AMERICAN DREAMS, MYTHS AND ILLUSIONS:

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

by

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"Someone has said that to plagiarize from the ancients is to play the pirate beyond the Equator, but that to steal from the moderns is to pick pockets at streetcorners" (Vauvenargues 33) Others contend that while "every generation has the privilege of standing on the shoulders of the generation that went before," "it has no right to pick the pockets of the first-comer" (Matthews 20). In either case, if we "take the whole range of imaginative literature" and scientific research, "we are all wholesale borrowers. In every matter that relates to invention, to use or beauty, or form, we are borrowers" (Phillips 1507). In short, "modern writers are the moons of literature; they shine with reflected light, with light borrowed from the ancients (Boswell 333).

I would, therefore, like to acknowledge at the outset, that I am greatly indebted to the genius, wit, and spirit of America, which is easily discovered in its proverbs (Bacon 1627). Indeed, "the proverbs of a nation furnish the index to its spirit, and the results of its civilization" (Holland 1627). It is, however, "characteristic of inventive wits that they grasp the connection between things and know how to bring them together; and perhaps old discoveries belong less to their

first authors than to those who make them useful (Vauvenargues 45). It is in this spirit, that I am going to assemble and form some of these proverbs which contain the wisdom of many ages and nations, into a connected discourse disguised as a "harangue" (Franklin 108) that summarizes the "autobiography of an attitude" (Nathan, title). This adventure, might be best thought of as an "intellectual journey" that has become an academic "tradition" (Bloom 265).

Preface

Because "science only advances when researchers question previously accepted wisdom" (Beeghley 40), my primary task in this thesis is to examine how far commonly-held views about the 'American Dream' are in fact valid, even if they appear obvious to everyone else (Giddens, Theory 5). This "orientation implies that the facts are not always what they seem to be, an insight that is fundamental to sociology" (Beeghley 2).

To be more specific, my focus will be on American "modes of belief and behavior that are socially reproduced across long spans of time and space. Such aspects of social life include commonly adopted practices which persist in recognizably similar form across the generations" (Giddens, Intro 8).

In the process, I will also try to represent some of the hopes and fears, values and goals, beliefs and rituals of American Dreamers, both as I perceive them to be, and the way they want to be seen by others. But this is only half of the job. The other half is to describe and explain what people are actually saying and doing (Harris 15), in terms of Anglo/Native cultural, and Senior/Youth political comparisons.

Table of Contents

Chapter I. American Dreams, Myths, and Illusions

1. Introduction: American Dreams
2. Instinctive Imagination
3. Mysterious Truths and Necessary Fictions
4. Science: Inherited Paradox
5. Dreams, Myths, and Illusions

Chapter II. American Culture: Comparative Visions

1. Introduction
2. Ethnocentricity and Diversity
3. Time and Religion
4. Economics, Social Structure and Government
5. Family and Education
6. Summary and Conclusion

Chapter III. American Society: Comparative Politics

1. Introduction: Stratified Morals
2. Age and Affluence
3. Poverty's Youthful Face
4. Summary
5. Conclusion

Chapter IV. Epilogue

1. Paradigm Validity and Ideological Visions

2. Truth, Reason, Morals and Motives; Death Fear, Desire, and Virtue.

3. Two Americas: Power, Success, and Social Control vs. Conformity, Failure, and Poverty

4. Stereotypical Indifference: A War For Resources

5. Burdens of Entitlement

6. A Cohesive Society of Contradictory Judgments

Chapter I: American Dreams, Myths and Illusions

An ardent throng, we have wandered long,
 We have searched the centuries through,
In flaming pride, we have fought and died,
 To keep its memory true.
We fight and die, but our hopes beat high,
 In spite of the toil and tears,
For we catch the gleam of our vanished dream
 Down the path of the Untrod Years.
--Wilma Kate McFarland

Science must begin with myths, and with the criticism of myths.
--Sir Karl Popper

1. Introduction: The American Dream

The Ideological Potential Of Progress

The phrase 'American Dream' may seem timeless, but it is in reality, relatively new. James Truslow Adams, an obscure 1930s novelist, coined it to describe his vision of an open society in which everyone could achieve their full potential (Nesbitt A1). "The buoyant liberal faith, the optimistic, expansive, and expansionist vision that has been called the American Dream" (Susman 58-59), is premised on the unlimited human potential that Americans are so often adjured to fulfill as much as possible (May, Power 254).

Although the phrase itself is relatively new, for more than three hundred years Western man has staked life's meaning on the belief that he was building a better world (Niebuhr 145). In fact, the contemporary American mind is still heavily influenced by the optimistic illusions of a bygone age. Dreams of unlimited progress still envelop us. Generations of Americans have grown to maturity believing that the present is the culmination of the past and a steppingstone to a brighter future (Niebuhr 135). This is a notion that represents something shared collectively by all Americans (Susman 154).

It seems unlikely that the emergence of such an explicitly temporal worldview was accidental. Instead, the convergence of social, economic, political, and technological necessity, better explain how and why the distinguishing characteristic of the contemporary American mind, is its assumption that change is likely to be for the better, and that whatever problems progress may raise, more progress will take care of them (Niebuhr 135).

For example, it was not until 1935, that George Gallup established the American Institute of Public Opinion, and "polling" became commonplace in American life. Now Americans had "empirical" evidence of how they felt and thought, regarding the major issues of the day and generally shared attitudes and beliefs. It was easier now to find the core of values and opinions that united Americans, the symbols that tied them together and helped define the American Way (Susman 158).

Innovations of an Upwardly Mobile Heart

Such timely innovations are important because it was the experience of the American Depression that provided a unique shock requiring a special kind of response. It was precisely this era of social and economic upheaval (Susman 192, 178) that influenced large numbers of people to recognize their common condition and act radically to

usher in a new order (Beeghley 6-7). In other words, it was the pervasive perception of the need to "build a better world," that dictated the "human terms" this reformation required. Social and economic theories were not enough. These reformations had to be based on an ideal that could "stir the human heart" (Susman 178).

The American Dream is often a very private dream of being a uniquely successful person who stands out from the crowd of ordinary folk (Bellah 285). In practice, the very real possibility of upward mobility over the past century has buttressed the dream of success through hard work. Subsequently, the belief that one can shape one's own fate--that hard work will be rewarded and laziness punished--has a strong hold in our society (Easterlin 3).

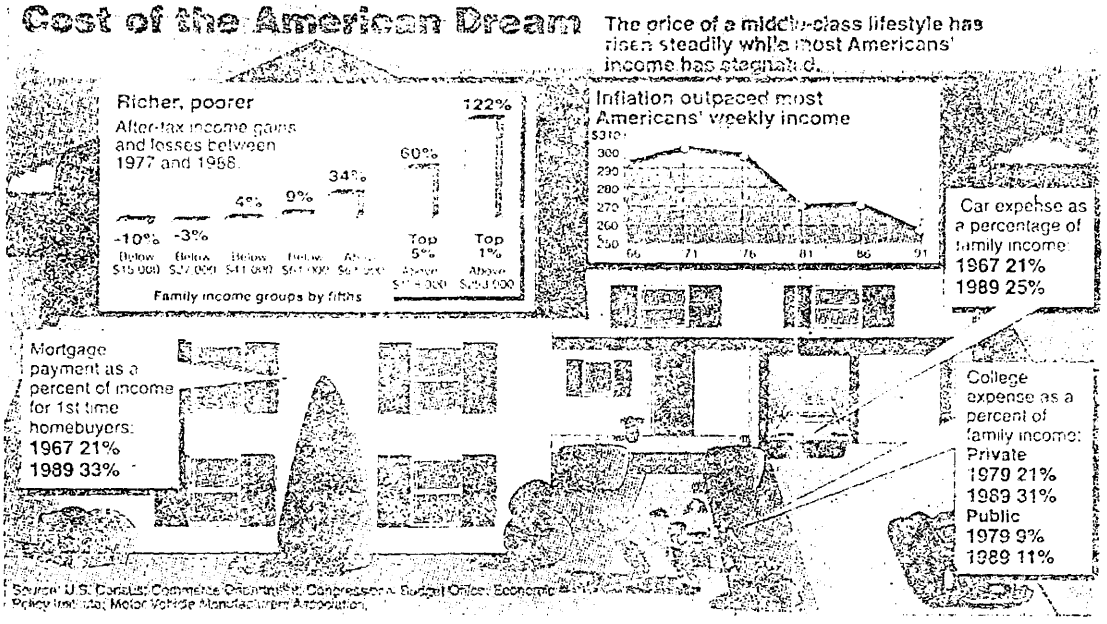
This is a set of values that people share (Windt A10): like having a job that provides the economic security to pay you bills on time, some satisfaction, and the feeling of usefulness; and a belief in fairness, honesty, personal responsibility and hard work (Gans 25, 36). Hence, individuals though we are, we can at least recognize our fellows as followers of the same private dream (Bellah 281).

The Politics Of Greed

Put simply, "the American Dream is for every generation to improve over the prior generation" (Chakravarty 222). This notion is based on an egoistic assumption that one's children should have as least as many opportunities as one has had, and preferably more. Hence, it provides an idealistic self-sacrificing rationale for greed and competitiveness (Harrington 182).

Because many of us have believed in this dream for a long time, and worked very hard to make it come true (Bellah 285), it has become "an ideology that is relatively impervious to contradictory facts" (Beeghley 154). For example, in spite of the fact that "for the first time since the Great Depression, the 'poor' are coming to include millions who have been taught to think of themselves as middle class," (Harrison 114), the 'American Dream' to which every presidential candidate pays respect (Gans ix), remains "persistent and powerful" (Nesbitt A11).

Like many things American, the phrase 'American Dream' has been turned into a sales pitch for a collection of material goods: a house, car, college for the kids, a comfortable retirement" (Gans 25) [see p. 6]. The guiding principle of this notion is the assumption that government


Cost of the American Dream
The price of a middle-class lifestyle has risen steadily while most Americans' income has stagnated.
Richer, poorer
After-tax income gains and losses between 1977 and 1988.
-10%
-3%
4%
9%
34%
60%
122%
Top 5%
Top 1%
Family income groups by fifths
Inflation outpaced most Americans' weekly income
$310
300
290
280
270
260
250
66
71
76
81
86
91
Car expense as a percentage of family income:
1967 21%
1989 25%
Mortgage payment as a percent of income for 1st time homebuyers:
1967 21%
1989 33%
College expense as a percent of family income:
Private
1979 21%
1989 31%
Public
1979 9%
1989 11%

(Cost A1)

is instituted for the protection of the weak and poor against exploitation, as well as for the strong and rich. But what tends to be overlooked is a recognition that human potential never functions except as it is experienced within its own limits. Our error is in believing that there are no limits at all, as though life's course were perpetually onward and upward (May, Power 187, 254).

The illusion that we become "good" by progressing a little more each day is a doctrine bootlegged from technology and made into a dogma in ethics where it does not fit. This is the case in technology; but in ethics, in aesthetics, in other matters of the spirit, the term progress in that sense has no place. Modern man is not ethically superior to Socrates and the Greeks, and although we build buildings differently, we do not make them more beautiful than the Parthenon (May, Power 254).

Hence, so as to inspire with hope rather than confound with fear (Montesquieu 36), the political propaganda of American government has spread incomplete truths, in series and as separate units. These fragments have been organized and converted into political theories, which, eventually become become absolute truths for the

masses if repeated enough times (Paz 68). This might best be thought of as "an objectively oriented intellectual formula" by which good and evil are measured, and beauty and ugliness determined. Everything that agrees with it is right, everything that contradicts it is wrong (Jung 198).

Because this formula seems to embody the entire meaning of life, it has been made into a universal law which must be put into effect everywhere all the time, both individually and collectively (Jung 198). What seems to have been missed by many, however, is the fact that when such dreams collapse, the biggest dreamers often fall the hardest. Limitless optimism breeds endless frustrations (Myers 41).

2. Imagination's Instinct

Hopeful Illusions

Perhaps it is a bit of a shock for me to suggest that one of the most important facts about human beings are their illusions, their fictions, their unfounded convictions (Hoffer 26). But I believe few would disagree that there emerges from time to time in the creations and fabrics of the genius of dreams and myths, a depth and intimacy of emotion, a tenderness of feeling, a clarity of

vision, a subtlety of observation, and a brilliance of wit that we can never claim to have at our permanent command during our waking lives. There resides in such mental constructs a marvellous poetry, an apt allegory, an imcomparable humor, a rare irony. Dreams, myths, and illusions look upon the world in a light of strange idealism that often enhances the effects of experience by a deep understanding of human nature's essence. They portray earthly beauty in a truly heavenly splendor and clothe dignity with the highest majesty, they show us our everyday fears in the ghastliest shape and turn our amusement into jokes of indescribable pungency (Freud, Works 62-63).

"Thoughts born from the common talk of life" (Pascal 9) inspire "categories of the imagination" (Jung 60) that incessantly revive ideas which continue to constitute the "ruling spirit" (Montesquieu 140) of America. Because it is far more difficult to imagine the unknown than to chart the outlines of what people imagine that they know (Boorstin 99), and since myths and dreams unlike empirical evidence are uncorrectable (Boorstin 423), "when we must deal with problems we instinctively resist trying the way that leads through obscurity and darkness" (Jung 5). People always commit the error of not knowing where to limit their hopes

(Machiavelli 378), and as a result, "the last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it (Pascal 93).

An essential theme of "the human comedy" (Balzac, title), is, that life is a loom weaving illusions (Lindsay 282), dreams and myths, which make the real miseries of life and the uncertainties of death bearable (Fromm, Chains 15). Because "nothing is more sad than the death of an illusion" (Koestler 96) and all human "nature ministers to hope" (Coleridge 273), what we ardently wish we soon believe (Young 2169), making many of us "prisoners of hope" (Smith 875). "A few facts, embellished by abundant theology, morality, folklore, myth, rumor, and fable" (Boorstin 422), have been manipulated to disguise our instincts under the cloak of rational motivations (Jung 56).

