On the whole, this ferment seems to accord relatively well with the sociologist's expectations. It expresses many dissatisfactions with the current state of society, some of which are fully justified, others are of a more dubious validity. Yet the general orientation appears to be, not a basic alienation, but an eagerness to learn, to accept higher orders of responsibility, and to "fit," not in the sense of passive conformity, but in the sense of their readiness to work within the system, rather than in basic opposition to it. The future of American society and the future place of that society in the larger world appear to present in the main a *challenge* to American youth. To cope with that challenge, an intensive psychological preparation is now taking place.

8

The Link Between Character and Society

WITH *Winston White*

I. RIESMAN'S APPROACH AS WE SEE IT

AS INDICATED by the subtitle—*A Study of the Changing American Character*—Professor Riesman has addressed himself in *The Lonely Crowd* to major trends in American society, with particular reference to the relation between character and social structure. We find ourselves in general agreement that these major changes have had far-reaching implications for the socialization process and that they have significance for personality.

Our primary objective is to present an alternative interpretation of certain of these recent changes and their consequences. In an effort to clarify our areas of agreement as well as our points of departure, the first section of this essay will set forth our understanding of his main position without critical comment. We will reserve our own opinions for the second section, where we will present our alternative approach. A third section will then look into some of the empirical issues we have raised.

The central structural focus in Professor Riesman's work, it seems to us, is the "link between character and society . . . the way in which society ensures some degree of conformity from the individuals who

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