3. Mysterious Truths and Necessary Fictions

Concealed Realitites

It is easy, then, to understand how and why "mystery" might convey a felt sense that the "whole truth" of life is ever greater than our rational attempts to summarize it. One result is that myths, and dreams often use apparent falsehoods to lure us toward the deeper

meaning and mystery of our lives (Tollefson 59). Such encounters with being have the power to shake one profoundly and may potentially be very anxiety-arousing. They may also be joy-creating. In any case, they have the power to grasp and move one deeply (May, Existence 38). But "are we not the first age to be self-conscious of its own fictions" (Blackmur 7)? Does wisdom not consist of rising superior to both the irrationality of dreams and the common sense of myths, while lending oneself to the universal illusion without becoming its dupe (Amiel 2162)?

If we could recognize our myths and illusions for what they are, that is to say if we could wake up from the half-dream state that exemplifies human existence, then we could come to our senses, become aware of our proper forces and powers, and change reality in such a way that illusions are no longer necessary (Fromm, Chains 15). It is worth noting, that "decaying societies and classes are usually those which hold most fiercely to their fictions since they have nothing to gain by truth. Conversely, societies--or classes--which are bound for a better future offer conditions which make the awareness of reality easier, especially if this very awareness will help them to make the necessary changes (Fromm, Chains 130).

From my own biased perspective, it seems likely

that "those who are least aware of their unconscious side are the most influenced by it," and so perhaps becoming acquainted with the American soul begins with all those things which we do not wish to see (Jung 285, 474). It is for this reason, that the focus of the chapters that follow, will be to uncover and expose some of the realities that the American Dream tends to obscure, distort, or deny.

4. Science: Inherited Paradox

The Hidden Meaning Of Life

When investigating dreams, one cannot even be certain about the object of one's research, which perhaps explains the contempt in which dreams are held in some scientific circles [Freud, Lectures 84, 85). However, because the history of science is a history of errors, I would like to suggest that what matters in such inquiries is not that any new insights are necessarily the last words of truth, but that they are conducive to further discovery (Fromm, Chains 153). If the advance of knowledge depends on man's willingness to believe the improbable, to cross the dictates of common sense (Boorstin 18), it seems plausible to conclude that science, whether social or otherwise, will not progress by merely authenticating everyday

experience, but instead requires that we grasp paradox and adventure into the unknown (Boorstin 291).

A working assumption in the chapters that follow, is that dreams really do have a meaning, and that it is possible to interpret them (Freud, Works 100). By interpret I mean finding a hidden sense in something (Freud, Lectures 87). A corollary of this assumption is that it is the general attitude toward life which is the basis of all dreams, and subsequently, they show not only that a dreamer is occupied with the solution of one of life's problems, but also how they approach these problems (Adler 94, 99).

When a person confronts an essentially human problem, for example, by being aware--even very dimly--of death, sickness, or aging, they necessarily feel their insignificance and smallness in comparison to the universe (Fromm, Freedom 17). In such instances, dreams often serve as a safety-valve for the over-burdened brain. They possess the power to heal and relieve (Freud, Works 79).

Passions And Fears

Such moral, philosophical, and religious problems, on account of their universal validity, are the most likely to call for mythological compensation. Indeed, the

mythical character of life is just what expresses psychic aspects which all individuals share. Myth is not fiction though: it represents experiences that are continually repeated, and can be observed over and over again. These ancient images are restored to life by the inherited thought patterns peculiar to dreams, and are made up of contents which are universal and of regular occurrence. This is a collective experience that has a feeling of importance about it which impels communication (Jung 130, 60, 577, 83, 52-53, 128).

It is in this context, that I am going to explore the "innermost thoughts" of many Americans, by deciphering their dreams, myths, and illusions (Freud, Lectures 132-133). In the process, I expect to encounter irrational and unconscious forces that have played a key role in determining the part of our value system (Fromm, Freedom 6) which has come to be known as the "American Dream."

I will show that this dream is, in fact, an illusion centered on our warmest passions and deepest fears; one constituting a compromise that fulfils two wishes in so far as they are compatible with each other (Freud, Works 8, 579). I am going to focus on the questions of how this dream throws light on the nature of being an American who is choosing, committing and pointing

themselves toward something right now; the context is dynamic, immediately real, and present (May, Existence 77).

5: Dreams, Myths, and Illusions

The Indefinable and Inexplicable

The peoples of antiquity attached great significance to dreams and thought they could be used for practical purposes. Both "history and popular opinion tell us that dreams have a sense and a meaning: that they look into the future" (Freud, Lectures 85, 98). Indeed, the significant tense for human beings is the future--and so our critical question is what are we pointing toward, becoming, what will we be in the future. Personality can be understood only as we see it on a trajectory toward its future; people can understand themselves only as they project themselves forward (May, Existence 41, 69). It is our "rendezvous with the future" (Olim 218) that provides the substance of our dreams, and gives meaning to all of our actions (Paz 212).

In this sense, dreams might be thought of as the best possible expressions for something unknown--bridges thrown out toward an unseen shore (Jung 314), an oracle witnessing man's desperate eagerness for clues to his

future (Boorstin 17). Seen in this light, the idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possiblity, often proves to be more fruitful than the future itself (Kinget 40).

Perhaps this is why human beings sometimes find more charm in hope than in possession, and in dreams than in reality (Kinget 40). Armed with a restless curiosity about things we do not understand (Pascal 9), and torn between wanting to know the good news and fearing to know the bad (Boorstin 18), our dreams are an appeal to the indefinable to explain the inexplicable (Boorstin 361).

Mysterious Purposes

It follows, then, that any attempt, by either science or religion, to say just what the ultimate reality is, must fall back into mere hypothesis; our "understanding can never go beyond the limits of sensibility" (Durant 207). No power of genius has ever yet had the smallest success in explaining existence in a way that satisfies everyone. The perfect enigma remains (Emerson 1117).

In spite of our intellectual achievements, there are no eternal facts or absolute truths (Nietzsche 29), and nothing certain in a person's life but that they must lose

it (Lytton 1141). "At best, fragments of meaning can be discerned within a penumbra of mystery" (Niebuhr 145) about a universe full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper (Phillpotts 2068).

This is an intolerable situation for beings that can best be conceived of as living with intentionality, which means living with purpose. The human purpose is to give meaning to life. Individuals want to create values. Even more, the human being has a primary, or native orientation, in the direction of creating values. There is little question that a strong meaning orientation is a life-prolonging, if not a life preserving agent (Frankl 114, 122).

The human quest for ultimate meaning is, of course, a formidable force in society, but it rarely if ever exists apart from, above, beyond, or in opposition to the quest for solutions to practical problems (Harris 145). The purpose of meaning is discovered only if we work incessantly (Jung 11) to improve the human condition.

Contradicting Weaknesses

In a life in which the struggle for existence is so unfairly doomed to defeat (Durant 98), people often long for a sense of connectedness with all that is, an

"absolute" to which they can commit themselves, something or someone larger than their own ephemeral existences to give meaning to their lives, a meaningful place to be within the entire world of Being itself (Tageson 46).

Considering the contradictions and weaknesses which beset American existence, it seems only natural that people seek an absolute which can give them the illusion of certainty and help relieve them from conflict, doubt and responsibility (Fromm, Chains 176]. All people wish to find a meaning and purpose in life that is greater than an individual (Rogers 351), and related to ideas and values, or at least social patterns that provide a feeling of communion and belonging (Fromm, Freedom 15).

Many cultures have used just such a quest for meaning and purpose, to link private and public; present, past, and future; and the social individual to the cosmos (Bellah 83). Such myths, whether secular or religious, permit man to emerge from his solitude and become one with creation. Myths, therefore--disguised, obscure, hidden--reappear in almost all of our acts and intervene decisively in our society: they open the doors of communion (Paz 211). This capacity to transcend the immediate boundaries of time, to see one's experience in the light of the distant past and future, to act and react

in these dimensions, to learn from the past of a thousand years ago and to mold the long-time future, is the unique characteristic of human existence (May, Existence 67).

Real Illusions

It certainly seems possible, that "dreams are mainly imaginative illusions" in which we appear not to think but to experience; that is to say, we sometimes attach complete belief to the hallucinations. In fact, the two chief characteristics of dreams are wish fulfilment and hallucinatory experience (Freud, Works 222, 50, 131). Put differently, an essential facet of dreams is a manifest discrepancy between dream images and external reality (Dreams 664).

Dreams have the advantage of being products of 'nature,' and in this way remain beyond the reach of our control, in a realm where nature and her secrets can be neither improved upon nor perverted, where we can play but not meddle (Jung 67, 328-329). They refer to one's whole experience, as an unconscious reflection of the outside world rooted in one's own experience of existence (May, Existence 46).

On one hand, dreams can wake the divine 'spark' which only true communication from existence can bring forth,

with its light and warmth, and the fundamental power of private wishes, conceits, and presumptions [May, Existence 81). "In dreams, daily life, with its labors and pleasures, its joys and pains, is never repeated. On the contrary, dreams have as their very aim to free us from it." A dream is something completely severed from the reality experienced in waking life. They set us free from reality (Freud, Works 7, 9). Perhaps this helps explain why we often dream of a world whose reality remains forever unattainable (Jung 146).

On the other hand, dreams sustain and protect the contradictions--the unhappy consciousness of a divided world, the defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed (Marcuse 61). Caught in the web of associations in which dreams are naturally embedded, are frightful paradoxes and ambivalences where good and evil, success and ruin, hope and despair, counterbalance one another (Jung 327, 150). Dreams are a cognitive force that reveal a dimension of man and nature, which is all too often repressed and repelled in reality. Their truth is in the illusion evoked, the insistence on creating a world in which the terror of life is called up and suspended--mastered by recognition (Marcuse 61).

Imagination's Intention

In both cases it is worth noting that dreaming is evidently mental life during sleep--or more specifically, an intermediate state between sleeping and waking. Dreams, however, are not disturbers of sleep, as they are sometimes called, but guardians of sleep which get rid of disturbances (Freud, Lectures 88, 129). As such, dreams are servants, they await our call, they do not come unless we need them. There is an agent of selection and direction that uses them and is their master (Durant 269). Whether the conscious individual orientation is theological, metaphysical, or scientific, dreams possess one characteristic in common--the predominance of imagination over observation. The only difference that exists between the three, is that in the first the imagination occupies itself with supernatural beings, in the second with personified abstractions (Comte 34), and in the third with inherited formulas.

The human mind, however, is not passive wax upon which experience and sensation write their absolute and whimsical will; nor is it a mere abstract name for a series or group of mental states; it is an active organ which molds and coordinates sensations into ideas, transforming the chaotic multiplicity of experience into

the ordered unity of thought (Durant 267). "The psyche assimilates external facts in its own way, which is based ultimately upon the laws or patterns of apperception" (Jung 494).

"These laws do not change, although, different ages or different parts of the world call them by different names" (Jung 494). The "association of sensations or ideas is not merely by contiguity in space or time, nor by similarity, nor by recency, frequency or intensity of experience; it is above all determined by the purpose of the mind" (Durant 269). At every moment, whether awake or asleep, man's mind is directed by some intention (Frankl 118).

A Hopeful Fear of Death

It is in precisely this context that the confluence of fear and hope, which is itself a derived consequence of the certainty of death (Hawthorne 202), determines the degree to which the individual imagination dominates collective reality (Santayana 1535). Of course, "it is foolish to fear what cannot be avoided" (Syrus 682). Nonetheless, one permanent human emotion is fear--fear of the unknown, the complex, the inexplicable. What people want beyond everything else is safety (Mencken 77). Dangerous situations, be they dangers to the body or to

the soul arouse primordial images and symbols inborn from time immemorial, eternally living outlasting all generations" (Jung 42, 21).

Entertaining hope, on the other hand, means recognizing fear (Browning 158). It is the battle between hope and fear which best displays the spiritual grandeur of humanity daring to defy its mightiest hereditary enemy--Death (Heine 44). It is through death and rebirth that many mortals hope to become immortal. There seems to be only one belief that robs death of its sting and the grave of its victory; and that is the belief that we can lay down our individual burdens forever if we only do our part towards the goal of human evolution (Shaw 412).

"Hope is a waking dream" (Diogenes 461), and as deceitful as it is, it serves at least to lead us to the end of life along an agreeable road (Rochefoucauld 198). Taken together, there is nothing fear and hope will not persuade people of (Vauvenargues 127).

Instinctive Fusion of Values, Morals, And Ethics

For dreams, then, "imagination is more important than knowledge" (Einstein 961), because while it cannot make people wise, it can make them happy (Pascal 31). It is precisely for this reason, that the human animal prefers

to follow the straggling lines of fantasy to weave their theologies, philosophies, ideologies, or sciences precariously out of their dreams (Durant 169).

Interestingly, inherent in the human psyche there is a patterning force, and at various times and places out of touch with each other, it spontaneously puts forth similar constellations of fantasy. It must be pointed out, however, that wherever creative fantasy is allowed to freely express itself (Jung xii, 319) one always risks the fusion of reality and values (Frankl 122).

It should also be "borne in mind that associations occur and ideas are linked together in dreams without any regard for reflection, common sense, aesthetic taste, or moral judgment. Judgment is extremely weak and ethical indifference reigns supreme." In fact, "dreams accept the most violent contradictions without the least objection, they admit impossibilities, they disregard knowledge which carries great weight with us in the daytime, they reveal us as ethical and moral imbeciles" (Freud, Works 66, 54).

From the center of a human universe, we often conjure up images representing the goal of life spontaneously produced by our unconscious, irrespective of the wishes and fears of the conscious mind. In such

instances dreams stand for the realization of our wholeness and individuality with or without the consent of our will. The dynamic of this process is instinct, which ensures that everything that belongs to an individual's life shall enter into it, whether they consent or not, or are conscious of what is happening to them or not (Jung 637).

Instinctive Passions and Logical Truths

Everything that is creative, then, necessarily flows from the living fountain of universally distributed motivational instincts, dynamically pursuing a patterned set of goals. In fact, dreams are often repressed instincts (Jung 44, 61, 68) or impulses that are prevented from becoming conscious because they are incompatible with existing social or family mores (Fromm, Chains 92).

Repression means a distortion in man's consciousness, it does not mean the removal of forbidden impulses from existence. It means that the unconscious forces have gone underground and determine man's actions behind his back. To be more precise, I am referring to those areas of repression which are common to many members of American society; the commonly repressed realities of American existence that our society cannot permit us to be aware of if it is to operate successfully with its specific

contradictions (Fromm, Chains 91, 88).

To illustrate, for example, it has been posited that the "mind is ever the ruler of the universe" (Plato 1312). It has been just as convincingly argued, however, that "the heart has reasons of which reason itself knows nothing" (Pascal xv). Similarly, while it seems reasonable to suggest that "the world in which a man lives shapes itself chiefly by the way in which he looks at it (Durant 251) ....it seems equally plausible to contend that "there exists a second system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals" (Jung 60). In spite of the fact that "nature has planted in our minds an insatiable longing to see truth" (Cicero 2056), the two-footed soul always accepts as true those things which flatter his passions, caress his hates, or serve his amours; from this comes logic (Balzac, Stories 179).

Hereditary Contradictions

Unfortunately, and as a result, "one of the most ordinary weaknesses of the human intellect is to seek to reconcile contrary principles by purchasing peace at the expense of logic (Tocqueville 30). That which is imprinted upon the human spirit by an inward instinct (Bacon 992), dictates that life often requires the power

of uniting contrarieties: love of virtue with indifference to public opinion; taste for work with indifference to glory; attention to health with indifference to life (Chamfort 57); and so on. In contrast, and as a possible alternative to what has already been stated, perhaps people are only apparently drawn from in front while in reality they are pushed from behind; maybe they only think they are led on by what they see, when in truth they are driven on by what they feel,--by instincts of whose operation they are half of the time unconscious (Durant 237).

For example, it has been suggested that the relation of the sexes.....is really the invisible vortex of all action and conduct, and that it peeps out everywhere in spite of all the veils thrown over it. If it is, indeed, the cause of war and the end of peace; the basis of what is serious, and the aim of the jest; the inexhaustible source of wit, the key of all illusions, and the meaning of all mysterious hints....Must we see it at every moment seat itself, as the true and hereditary lord of the world, out of the fullness of its own strength, upon the ancestral throne; looking down with scornful glance, laughing at the preparations made to bind it, or imprison it, or at least limit it and, wherever possible, keep it concealed, and master it so that it only appears

as a subordinate, secondary concern of life (Durant 240)?

An Immortal Symbol For Eternity

Has nature produced intellect for the service of the individual will? Is it only designed to know things so far as they afford motives of the will, but not to fathom them or to comprehend their true being (Durant 237)? Is human understanding greatly indebted to passion? Is it by the activity of the passions that our reason is improved; do we desire knowledge only because we wish to enjoy; does it seem possible to conceive of any reason why a person who has neither fears nor desires should give himself the trouble of reasoning? Do our passions originate in our wants, their progress depending on that of our knowledge; can we desire or fear anything apart from the idea we have of it, or from the simple impulse of nature (Rousseau 338)?

No matter what one's answer to such questions, nobody really wants their dearest desires or darkest fears to be put in the same category as itching and scratching (Bloom 234). Hence, the notion that sexuality is the nexus of existential purpose and meaning, has required refinement and modification to successfully guide the human herd happily through and beyond the unknown doors that death opens (Masefield 74).

Given the sacrosanct and primordial nature of the subject (Beard xxi); and the condition of human beings, which is to be weary of what they know and afraid of what they do not (Halifax 236), it is easy to see how and why "phantoms of the imagination" (Beard 48) inspired by the hope that to live is not all of life, and the fear that to die is not all of death, continually search for a guaranteed symbolic immortality (Nincic 3).

The thought of eternity consoles human beings for the observable shortness of life (Malherbe 309), and entices them to long for the perpetuity of their seed (Bloom 133). It has even been suggested that children are our immortality (Durant 501) and "at the day of judgment will be as a bridge, over which those who have none cannot pass" (Montesquieu 206).

Perhaps this helps explain why "taking care of their children, seeing them grow and develop into fine people, gives most parents--despite the hard work their greatest satisfaction in life. Isn't this creation, our visible immortality? Pride in our worldly accomplishments is usually weak in comparison (Webb 204). Perhaps it is true, then, that "when we do not know the truth of a thing, it is of advantage that there should exist a common error" (Pascal 9) to serve as the spiritual glue that

helps America cohere (Fallows 313).

Social Expressions of Morality

No matter which stance one chooses to take toward life and death, there is a correspondence which we all seek to establish between the head and the heart of those to whom we speak, on the one hand, and, on the other, between the thoughts and the expressions which we employ (Pascal 9). This of course is an expedient method of presenting the self to society, while offering a standard of conduct to assure an interrelationship between the social and the moral (Susman 273).

These irrationalities, as well as the whole character structure of American individuals, are reactions to the influences exercised by the outside world (Fromm, Freedom 6). This is a law of human behavior that continually gains new strength, the precedent of antiquity making it more venerable with the passing of each day (Rousseau 420). The result has been a world of harmonious unanimity that exists more in the realm of hope than in everyday reality (Bellah 198). Its cumulative force has been powerful (Beard xviii).

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Chapter II: American Culture: Comparative Visions

Savages we call them, because their
manners differ from ours.
--Benjamin Franklin, Savages.

The perpetrator of a wrong never forgives
his victims.
--John Ross

1. Introduction

> There are only two classes in society:
> those who get more than they earn and
> those who earn more than they get.
> --Holbrook Jackson

It is helpful to understand how those different from ourselves view us, it is not, however, necessary to look beyond U.S. borders to formulate a comparative perspective. The United States itself, contains an affluent society built upon a peculiarly distorted economy, one that proliferates rather than satisfies human needs. For some, the result has been a sense of spiritual emptiness. At the same time, the United States contains an underdeveloped nation, a culture of poverty (Harrington, Poverty 167). This might best be thought of as "a Nation Within--a cohesive nation within the more discernible nation, the United States" (Salisbury 35). However, because American poverty is not deadly, and because there are so many enjoying a decent standard of living, indifference and blindness is often the response to the plight of the poor (Harrington, Poverty 167).

Because Native Americans as a group, have the negative distinction of ranking at the bottom of virtually every socio-economic indicator: the highest

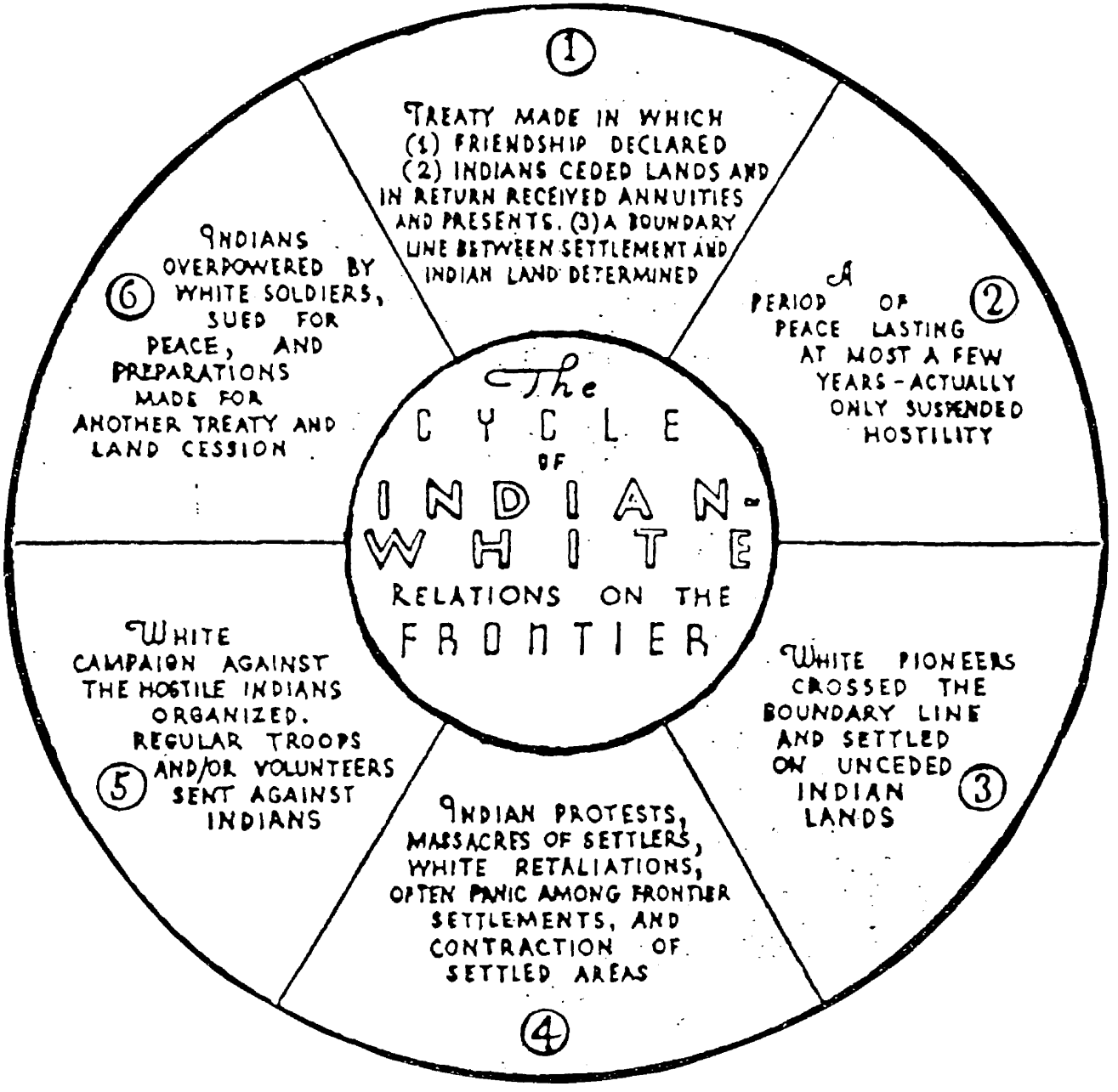
rate of accidents, suicides, diabetes, cirrhosis, fetal alcohol syndrome, unemployment, poverty, inadequate education, arrests, incarceration, and institutionalization, when compared to the general population (see pp. 40, 48, 49), I have chose them as representatives of Another America. Through a comparative analysis of Native and Anglo life-styles and value differences, I hope to provide a glimpse of why the inevitable result of contact between indigenous American and European-American societies was cultural hostility, which in turn, incited political and economic conflict (see p. 41).

It is important to note that the socio-economic conditions of Native Americans were not always as disastrous as they are today. In the past, Native Americans lived a remarkably healthy and harmonious existence. Their societies and economies functioned well, and their way of life was spiritually based. Healthy and thriving tribes and cultures once provided a quality of life comparable in its completeness to any other known at the time. Centuries of determined cultural genocide, however, and the subsequent dismantling of cultural resources has seen the steady erosion of this harmonious life, and, in its place, has

Table 1: Comparison of Socio-Economic Conditions (Michigan 16)

		All Michigan Residents	American Indians
*	Percentage of State Population	Approx. 9,000,000	.07 (63,000)
*	Population under 18 Years of Age	32.4% (decreasing)	44.8% (28,224) (increasing)
**	Median Age at Death	72 years	63 years
***	Female Heads of Household Living Below Poverty Line	37.9%	57.5% 82% (reserv.)
***	Median Family Income (1985)	$22,841	$15,916
***	Households Near or Below Poverty Line	11.3%	49.0%
*	Unemployed	9%	54%
*	High School Graduates	79.6%	59.9%
*	3 or More Persons Per Household	48.7%	76.7%
*	4 or More Years of College	14.2%	6.2%
**	Infant Mortality Rates Per 1,000	10.4%	16.1%
**	Birth Rates for Women Under 20	11.9%	25.0%

* 1980 U.S. Bureau of the Census
** Michigan Department of Public Health, 1985 Task Force Report
*** U.S. Census Bureau, 1985 Update


The CYCLE OF INDIAN-WHITE RELATIONS ON THE FRONTIER
1
TREATY MADE IN WHICH (1) FRIENDSHIP DECLARED (2) INDIANS CEDED LANDS AND IN RETURN RECEIVED ANNUITIES AND PRESENTS. (3) A BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN SETTLEMENT AND INDIAN LAND DETERMINED
2
A PERIOD OF PEACE LASTING AT MOST A FEW YEARS - ACTUALLY ONLY SUSPENDED HOSTILITY
3
WHITE PIONEERS CROSSED THE BOUNDARY LINE AND SETTLED ON UNCEDED INDIAN LANDS
4
INDIAN PROTESTS, MASSACRES OF SETTLERS, WHITE RETALIATIONS, OFTEN PANIC AMONG FRONTIER SETTLEMENTS, AND CONTRACTION OF SETTLED AREAS
5
WHITE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE HOSTILE INDIANS ORGANIZED. REGULAR TROOPS AND/OR VOLUNTEERS SENT AGAINST INDIANS
6
INDIANS OVERPOWERED BY WHITE SOLDIERS, SUED FOR PEACE, AND PREPARATIONS MADE FOR ANOTHER TREATY AND LAND CESSION

(Talbot 104)

given the Indians the worst health, education, housing, and economic status among all minority populations (Michigan 11, 69).

> It is what men believe that shapes their economy and society.
> --Michael Harrington, Century.

In the context of this thesis, however, there is a more compelling reason to compare the cultures of Native and Anglo Americans. More than two centuries before Sigmund Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory, Native American cultures urged individuals to look to their dreams for clues to unresolved problems and to engage in a kind of group psychotherapy in order to receive help from their fellow tribesmen. In fact, they had achieved an understanding of many of the basic tenets of modern psychology. They recognized that the mind had both conscious and unconscious levels; that unconscious desires were often expressed symbolically in dreams; that these desires, if unfulfilled or unresolved, could cause psychic and psychosomatic illness; and that those suffering from nightmares or haunting dreams could often find relief by recounting his or her dreams to a group whose members attempted to help the individual find the meaning of and the cure for the subconscious problem (Nash 24).

An incredulous Jesuit priest, Father Raguneau, described this theory of dreams as he witnessed it in Huron villages in 1649. The Indians, he reported, believed that:

> In addition to the desires which we generally have that are free, or at least voluntary in us,....our souls have other desires, which are, as it were, inborn and concealed. These, they say, come from the depths of the soul, not through any knowledge, but by means of a certain blind transporting of the soul to certain objects; these transports might in the language of philosophy be called Desideria innata, to distinguish them from the former, which are called Desideria Elicita. Now they believe that our soul makes these natural desires known by means of dreams, which are its language. Accordingly, when these desires are accomplished, it is satisfied; but, on the contrary, if it be not granted what it desires, it becomes angry and not only does not give its body the good and the happiness that it wished to procure for it, but often it also revolts against the body, causing various diseases, and even death...In consequence of these erroneous ideas, most of the Hurons are very careful to note their dreams, and to provide the soul with what it has pictured to them during their sleep. If, for instance, they have seen a javelin in a dream, they try to get it; if they have dreamed that they gave a feast, they will give one on awakening, if they have the wherewithal; and so on with other things. And they call this Ondinnonk-a secret desire of the soul manifested by a dream
> --Anthony Wallace

2. Ethnocentricity and Diversity

Ethnocentricity

> Today we are dividing the lands of the native Indians into states, counties and townships. We are driving off from their property the game upon which they live, by railroads. We tell them plainly, they must give up their homes and property, and live upon corners of their own territories, because they are in the way of our civilization.
> --Horatio Seymour

Many European Americans have failed to understand the dynamics of Native American cultures. Convinced that their own way of life is the finest ever conceived, Anglo-Americans have persistently viewed Native American cultures as deficient rather than different, seeing them as nothing more than pathology, a deviant lifestyle badly in need of reform. European Americans have historically viewed the Indians as a problem, an obstacle standing in the way of progress and civilization (Clifton 22).

> Their whole character, inside and out; language and morals, must be changed.
> --Thomas L. McKenney

Anglo-Americans have always been dangerously ethnocentric--self-righteously convinced of their own religious, political, and economic superiority. They have always expected Native Americans to conform, to fit

into the larger scheme of things (Olson 23, 34). If cultural change is to take place, it has always been the Indians who must change (Clifton 22).

Diversity

> The study of native origins-archaeological, philological and historical-desired to rivet the white man's attention on the Indians and to demand that tribal society be interpreted through the same methods used by the white man to understand his own society. Philanthropy had asked no more, after all, than that the Indians should be seen through the same lens used by civilization to see itself.
> --Bernard Sheehan

Native Americans, like other people, cannot be stereotyped. They are wide and diverse regarding common values, beliefs and orientations. There are over 300 different Indian languages and dialects among Indian tribes in the U.S. (Michigan 89). European-Americans have been blind to that diversity and insisted on viewing Native American culture through a single lens, as if all Native Americans could somehow be understood in terms of a few monolithic assumptions (Olson 5).

When compared to one another, the various tribes are highly diverse; but when all of them are compared to European society, a Native American culture becomes

discernible--one that revolves around visions of natural life cycles, community, and the environment. The distinctive nature of Native American culture however, is its holistic independence from the assumptions of Western civilization (Olson 15). Most Native American tribes interpreted life from a certain common perspective, employing a set of values sharply at odds with the assumptions of advancing settlers and Western civilization (see pp. 47-48).

3. Time and Religion

Time

> It was a beautiful morning in grass growing moon.
>
> When the sun was in the middle of the sky.
>
> After sleeping four times....
> --Peter Nabakov

Time, for most Native American tribes, was a servant of the people in harmony with the creative and destructive patterns of nature (Salisbury 25). Time was intangible, a natural process in which all living things fulfilled the promise of their creation--the stages of the moon, the rising and setting of the sun, the seasons of the year, the blooming and withering of flowers, the greening and browning of grasses, the

Table 2: Comparison of Life-Style and Value Differences (Michigan 121, 122)

Social Structure

Native American	Anglo-dominant Culture
a. Non-status seeking	a. Status seeking
b. Life family centered	b. Life divided between family, work and outside interests.
c. Extended family	c. Nuclear family
d. Frequent, ongoing contact with relatives.	d. Sporadic contact with relatives
e. Family, a producing unit of society	e. Family, consuming unit of society
f. Matrilineal orientation	f. Patrilineal orientation
g. Loosely continued rules and regulations.	g. Legalistic approach to governance

Economics

a. Depend on food availability	a. Money economy
b. Sharing of basics of life expected to be cared for	b. Self-sufficiency
c. Not accept private ownership of land	c. Ownership of land promoted
d. Work limited to meeting family needs	d. Work ethic
e. Harmony with nature-environment	e. Subdue the earth
f. Utilize only what is needed	f. Accumulation valued
g. Slow pace - time sense rhythmical and in harmony with surroundings	g. Rapid pace - time an economic commodity
h. Present orientation	h. Future orientation

Family

a. Family, work centered	a. Family, activity and support centered
b. Family, first priority	b. Family may be placed last
c. Discipline threat from external sources	c. Discipline from parents
d. Discipline in form of threats to physical well-being or harmony with environment.	d. Discipline withdrawal of love-support
e. Formal education often questioned or seen as a negative	e. Formal education supported and highly stressed
f. Family often shares common dwelling areas	f. Separate living space esteemed and sought (own bedroom)
g. Giving valued and expected	g. Receiving often expected (matter of rights)
h. Orientation of meeting others' needs	h. Self-gratification increasingly stressed
i. Retiring approach valued	i. Assertiveness valued

Table 2 (cont'd):

j. Family members expected to be quiet - respected	j. Family members often verbal and challenging
k. Respect for all things	k. Respect for authority
l. Dress, modest	l. Dress, sexy
Communication	
a. Limited eye contact	a. Eye contact expected
b. Decision-making by consensus	b. Decision-making by authority and for representation
c. Emotions controlled - no words for many emotions	c. Emotions expressed - verbalized
d. Silence contemplative	d. Talk and sharing expected
e. Affection not shown publicly	e. Encourage open expression of affection
f. Soft-speaking voice	f. More boisterous or louder-speaking voice
Time	
Servant of people	Time controls
Leisure	
Family-centered	Person/skill/interest
Participate in total family	Centered often away from family

Other Facts (Michigan 18):

* The alcoholism rate of Indians ranges from 4.3 to 5.5 times higher than the United States all-race rate.

* Two-thirds of these alcohol-related deaths are the result of cirrhosis of the liver; 30% result from alcoholism itself; the remainder are due to alcoholic psychoses.

* The arrest rate of alcohol-related offenses is 12 times that of non-Indians.

* Alcoholics frequently die in jails as the result of delirium tremens, internal bleeding, head injuries, pneumonia, or suicide.

Other Facts: (cont'd)

* The American Indian population has a suicide rate about twice the national average. These rates are highest in the young-to-middle years, while rates for all races are highest in older adults.

* The Indian homicide rate is almost three times the national average. The high accident rate is closely correlated to use of alcohol.

* Broken families, domestic violence, divorce, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, illegitimacy, child neglect and abuse have become common in a population where they had rarely existed before.

---

hibernation of bears, the hatching of doves, the births and deaths of people (Olson 18).

For most Native Americans adulthood itself implied fulfillment, there was no sense of wasting life, of not having done or experienced enough, or of having dissipated time. Theirs was a life without clocks, deadlines, or rigid schedules. Like the seasons, human life was conceived of as a cycle. Time was not an enemy, but rather the relationship between the individual, their community and the cosmos (Clifton 11). Indians welcomed the future but didn't worry about it (Deloria 221).

> The first years of a man's life must
> make provision for the last.
> --Dr. Samuel Johnson
>
> Time is money.
> --Bulwer Lytton

> Do not squander time for that is the stuff that life is made of.
> --Benjamin Franklin, Almanack.

In sharp contrast, for European Americans, time was controlled: time was precious and fleeting, something not to be wasted, like health and money. Time became for these people a linear and sequential commodity, an economic good for sale or rent and against which the individual measured their life. European Americans equated time with the passage through such stages as childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and old age, and the achievement of a series of schooling, career, and retirement goals (Olson 17).

Religion

Native American religions were hardly monolithic; instead, they were characterized by a rich variety of theological assumptions and ceremonial rituals. Most natives of North America were polytheistic, believing in many gods and many levels of deity. Native American ceremonies revolved around the relationship between the individual, the community, and the cosmos; they were a fusion of matter, spirit, time, and life; a divine source of energy which unified all of the universe. In short, the Native American world was one infused with the divine (Olson 11, 12).

For Native Americans, the interconnected relationship of human beings with their natural world, gave all living things and beings a special purpose in the cycle of life and nature. Not every pebble, blade of grass or stick had religious significance, but each one carried the potential. The wise person took no chances and tried to treat all beings as kin (Clifton 6, 8). Indians taught that sharing one's goods with another human being was the highest form of behavior possible (Deloria 121).

At the basis of most Native American beliefs in the supernatural, was a profound conviction that an invisible force, a powerful spirit, permeated the entire universe and ordered the cycles of birth and death for all living things. Man was not unique and transcendent, but only part of a larger, eternal whole. Native Americans attached supernatural qualities to animals, heavenly bodies, the seasons, dead ancestors, the elements, and geologic formations (Olson 11-12).

Because of this pantheism, most Native American tribes felt comfortable with the environment, close to the moods and rhythms of nature, in tune with the living planet. In Indian religions, regardless of the tribe, death was a natural occurrence and not a special

punishment from an arbitrary God. Indian people did not try to reason themselves out of their grief; nor did they try to make a natural but sad event an occasion for probing the rationale of whatever reality exists beyond themselves (Deloria 120).

European Americans tended to be quite different. Competition for social mobility and the painful striving to get ahead of everyone else; a time orientation attentive to clocks and the future; and the rapidity of the pace of change; all involved the loss of relationship with nature. No longer did the white man hear "natural rhythms" like the roar of the sea, the singing of the birds, and the swaying of the branches, which the "savages" heard (Takaki 165). Instead, Anglo societies exalted the Protestant ethic to a theological level, worshipping at the intricately related altars of individualism, materialism, and progress (Olson 179).

Americans placed all living things into a fixed hierarchy of categories. The grace of God extended only to the higher forms of life, and even then, some groups of people were more deserving of ethical consideration than others. At one time or another slavery, poverty, and treachery were all justified by Christianity as

moral institutions of the state. Exploitation of one's fellows by any means possible became a religious exercise (Deloria 104).

God was, for many Anglos, a personal being who looked upon whites with special favor, and presided omnipotently over the salvation or damnation of all individuals. These Americans tended to believe that the almighty God revealed his will through the successes and failures of individuals. Only in worldly success could people assure themselves of divine approbation. The true measure of a person, spiritually as well as temporally, was economic, interpreted as a function of material wealth (Olson 15, 33).

Convinced that God had selected them to establish a model community to be emulated by the rest of the world, white men demanded conformity in the name of assimilation (Olson 87). They confused equality with sameness, and the Indians could not make them understand the difference (Deloria 179).

The ultimate solution to the "Indian problem," reformers believed, was to divest Native Americans of their cultural heritage by introducing them to Christianity. In a nation where freedom of religion was the most sacred of all individual rights, the 1884

Congress authorized government agents on reservations to cooperate with local missionaries in suppressing Native American religions (Olson 51, 56).

In many dealings with Native Americans, Christian missionaries incorrectly tried to equate their "giving" God, with a "sharing" Great Spirit. Christianity tried to substitute giving to the church for sharing with other people. The white man preached that it was good to help the poor, yet he did very little to assist the poor in his society. Instead he applied constant pressure upon the Indians to conform, to hoard their worldly goods, and when they failed to accumulate capital but freely gave to the poor, the white man reacted violently. Indian people have always been confused by religion that prefers correctness of belief over truth itself, one that preaches the virtues of peace and yet always endorses the wars in which the nation is engaged (Deloria 101, 176, 113).

> Churches struggled to make the Indians cut their hair because they felt that wearing one's hair short was the civilized Christian thing to do. After the tribal elders had been fully sheared, they were ushered into a church meeting given pictures of Jesus and the Disciples, and told to follow these Holy Men. Looking down at the pictures, the ex-warriors were stunned to discover the Holy Dozen in shoulder length hair.
> --Vine Deloria, Jr.

Because the values of most First Americans contrasted so sharply with European assumptions, nearly four-hundred years of intense controversy and struggle has resulted, a struggle which is today not at all ready to end (Olson 15). The ensuing clash was between different moral orders. The battle was between rival perceptions of the world, different visions of life (Susman xx).

4. Economics, Social Structure, and Government

Economics

> My people will not sell our Blue Lake that is our church, for $10 million, and accept three thousand acres, when we know that fifty thousand acres is ours. We cannot sell what is sacred. It is not ours to sell.
> --Paul Bernal

A most fundamental American question, has always involved ownership of land (Olson 22). Tribal existence had always been predicated upon a land base, a homeland within which tribal existence could take place (Deloria 233). The idea of private property, in which one man or one group possessed eternal, exclusive control of a piece of land was foreign and confusing to most Native Americans, who had long ago adopted communal land systems (Olson 22).

Native Americans could not understand the European approach to property. For them, property was personal rather than private, which meant that it belonged to an individual who was respected for freely allowing access to their possessions. From their perspective, giving one person exclusive, perpetual control of land was as inconceivable as distributing the sky. Private property seemed ridiculous, insanely selfish, and even sacrilegious to many Native Americans (Olson 22).

Native American economic life, in most instances, served to melt individual interests into those of the larger community (Olson 20). The "economics of survival" (Rubenstein, lecture) insured that most Native Americans maintained an overpowering concern for community welfare, for the survival of everyone. Because each person was so important in producing food, shelter, and clothing, this system depended on cooperation rather than competition (Clifton 6, 17, 5).

All members of the group shared their material wealth, labor, and food. The willingness to share, to part with material security, was often considered a personal asset, a sure sign of status and nobility. Within their own kin group, goods were given freely,

shared to help all family members survive. The gap between the rich and poor was far less pronounced than among European Americans; the capriciousness of subsistence living generated a moral dynamic to assist neighbors. A rich person did not have more than his kinsmen, he simply gave more of what he had (Clifton 6, 17, 5).

In their simple economies and reverence for land and space, Native Americans lived tens of thousands of years in a symbiotic relationship with the earth, using resources without exhausting them, prospering without destroying. Native Americans had developed a special relationship with their environment. They believed in the kinship of all living things and practiced a form of reciprocity with nature, giving something back for everything they took (Olson 3, 17). For Indians there was no reason to worry about wealth and its creation. The land had plenty for everybody. Piling up gigantic surpluses implied a mistrust of the Great Spirit and a futile desire to control the future (Deloria 221).

Few Americans could fathom such an attachment to the land. Viewing the earth itself as lifeless and inorganic, subject to all kinds of manipulations and

alterations, Europeans tended to be alienated from nature and came to the New World to use the wilderness, to conquer and exploit its natural wealth for private gain. The environment was not sacred and the earth had no transcendent meaning in and of itself (Olson 138, 16).

The white man maintained a belief that community needs were best served by the aggressive assertion of individual self interest. Theirs was an aggressive, acquisitive culture set on converting nature into money, property, and security. European Americans wanted all of the land and were never satisfied as long as Native Americans possessed any of it that was worthwhile (Olson 16, 21).

When Indian land was needed, the whites portrayed the tribes as wasteful people who refused to develop their natural resources. Because the Indians did not "use" their lands properly they would be judged too incompetent to handle their own money, but competent enough to vote to sell their reservation. Is it any wonder Indians distrust the white man (Deloria 10, 73)?

Social Structure

Tribal society is based on a philosophy of

interdependence (Michigan 118). The Native American social structure helped create an atmosphere in which individual interests fused with those of the larger community. All the people together were understood to be one living organism. Everyone was related to everyone else. All were connected by blood and spirit. The building blocks of all Native American societies were kinship groups (Lane 28).

For most Native American societies authority was understood in terms of family, clan and community, and since everyone understood the behavior within these roles and most occupied several roles simultaneously, family values actually governed society, providing direct moral restraints on individual deviancy (Olson 21). The pull of family loyalty, perhaps the most powerful governing force in human society, was overwhelming in Native America, guaranteeing reciprocal devotions among individuals and the group.

For Thomas Jefferson, as well as many other European Americans, "justice is in one scale and self preservation in the other." Assimilation as Jefferson defined it was a one way street. Indians must adopt white ways. If the Indian wished to live among whites and be an "American," and if he wished to survive and

spread with whites over "this great island," he would have to "amputate" his way of life. To facilitate this process, institutions of the Anglo-dominant society were established to impose, in a universal form, a morality which would prevail from "within" upon those who were strangers to it. After all, the American Revolution had given freedom to the "white man only," and the oppression of many different groups had come to serve the common needs of white men. Many of those who fought this war were determined to maintain the supreme rule of intelligence and self-control over the races of ignorance and impulsiveness. Civilization had become the subordination of instinct to reason (Takaki 46, 60, 127, 139, 136, 200, 206).

Government

Overpowering political and economic movements have been generated by coalitions of religious reformers and philanthropic developers from the dominant society. Intent on protecting, saving, or transforming Native American society, these coalitions have supported a long series of removal, reservation, education, allotment, and termination programs which have alienated Native Americans, though always in the name of there own welfare (Olson 179).

Throughout most of American history, public policy on all levels has reflected the inclinations of economic reform groups (Olson 179). Law after law has been passed requiring Native Americans to conform to white institutions (Deloria 8).

5. Family and Education

Family

For most Native American tribes, the core of each individual's personal identity came from close, intimate relationships of everyday life, acted out in the context of family, clan, and community (Clifton 45). Elders usually resided with their own children, and groups of siblings or cousins often lived close together, either under the same roof or within easy walking distance of one another (Michigan 12).

Parents were rarely expected to take on the sole responsibility for child rearing. The entire group--parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.--was thought to share the responsibilities of raising all the children in the extended family group. It was not unusual for children to move from one nuclear family to another. Children's wishes about where they live, were usually respected in most tribal traditions. Young

parents in a tribally based system, could always count on getting as much help, support and advice as they needed (Michigan 12).

Anglo-society, on the other hand, divides life between family, work and outside interests: Young adults usually live separately from their extended families. They make an abrupt change in status when the first baby is born. They are expected to take sole responsibility for the care and character development of their children. When Anglos do seek assistance, they generally look to the experts--the pediatrician, the teacher, the family counselor, or one of the myriad books on parenting. They are expected and often encouraged to follow more 'modern' or 'scientific' methods than their parents used (Michigan 11-12).

Education

Native American parents were rather permissive, content to let children learn and grow at a naturally individual pace. The ultimate values to be given children were self-confidence, tranquility, and emotional security, not a compulsive need to be richer than the neighbors. Rarely subject to physical punishment, children had the freedom to learn by experience. Traditionally, for Native Americans,

teaching was the responsibility of every family member. Children hunted, fished, and farmed alongside their elders, acquiring the skills they would need as adults and learning the values that had been handed down through the generations. Rarely subject to physical punishment, children had the freedom to learn by doing (Clifton 32).

Intellectually, Native Americans were carefully bound into communities by history as well as by oral traditions conveying the past to each new generation. The essence of the Oral Tradition was that there was a sense of sharing an occasion, utterance, and feeling. Oral histories conveyed the past to each new generation and sustained a community constant, a source of unanimity, security, and agreement (Salisbury 22-23).

European Americans, in their written world where knowledge was visual through the printed page, independently acquainted themselves with the community in the solitude of a library. People interpreted the world on their own, according to their own prejudices, and there was rarely agreement on the meaning or significance of history (Olson 18-20).

> The major problem centered at school. I despised every aspect of it. I was, indeed, made to feel I was not only

> different from the other students but inferior on all accounts.
> --Maurice Kenny

In the public schools the result has been a reform oriented assimilationist curricula, developed without substantial input from Native Americans. Schools to this day lack courses in tribal culture, while virtually every other ethnicity, from Arabia to Zimbabwe, is represented in the curricula. Often, the physical needs of the Native American students--food, clothing, shoes, and transportation are not met, while their emotional needs--ethnic pride and a sense of belonging--are ignored completely (Olson 115).

On reservations throughout the country, government agents punished Native American children for speaking native dialects and prohibited tribal dances, drumming, body painting, and chants. Tribal customs have constantly been under assault by liberal reformers dedicated to cultural genocide (Olson 53).

> America is God's crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! The real American, has not yet arrived. He is only in the crucible, I tell you--he will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman.
> --Israel Zangiwill

One of the primary problems has been the anti-Native American prejudice common among teachers and administrators who doggedly adhere to the "melting pot" ideology, as the ultimate solution to problems in America created by ethnic and cultural conflict (Olson 133). One of the many shortcomings of this panacea, is the fact that certain cultures and races were not allowed to become a part of the American alloy.

6. Summary and Conclusion

Summary

After 350 years of contact, the political relationship between the First Americans and non-Native Americans is still a tenuous one, marked by mutual suspicion and enormous cultural differences (Olson 25). The failings of past and present policy are easy to identify: depletion of personal, cultural, and economic resources; disregard of legal obligations; tolerance-even fostering-of racism; and institutional disinterest in Indian well being (Michigan 69) [see pp. 66 and 67]. If European Americans had learned more about Native American culture, they might have become more tolerant and understanding, and mutual acceptance would have been more likely (Olson 92).

"Connecticut Tribe Sues, Seeking Land and Recognition" (Hays 19).

In the beginning there were rocks and rivers, forests and meadows, cornfields and deer. Now there is downtown Bridgeport, and the Golden Hill Paugussetts, an Indian tribe based here wants it back.

In a lawsuit filed this month in federal court the 100 members tribe asserted its ownership of 88 acres (33.5 hectares) that include much of Bridgeport's core, including city hall, the main post office and the Hi-Ho shopping mall.

Citing violations of agreements made in the 18th century, first with the British and then with Americans, tribal leaders have proposed a settlement that includes $750 million, the 80 acres of land, support for the group's efforts to become recognized by the federal government as an official tribe - and state permission to operate a casino.

A tall order, especially for an economically strapped city and state but one that tribal leaders say they are entitled to after a history of poor treatment.

"This is based on the value of the land," said Aurelius H Piper Jr., known as Quiet Hawk, the Tribe's council chief.
"I want the whole thing, all of it, he said. "Any white man in this country with a billion-dollar claim would be as hard-nosed as I am."

Some have wondered why anyone would want anything in downtown Bridgeport, a tired industrial city that tried to declare bankruptcy last year. Others have scoffed at the tribe's claim, suggesting that it's real goal is simply to open its own casino. Another Connecticut tribe the Mashantucket Pequots, opened a successful casino near Ledyard, in February and it has operated around the clock ever since. Various parties, including prominent Las Vegas developers, have proposed building casinos in Bridgeport as well.

But regaining its land has been a tribal priority for generations, Mr. Piper 47, said. "It's something that has passed down, leader to leader," he said. "We have continuously gone after our property, but we haven't had the money to finish it. The tribe is very poor and small."

Besides Bridgeport, the tribe is considering staking claims to other land it inhabited, before Europeans land it inhabited, before Europeans arrived, in Orange Stratford, Milford and Trumbull.

The Golden Hill Paugussetts have existed "since time immemorial," according to the lawsuit, and now occupy two reservations in Connecticut. One, covering about 107 acres in Colchester, was bought with a federal Housing and Urban Development grant in the 1970s, Mr. Piper said. The other, only a quarter-acre, is in Trumbull. Mr. Piper's brother, a tribal leader know as Moonface Bear, lives on the Colchester reservation; his father, Aurelius Sr., whose Indian names is Big Eagle, lives on the Trumbull property.

Mr. Piper said he had tried to negotiate with Bridgeport officials, who forced him to file the suit. A lawyer for the city refused to comment on the case, which is pending. Several legal experts said that in the settlement of Indian claims, the bulk of the awards are usually paid by the federal government, although state and local governments are required to contribute.

The tribe contends that agreements between its ancestors and London, as well as the fledgling American government, were repeatedly violated. The first English colonists arrived in the area of what is now Bridgeport, where the Paugussetts were concentrated in the 1630s. To resolve a dispute over property that arose in 1658, the tribe agreed to accept an 80 acre reservation in Bridgeport, which became known as the Golden Hill Reservation, the lawsuit states.

But by 1760, the reservation had been nibbled away by more and more settlers, prompting an

investigation by a committee of the colony's assembly, said Bernard Wishnia, a New Jersey lawyer who is representing the Paugussetts. The investigation, completed in 1765, found in favor of the Indians but allowed the settlers to keep 68 acres, giving the Indians two lots totaling 20 acres along with some corn and a pile of blankets.

Most of the land subsequently was taken from the Indians by local officials, according to the suit, although federal law specified that that could not be done without the consent of Congress.

The tribe therefore retains the title and rights of possession to the said land," the suit states. Among the several pages of defendants are dozens of individual and corporate property owners, as well as Mayor Joseph Ganim, Governor Lowell P. Weicker Jr. and the United States

Only one case of a tribe's seeking to prove its status has ever gone before a jury, said Henry Sockbeson, a senior lawyer for the Native American Right Fund in Washington. That involved the Mashpees, a tribe in Massachusetts, during the 1970s. The tribe is lost.

Instead, affected by events of which they had no knowledge, and decisions in which they had little say (Clifton 15), the Native American community has become angry and frustrated as a result of being forced into the role of permanent aliens in their own land (Olson 131). The fundamental Indian success has been survival (Michigan 69). In the face of religious, social, and educational reforms directed toward unilateral cultural extinction, Native Americans have with unyielding determination and courage maintained their birthrights. Their desire to retain their own culture and their own land, however, should not be taken to mean that they wish to return to the past; rather it means that they want to determine their own futures and ways of life (Michigan 68).

Conclusion

Each society holds in common certain assumptions about reality that guide and set limits upon its members, their awareness and perceptions, their understanding of cause and consequence, their sense of options, and their range of actions. This is a way of life, a combination of patterns of thought and action that as it becomes habitual and institutionalized, defines the thrust and character of a culture (Williams 5, 4).

The brief comparative sketch of American cultures which I have provided in this chapter, illustrates how to avoid the fundamental challenge of creating a humane and equitable community or culture. The will and power of a culture based upon the proposition that expansion is the key to freedom, prosperity, and social peace, has forcibly subjugated a formerly independent people. The European American culture has consistently judged the behavior of others by its correspondence to their own (Williams 96, 23, 53, 6).

The nation of the well off, has never been able to see through the wall of affluence, to recognize the alien citizens on the other side as human beings just like themselves. To a great extent the problem has been

one of vision, the failure to see that one cannot raise the bottom of a society without benefitting everyone above (Harrington 168, 169).

While recent history has brought physical, economic, social, and cultural deprivation, Native American people have remained amazingly strong and resilient. Because many have held on to traditional Indian ways, beliefs, and values, and are passing them on, Indians have survived as a people. This generation has been referred to as the "healing generation," the one that will heal past social and economic hurts (Michigan 3).

It seems likely that Native Americans once fully empowered to control their own lives, will in turn not only benefit the United States as a nation, but also serve as a model for other developing nations in the world. By viewing America in a more positive light, as a nation which cares about both its indigenous and poor people, this will contribute to improved international relations (Michigan 3).

If morality is to be achieved in this country's relations among and between its own people and other nations, a return to basic principles is in order. Definite commitments to fulfill extant treaty

obligations to Indian tribes would be a first step toward introducing morality into American domestic and foreign policy. Until America begins to build a moral record in her dealings with the Indian people she should not try fool the rest of the world about her good intentions (Deloria 51).

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Chapter III: American Society: Comparative Realities

I was told that the Privileged and
the People formed Two Nations.
--Benjamin Disraeli

The pleasures of the rich are bought
with the tears of the poor.
--Thomas Fuller

1. Introduction: Stratified Morals

A Society of Individuals

As was alluded to in chapter one, the long struggle between hopeful ideals and real fears (May 51) has meant that life is for most people a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible (B. Russell 74). Although individuals and their needs for self-mastery and creativity, are the core reality, human beings are hemmed in by the actions of others (Feagin 17).

Because there is no escape from living through the dialectical conflict of individual and society (May 229), an overriding American concern has been how to knit a contentious society together rather than allowing it to become balkanized by competing interests (Morrow 38). American society's attempt to structure a self-image and to communicate a common identity stems from the fact that no community can exist without common references (Gray 13). To keep a complex society such as the United States from falling apart, it has been necessary to insure that all social groups agree on certain values (Feagin 11).

However, such large unifying world views need not be restricted to explicitly religious, cultural, secular

or political doctrines, but can also include the complex web of moral values underlying American society (Fukuyama 5-6). In fact, the development of such a value system is predictable response to a real need in man's social nature of governing and knowing that one is governed not on the basis of mere material or intellectual force, but on the basis of a moral principle (Marger 69).

Because a moral life is most often expressed in terms of a dialectic between good and evil (May 238), shared feelings of attachment to symbols which identify members of a given population as belonging to the same overall community (Giddens, Intro 155), and the social problematics of identity, tend to function in terms of "same" and "other," of belonging vs. excluding (Rollins 18). Hence, being an American requires that one agree in advance to a series of observations or beliefs which will not be questioned (Rogers 27).

Virtues And Deficiencies

The dominant value orientation shared by most U.S. citizens, regardless of status, is a preference for seeing individuals as both the cause of and solution to social problems (Beeghley 301). This is a set of values

that enshrines "the good life" as one of hard, continuous work, frugality, self-disciplined living, and individual initiative (Lipset 57). "The ethic of individual responsibility is so pervasive in the United States" (Beeghley 20), that "the gospel of individualism has become the central tenet of the dominant value system. Widely accepted beliefs include the following: (1) Each person should work hard and strive to succeed in material terms; (2) Those who work hard will in fact succeed; (3) Those who do not succeed (for example, the poor) have only themselves to blame: their laziness, immorality, or other character defects" (Feagin 87).

Americans attach a social stigma to poverty. Poverty is viewed as evidence of moral failure. If you don't succeed, you did something wrong; it's your fault. The poor also call into question our ideology about the American Dream. That is an ideology that contends you can be anything you want. If only you work hard and get the right education, you can make it. That's a fundamental belief in this country, and the way we deal with the discomfort (when we see people who don't make it) is to blame the poor (Iggers 146).

Similarly, financial success is thought of as proof of moral or ideological virtue, and a fortune synonymous

with a state of spiritual grace (Lapham 7). The origins of this value lie in Puritanism, with its emphasis on each individual's personal relationship to God, and a frontier experience that required individuals to be self-reliant in order to survive. The long-term impact of these factors, has produced in many persons, a preference for focusing on individuals when thinking about social issues (Beeghley 20).

The myth of self-reliance is so compelling that (Coontz 13) timeless prophets of the moment explain that adversity is a blessing in disguise. Self-reliance is after all what America is all about, and hard times strengthen the sinews of character (Lapham 7). The pervasive and prevailing common theme seems to be that poverty is caused by individual deficiencies and that those who are poor have no one to blame but themselves (Beeghley 112). The belief that achievement is possible and that virtue will be rewarded by success for one's self or one's children, is an adaptive mechanism which has emerged to reconcile low status individuals to their position and thus contribute to the stability and legitimacy of the larger system (Lipset 272).

Stratification

"Individual effort is, of course one factor

affecting a person's destiny. But forces beyond the control of the individual also play a role in determining one's life, and for the bulk of the population, they may often play a crucial role" (Easterlin 3). For example, in the United States four interrelated systems of stratification, of domination, and subordination are central to social problems: a class system in which a large working class is dominated by a small capitalist class; a racial system in which non-European minority groups such as Native Americans and African Americans are generally dominated by white groups; a gender system in which women are generally dominated by men (Feagin 23); and an age system in which the key fact is the economic, political, and general organizational dominance of the older segments of the population (Lenski 406). It is the last of these four systems, that this chapter is concerned with.

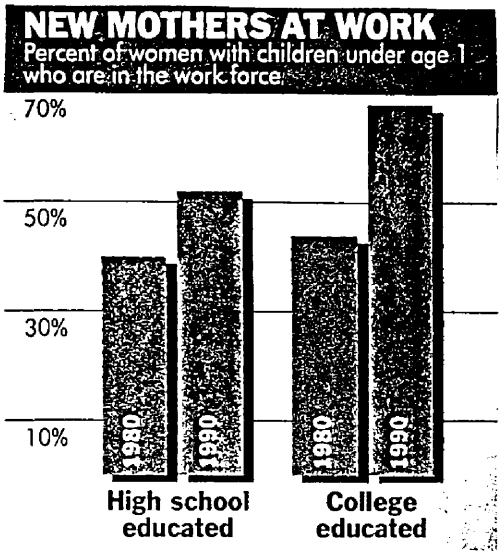
2. The Political Economics Of Age

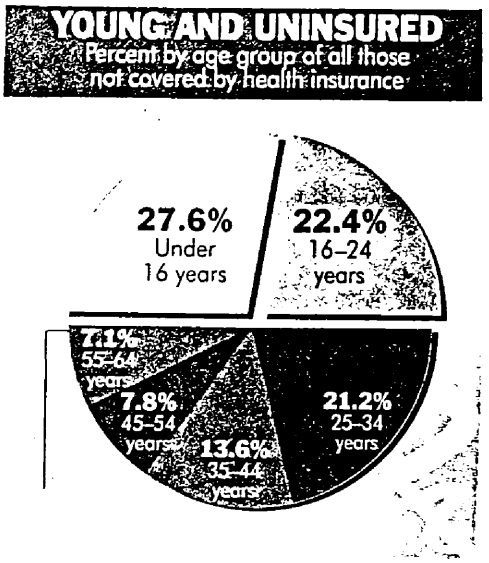
Income Distribution, Federal Spending, And Wealth

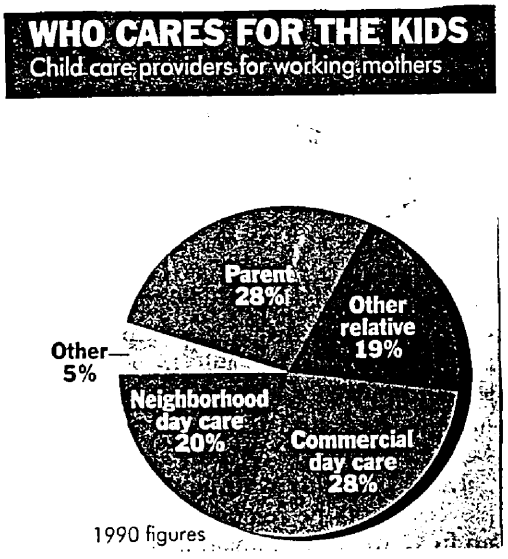
A central fact of all human history is the necessity for societies to provide the necessary goods and materials for sustenance (Marger 92). This might best be thought of as "the science of how who gets what,

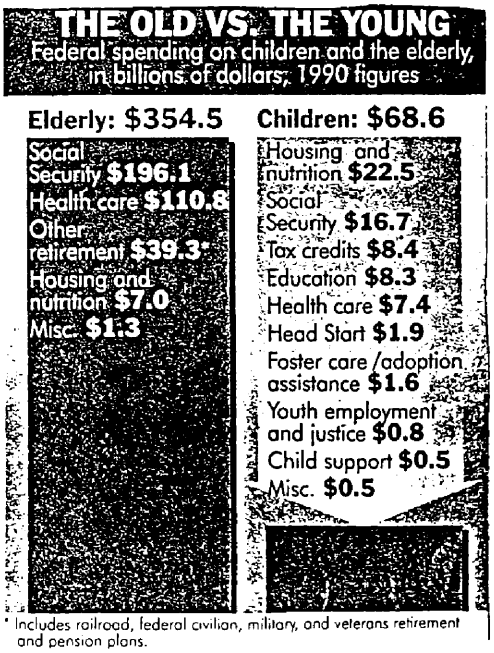
when and why" (Hillman 21). The American age stratification system, probably the most ancient of all forms of large-scale group subordination, is one in which older Americans as a group are the most powerful, and play a central role in subordinating those who are younger, in terms of power and acccess to resources. Our system of age stratification predates and has shaped American society. Today, as in the past, older Americans in the United States generally predominate over the young in terms of income, medical care, wealth [see p. 81], jobs, housing, and political power (Feagin 23).

For example, the Congressional Budget Office reports that since 1970, the median incomes for families headed by people 65 and older have increased 50% after adjusting for inflation and family size (Samuelson 68). In contrast, measured in inflation-adjusted dollars, the median income of families headed by someone under 30 is now 13% lower than such families earned in 1973, according to an analysis of Census Bureau statistics by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies. On average, young men today earn 17% less, in inflation-adjusted terms than they did in 1973 (Bernstein 80, 82).









(Fortune 36, 37, 52)

"Beginning in the mid-1970s, the distribution of annual wages and salaries became increasingly unequal. After moving toward greater equality from at least the early 1960s through the mid-1970s, the distribution of earnings suddenly began to move in the opposite direction. Since 1975, after accounting for movements in the business cycle, the inequality of wages has tended to increase" (Harrison 118).

Younger workers have been especially hard hit. The rapid spread of two-tier wage scales, for instance, which pays new employees at a lower rate for the same job, has hurt young workers most (Bernstein 82). After 1979, almost three fifths of the new year round full time employment that went to workers under the age of 35 has paid less than $11,000 per year (Harrison 127). In short, the distribution of earnings has become less equal through time, with younger workers falling increasingly behind older ones (Levy 923).

Similarly, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1986), although people over 65 comprised only 12% of the population in 1986 they received 27% of all federal spending. If you exclude national defense, interest on the national debt and spending abroad, the elderly got some 48% of federal domestic spending (Chakravarty 225). Today more than 60 percent of all

federal spending flows to Americans 65 and older (Howe 96). In sharp contrast, only 4.5 percent of the 1990 budget went to children, youth and families (Davis B3).

An example will help illustrate how this has happened. In 1960 medical care consumed just 5% of the gross national product; today it consumes 12%. Older people are the biggest consumers of medical care. In 1984, the Health Care Finance Administration estimated that private expenditure on health care totaled almost $350 billion. Of that, the 11.7% of the U.S. population that was over 65 consumed almost 34%. Since 1984, the proportion has increased even further. The old now consume four times as much in health care services as do those below the age of 65. As a result, Medicare expenditures have climbed almost beyond belief (Chakravarty 228-230, 224, 230) [see p. 84].

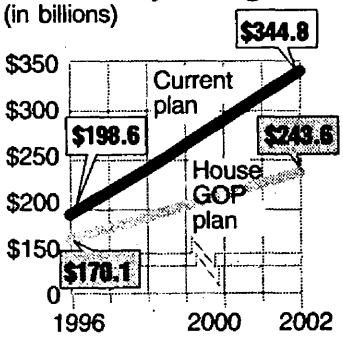
In a joint undertaking, the American Medical Association and the National Association of State School Boards found the health of poor children in this country abysmal. In fact, no generation of American children until this one, the report said, faced a situation where their health was worse than the childhood health of their parents (McLaughlin A8). Children under 16 make

Qualifying for Medicare

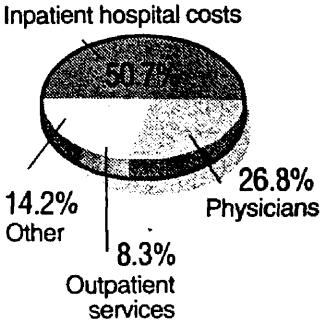
Every American 65 or older is eligible to receive Medicare, regardless of income. Currently 33.1 million elderly people use the program, along with 4.5 million disabled people.

PAYMENTS, PREMIUMS, GROWTH

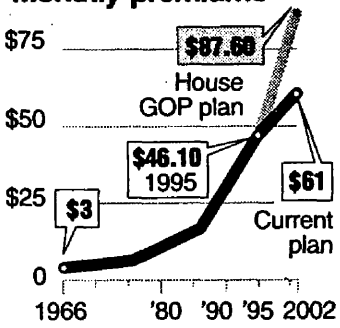
Medicare spending
(in billions)



Payments breakdown
(1994)



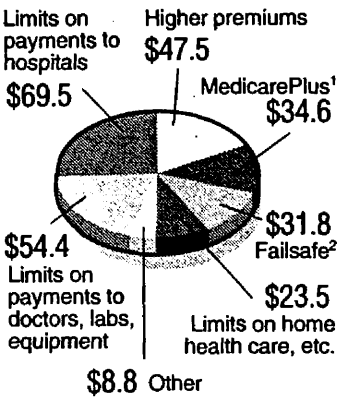
Monthly premiums



Limiting growth

How the House plan would save $270 billion over seven years:

(in billions)



up the largest group of Americans without medical insurance. And 56% of kids without health insurance live in households with incomes above the poverty line (Richman 35).

How do we explain that the U.S. economy staggered under the highest per capita health-care costs on earth, and still 23 million Americans under the age of thirty-five were uninsured for any medical care at all (Howe 88) [see p. 81]? Well, with people living longer and medical care becoming more expensive, the average Medicare recipient retiring in 1995, will receive $100,000 more in benefits than he or she paid in Medicare taxes (Broder 3K). As a result, there is little health-care money left over for those who have not yet qualified for this age-based program.

Income and transfer payments [see pp. 86-87] are only two measures of how dramatically the old have improved their lot compared with the young. If we look at wealth [see p. 88], the contrast becomes even starker (Chakravarty 223). "Family income also includes the interest, dividends, and real estate profits received by each household (Harrison 129). "Between 1973 and 1983 the wealth of the 65-69 age group increased in constant 1985 dollars, from $169,366 to $321,562. The wealth of

Programs Typically Considered in Studies of Income Tranfers (Beeghley 174)

Social Insurance	1983 Outlays (in billions)
Social Security	$170.7
Unemployment Insurance & Workman's Compensation	31.5
Railroad Retirement	3.8
Black Lung Benefits	1.7
Medicare	52.9
Subtotal	$260.6
Public Assistance	
Aid for Families with Dependent Children	$ 8.4
Supplementary Security Income	8.7
Veterans' Pensions	3.9
General Assistance ("Other Income Security")	.3
Medicaid	19.0
Food Stamps	12.7
Housing Assistance	9.6
Subtotal	62.6
Total Social Insurance and Public Assistance	323.2

Additional Income Transfer Programs (Beeghley 175)

Budgeted Expenditures	1983 Outlays (in billions)
Federal Employee Retirement and Disability (Civilian)	$ 20.9
Farm Price Supports	18.8
Other Child Nutrition	5.3
Low Income Home Energy Assistance	2.0
Farm Credit	1.4
Earned Income Tax Credit	1.2
Federal Employee Health Benefits	1.0
Refugee Assistance	.5
Farm Crop Insurance	.3
Federal Employee Workman's Compensation	.2
Subtotal	$ 52.3
Tax Expenditures	
Exclusion of Employer Pension Contributions	$ 49.7
Deductibility of Mortage Interest	25.1

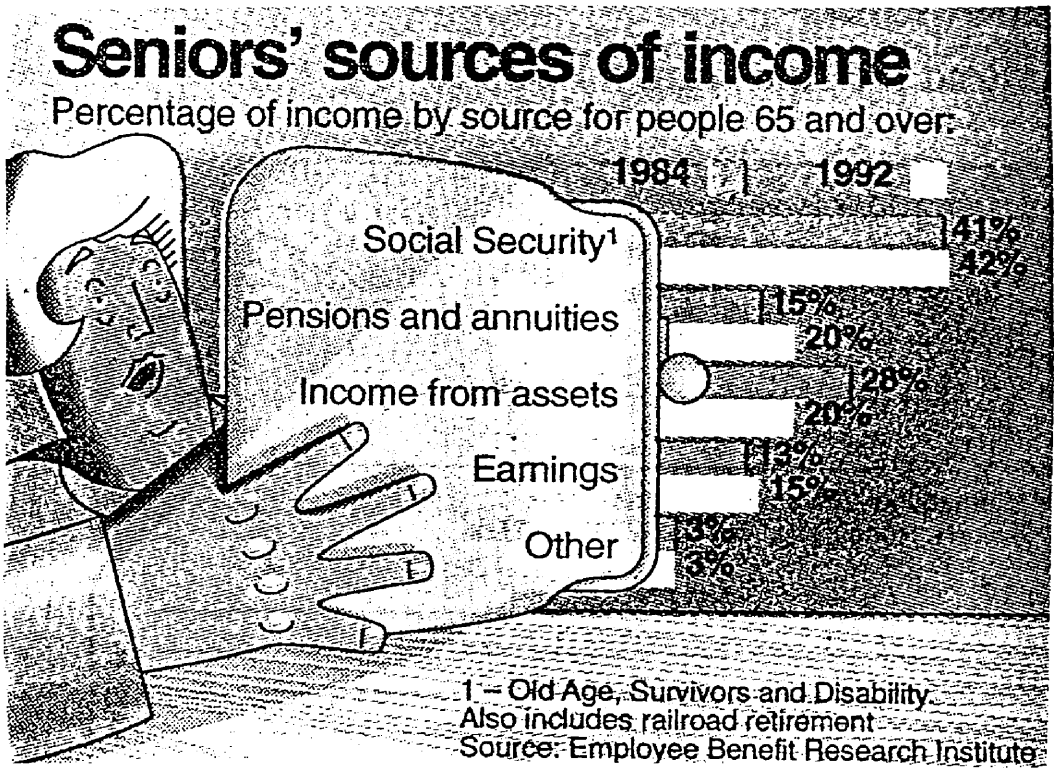
Additional Income Transfer Programs (cont'd)

Exclusion of Social Security & Other Retirement Benefits	24.1
Exclusion of Capital Gains	20.5
Deduction of Nonbusiness Taxes (Excluding Homes)	20.1
Exclusion of Employer Contributions for Medical Insurance	18.6
Exclusion of Interest Earnings	13.8
Deductibility of Property Tax	8.8
Deduction of Charitable Contributions	7.8
Other Expensing and Depreciation	4.8
Exclusion of Various Benefits to Armed Forces Personnel	4.7
Tax Credits on INvestments, Energy, and Other	4.4
Deferral of Capital Gains on Home Sales	3.8
Exclusion of IRAs and Self-Employed Pension Contributions	3.8
Deduction for Two-Earner Married Couple	3.6
Exclusion of Unemployment Benefits	3.3
Deduction of Medical Expenses	3.1
Exemptions for the Blind and Elderly	2.5
Expensing of Oil Exploration Costs and excess Oil Depletion	2.3
Exclusion of Employer Payments on Life and Disability Insurance	2.2
Exclusion of Various Higher Education Benefits	2.0
Tax Credit for Child Care Expenses	1.6
Exclusion of Income Earned Abroad by U.S. Citizens	1.3
Exclusion of Capital Gains on Home Sales by Aged	1.3
Exclusion of Employee Meals	.7
Deduction of Casualty and Theft Losses	.6
Expensing and Deductibility of Farm Capital Outlays	.5
Dividend Exclusion	.4
Exclusion of Public Assistance Benefits	.4
Tax Incentives for Preservation of Historic Structures	.1
Subtotal	$240.7
Total Budgeted Outlays and Tax Expenditures	$293.0

those from 25 to 34 dropped from $59,624 to $49,046 (Chakravarty 228).

Poverty and Voting

Perhaps these factors help explain a 1987 U.S. Bureau of the Census cross-sectional sample which indicated that the younger the age of the householder, the greater the likelihood of poverty. Among families


Seniors' sources of income
Percentage of income by source for people 65 and over:
1984
1992
Social Security[1]
41%
42%
Pensions and annuities
15%
20%
Income from assets
28%
20%
Earnings
3%
15%
Other
3%
3%
1 – Old Age, Survivors and Disability. Also includes railroad retirement
Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute

(Seniors 1A)

in which the family head was fifteen to twenty-four years old, the poverty rate was 32 percent in 1986. In comparison, the poverty level was only 7% among families with a householder aged forty-five to fifty-four years (Beeghley 95). "Poverty among the elderly, as measured by the poverty index and adjusted for non-money income, has virtually disappeared" (Chakravarty 223).

Because the principal reward offered by the American political system is incumbency, the central and overriding concern of political leaders is to maintain the favor of the electorate, with an eye toward the upcoming election (Nincic 146). Hence, as everything else in America, the state defines "poverty" to suit its own needs (Marable 207). Social insurance is a political construction; those with strategic placement and command of powerful organizational resources have been able to exert great influence over our perception of the concept (Cates 155).

Those in search of votes are willing to tell people whatever they want to hear. A vote is a commodity, as are Social Security and Medicare; and it doesn't do anybody any good to lose sight of the politics of the bottom line. Elections are about what is in it for me--both me the candidate and me the voter.

(Lapham 11).

But because most Americans no longer go to the polls, young voters being least likely to turn out (Nesbitt A11) and the elderly voting in disproportionate numbers to their share of the population (Chakravarty 232), the latter have a lot of clout and respect in the political community (Cummins C3). The political strength senior citizens wield at the ballot box (Rast A5), puts the main instruments of economic power largely in their hands (Lenski 406).

Something For Nothing And Rewards For Merit

When the contemporary public assistance system for the poor was inaugurated by the 1935 Social Security Act (Feagin 93), the phrase meant both social insurance and public assistance (Cates 13). The original legislation provided aid programs for three groups: Aid to the Blind, Old Age Assistance, and Aid to Dependent Children. Today, however, one part of the original 'Social Security' system is seldom thought of as a subsidy or welfare program, and is usually seen as very worthwhile. Another major part of the system, public assistance for the poor, is considered to be a government 'welfare' program and is often viewed as wholly or partially illegitimate (Feagin 93, 95).

Perhaps it is because many people who were 'marginal' in our society as children during the Depression (Susman 193), now belong to such politically powerful organizations as the 23 million-member American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) (Rast A5), that over the years, wage related benefits have come to be characterized as a reward for merit and virtue, and public assistance as a gift to those who want something for nothing (Cates 155).

Older people have become more organized to defend their groups interests (Samuelson 68). Their lobbying efforts have been so effective that a national survey by the Daniel Yankelovich Group for the AARP, showed conclusively that that the young now believe the elderly to be worse off than the elderly do themselves (Chakravarty 223).

Our public discourse, however, suffers from myths (Samuelson 68). Strongly rooted in American political folklore, for example, is the idea that Social Security is an "inviolable" (Howe 98) "pension" that allows recipients to get back what they have contributed. Not true (Samuelson 68, 57]. Such notions have no financial or even legal basis, however much certain politicians and interest groups may claim otherwise (Howe 98).

True enough, the original Social Security Act of 1935 included a 'money back' guarantee (with some interest) on all employee contributions, and called for benefit levels to be calculated on the basis of the lifetime covered wages earned by each individual. But the guarantee was eliminated by Congress in 1939, and the link between benefit levels and years of participation, after being weakened in 1939, was entirely discarded in 1950" (Howe 98).

The truth is, that today's workers (through payroll taxes) support today's retirees. Consider a couple who reached 65 in early 1988. The man worked and had average earnings; he retired in January. Suppose they live 15 years. That's average for the man and a little less for the woman. Their initial annual benefit is $11,268. With 4 percent inflation the 15 year total just exceeds $225,000. As a worker, his social security taxes totaled $11,999. His employer paid a similar amount (Samuelson 68, 57).

In other words, today's retirees will collect between 2.5 and 4 times as much as they have contributed, after adjusting for the interest they would have earned had they invested it themselves. In short, a Congressional Research Service study showed that a

typical retiree of 1986 who had paid the maximum tax required during his working life would recover his contributions in just 21 months--in October 1988 he'd have gotten his money back but would then go on collecting for as long as he lived. In contrast, today's 25-year old will be lucky to get back 98 cents per dollar paid in (Chakravarty 225).

The insurance and savings imagery of the social security system is a misleading myth, which has allowed recipients to look upon benefits as a right rather than a charity. This illusion has been an essential protective device (Cates 7, 15, 10) for an ideal, that although once taken as the nation's highest expression of community, has unfortunately evolved into a system that serves the political interests of the powerful at the expense of the young (Howe 95). From recent political campaigns and from the mass media, one sometimes gets the impression that the poor are the major recipients of government dollars. This is not the case (Feagin 94).

Of all the federal money distributed as transfer payments to individual Americans during the decade of the 1980s only a relatively small percentage found its way into the hands of the poor (Lapham 8). For example,

in 1961 nearly $34 billion was spent by the federal government for all these programs including grants to local governments, but $29 billion of that was for programs that were aimed substantially at the non-poor (such as social security) (Feagin 94).

In the late 1970s the federal government was spending only about 15 percent of the total on social programs for the poor. This proportion declined even more in the conservative era of the 1980s, when social programs for poor and moderate-income Americans were slashed sharply (Feagin 94). In 1993 cash welfare cost the federal government $13.79 billion. Another $24 billion was spent on food stamps. The cost of the nation's two primary public assistance programs are less than 2 percent of total federal spending, compared to 13 percent that goes to fund interest on the deficit; the 18 percent spent on defense and the 21 percent spent for Social Security (Stevens 4A) [see p. 95].

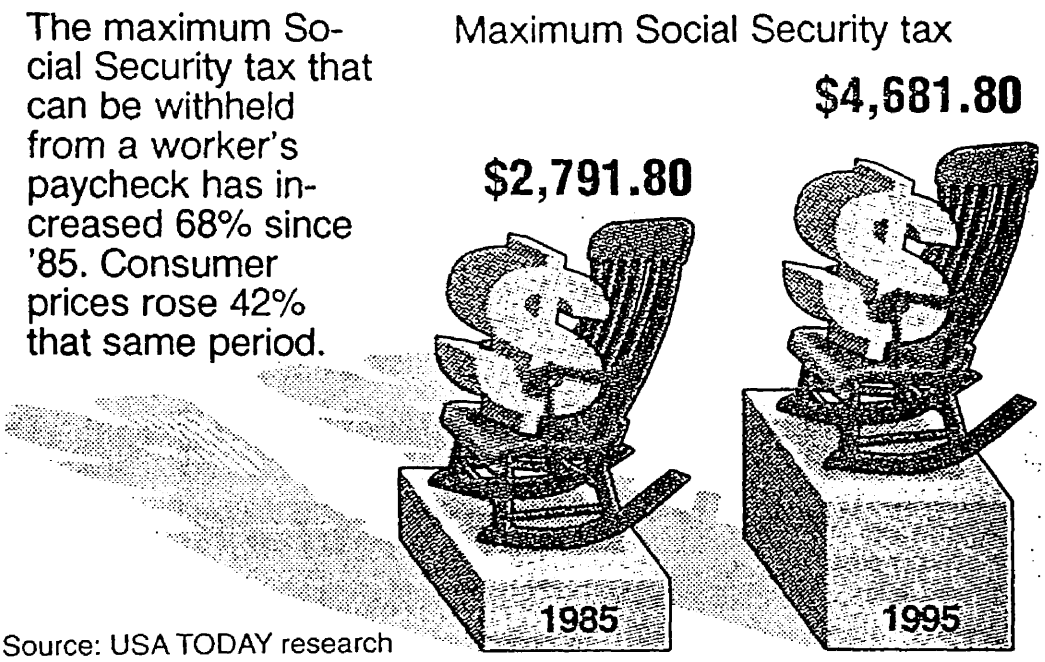
3. Poverty's Youthful Face

A Historical First

When Social Security first started paying out benefits, the elderly were by far the most destitute age group in American society. As recently as 1969, 25

Social Security bill grows

The maximum Social Security tax that can be withheld from a worker's paycheck has increased 68% since '85. Consumer prices rose 42% that same period.



Source: USA TODAY research

(Social 1A)

percent of American elderly were officially designated "poor"--as were only 14 percent of children under age eighteen (Howe 95). Today, however, "the simple fact is that the vast majority of those over 65 are quite well off" (Chakravarty 222). Retirees on average now have cash incomes higher than those of working families under the age of 55 (Thomas 45). Taken in isolation, that's wonderful news: it means that our society is taking care of its elderly (Chakravarty 223).

Indeed, the shift of society's resources to the elderly is one of the great success stories of American social policy. In contrast to 1960, when one in three older Americans was poor, only 13 percent of the elderly are today in poverty--a lower rate than that for younger people (Nasar 19). The problem is, that this is happening not only at the expense of the younger working generation, but at the expense of today's children as well. In fact, "the United States has become the first society in history in which the poorest group in the population are the children, not the aged" (Chakravarty 223, 230).

Today the relative positions of the very old and the very young are just about reversed: in 1990, 12 percent of the elderly and 21 percent of children were

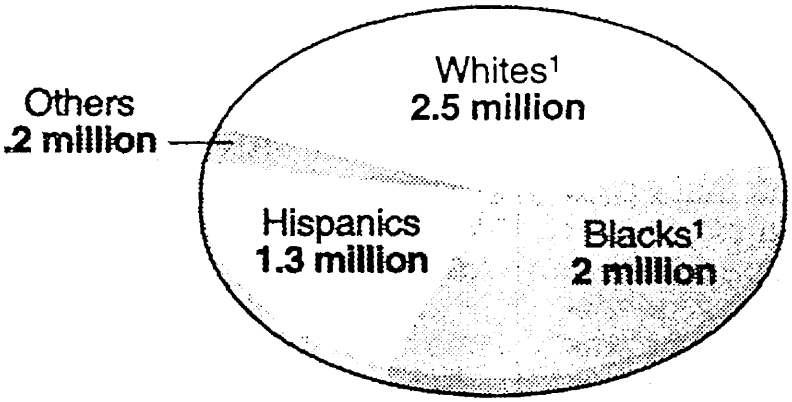
poor (Howe 95). A study by the Children's Defense Fund found that 40% of kids whose parents are under the age of 30 are poor--double the proportion in 1973 (Richman 38). In other words, the proportion of children living in poor households has jumped more than five points since 1973, to nearly 20%, vs. the 13% overall poverty rate [see p. 98]. This translates into nearly 13 million poor kids under 18 (Bernstein 83). One out of five Americans children lived in poverty in 1991, the largest number since 1965 (Away 7).

Aspirations, Homelessness, And Living Standards

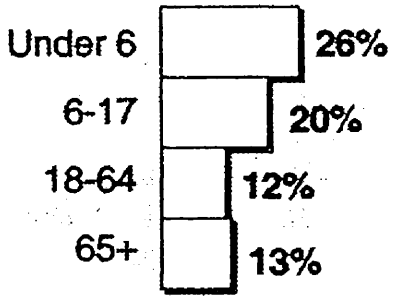
It should be no surprise, then, to discover that today's young adults have difficulty supporting their economic aspirations (Easterlin 148). For the first time in American history, home ownership rates are dropping among the young. A report by Harvard's Joint Center for Housing showed that in 1973 23.4% of those under 25 owned homes. In 1988 16% did, a drop of 30%. For those 25 to 29, 43.6% owned homes in 1973 versus 35.9% in 1987, a drop of 18% (Chakravarty 222). As recently as 1980, almost 60 percent of Americans between the ages of 30 and 34 owned their own home. That figure has now fallen to 52 percent (Nesbitt A1). Among those 65 to 74 however, the ownership rate grew

U.S. children in poverty

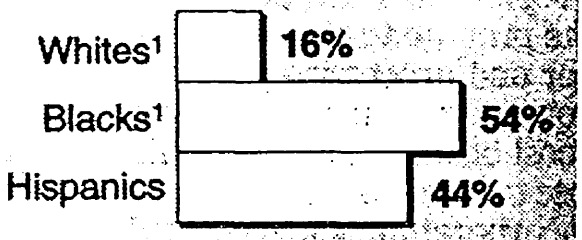
The number of poor children under age 6 rose to 6 million from 5 million between 1987 and 1992, says a report by the National Center for Children in Poverty. Who those 6 million are:



Poverty rates by age group



Poverty rates for under 6 by race/ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

1 = Non-Hispanic

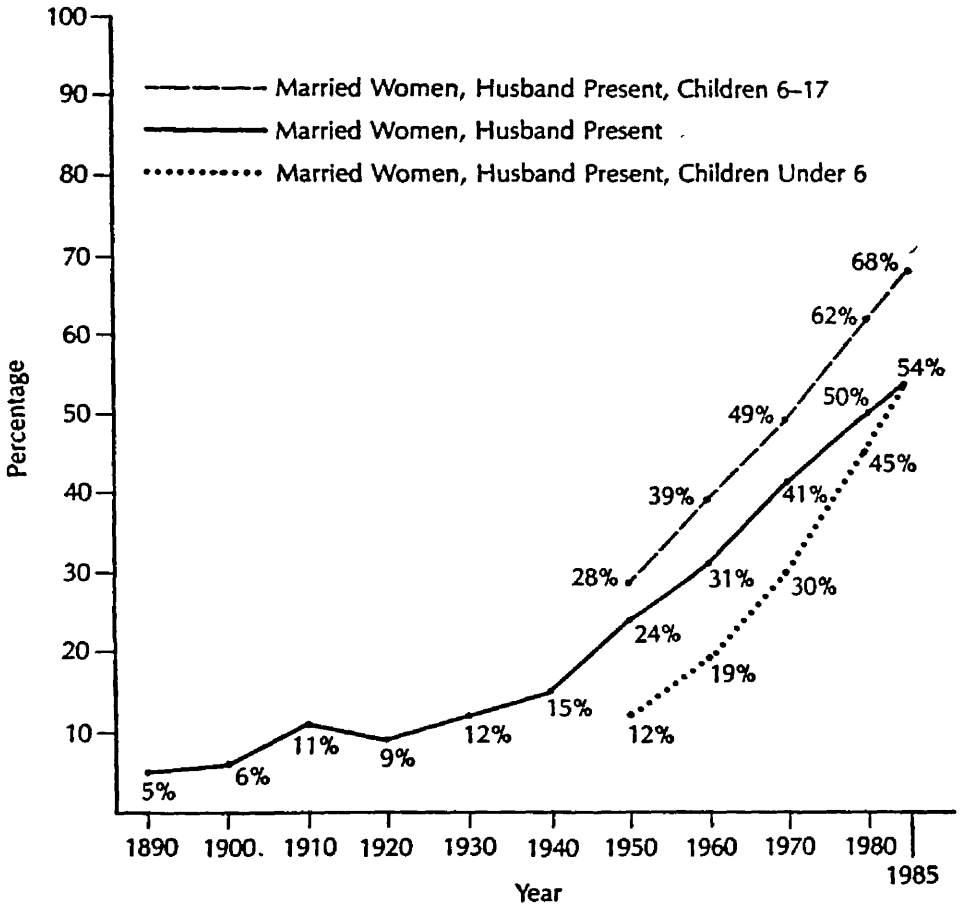
almost 10% (Chakravarty 222).

Hence, the overall face of the homeless is changing. The homeless population is becoming younger. More than half of the people in shelters and on the streets today are under the age of 35. In fact, families with young children are the fastest-growing segment of the population now living on the nation's streets. A 1990 survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors of 30 American cities showed that families with youngsters now represent one-third of the homeless population--up from a relative handful a decade before (Families A3).

If a family's standard of living hasn't fallen, it is due largely to the increased numbers of two wage families. For example, in 1949, 18% of wives worked. In 1987 56% did [see p. 100]. This unusually rapid rise in young women working outside the home is chiefly due to the decline in relative income of today's young couples. The net effect has been to put mother to work at sub-standard wages to support grandpa and grandma (Chakravarty 230).

Whereas their parents enjoyed an option--only one of them had work--that is not a choice for the couple of today. She must work just to make ends meet. She does

Labor Force Participation Rate of Married Women, 1890–1985



(Beeghley 227)

not go to work so that the family can enjoy a few luxuries or extras--an exotic vacation or a new car. She works so that her family can meet its day-in, day-out obligations and maintain its standard of living (Bingaman 16).

4. Summary

While it is commonly recognized that society requires individuals to adjust to new situations, little attention has been given to the problem generating character of the age stratified order in American society (Feagin 13-14). However, because the distribution of privilege, prestige, and economic rewards in the United States is a function of power (Lenski 63, 75), which is social and consists of persons acting in concert (May 35), identifying which age group is most favored by the stratification structure (Beeghley 5) helps expose the hidden roots of many American social problems (Feagin 25).

The changing age structure of the American population, for example, is disproportionately disadvantageous to children and advantageous to the elderly. The elderly have electoral power. They belong to organizations dedicated to political action that will

benefit their interests. Children, on the other hand do not vote and have few advoctates. Similarly, their parents who are busy struggling to provide for a family, do not have time to organize. Hence, "in the competition for scarce resources, the greater political influence of the older population gives them an advantage over the young." Governmental generosity to the elderly, reflects the power the elderly have compared to the young (Baca-Zinn 161, 168, 169).

This seems to be an inescapable reality, due to the fact that when people are confronted with important decisions where they are obliged to choose between their own, or their group's interests and the interests of others, they nearly always choose the former--though often seeking to hide this fact from themselves and others (Lenski 30). In spite of collective self-deceptions (Steele 77) that help preserve the legitimacy of the existing age system (Feagin 23), the fact remains that when competing American seniors are interested in curbing economic competition, they join together in spite of continued competition among themselves, to use their political power to influence the creation and administration of law (Beeghley 8).

Not only have older Americans standing in a similar

position with respect to political power (Lenski 75) been able to decisively influence the distribution of valued resources (Beeghley 107), but also people's beliefs and thoughts about the economic, political, and social structures around them. As a result, beliefs justifying the current American economic system have become ruling ideas, and they have come to appear more and more as part of the natural order of things. In practice, this means that while people in this country boast that children are important, day-to-day practices suggest that children have a low priority (Feagin 23, 92, 148).

For example, there hasn't been a political candidate in 20 years who says that children aren't our most important resource (Smith C4). But the 1990 National Commission on Children reported that little Americans are the poorest, a development it called a "staggering national tragedy" (McLaughlin A8). The fact is, that an economic disaster has afflicted America's young families, especially those with children (Baca-Zinn 155).

The median income of young families with children fell by 26 percent between 1973 and 1986--a loss virtually identical to the 27 percent drop in per capita

personal income that occurred during the Depression from 1929-1933. As a result, the poverty rate for young families has nearly doubled, jumping from 12 percent in 1973 to 22 percent in 1986 (Baca-Zinn 155-156).

5. Conclusion

Distracting Folklore

Contrary to contemporary American folklore, few individuals in American history--whatever their "values"--have been able to rely solely on their own resources. Instead, they have depended on legislative, judicial, and social-support structures set up by governing authorities. The government has always supported families with direct material aid as well. (Coontz 13).

Nonetheless, contemporary anti-poor perspectives often accuse the disadvantaged of immorality and improper work attitudes to help legitimize the much-discussed tax burden they allegedly require. This is a process that takes the heat off the economic and political status quo--off the structure of inequality detrimental to the lives of many Americans, by distracting public attention from the much higher proportion of taxes going for such things as Social

Security and Medicare (Feagin 91-92).

Subsidized Pioneers and Homeowners

The two best examples of the governments history of material aid can be found in what many people consider the perfect examples of self-reliant individuals: the Western pioneers and the 1950s homeowner. In both cases, the ability of these people to establish and sustain themselves required massive underwriting by the government (Coontz 14).

Western pioneers could have never moved west without government-funded military mobilizations against the original inhabitants or state-sponsored economic investment in transportation systems. In addition, the Homestead Act of 1862 allowed settlers to buy 160 acres for $10--far below the government's cost of acquiring the land--if the homesteader lived on and improved the land for five years (Coontz 14).

Homeowners of the 1950s are another oft-cited example of individual self-reliance. According to legend, after World War II a new, family-oriented generation settled down, saved their pennies, worked hard, and found well-paying jobs that allowed them to purchase homes. The fact is, however, that many 1950s

homeowners were more dependent on government assistance than any of the so-called 'poor' of today (Coontz 15).

Federal GI payments, available to 40 percent of the male population between the ages of twenty and twenty-four, permitted a whole generation of men to expand their education and improve their job prospects without forgoing marriage and children. In addition, home ownership depended on an unprecedented expansion of federal regulation and financing. Before the war, banks often required a 50 percent down payment on homes and normally issued morgages for five to ten years. In the postwar period, however, the Federal Housing Authority, supplemented by the GI Bill, put the federal government in the business of insuring and regulating private loans for single-home construction (Coontz 15).

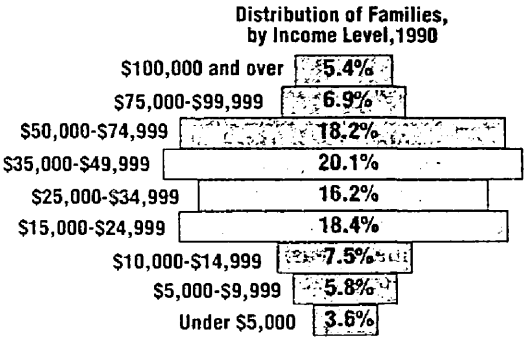
Hazards of Subsidy

Evidence suggests, that most government expenditures today, substantially benefit middle-income and upper income persons (Feagin 94) [see p. 107]. While only one of every eight federal benefit dollars actually reaches Americans in poverty, political leaders express alarm at the moral hazard of providing welfare benefits to poor unwed mothers. In contrast, few political leaders worry about the moral hazard--and

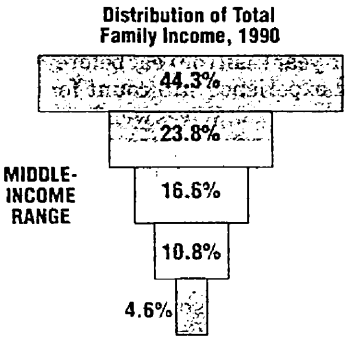
The Squeeze Is On

Millions of families are losing the struggle to improve their living standards, as the affluent consume a larger share of the nation's wealth.

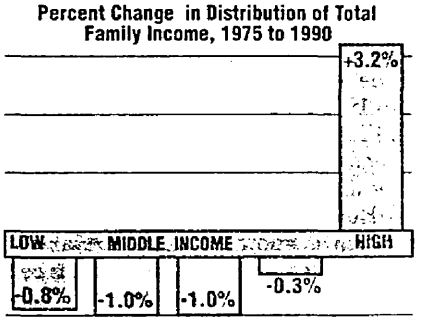
1 Although Most Families Are Middle Income...



2 ...A Majority of Money Goes to the Affluent...



3 ...And the Gap Has Widened



SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

incomparably larger cost--of writing checks to senior citizens. It is politically convenient to assume that free lunches corrupt only the poor (Howe 89, 90).

This is just one example of how the public perception of poverty and social insurance can be used as a tool for goal achievement....an instrument through which leaders can reach out and change, influence, or dominate the environment, rather than simply responding or adapting to it (Cates 18). The cumulative result has been an anti-poor bias that fosters a more respectful attitude on the part of society as a whole, toward older beneficiaries (Cates 16, 18), while segregating and stimatizing the young. Anti-poor views help forestall conflict by concentrating attention on the poor at the bottom, shifting hostilities downward rather than upward (Feagin 91-92).

Believing that the poor are undeserving deflects anger away from the system and the affluent, and onto the poor--which helps people maintain power and belief in the system (Iggers 146). A young adult is poor because they are lazy or stupid or criminal, but if the elderly are deprived it is due to governmental policies. Nobody knows why this is so. It is a great mystery, but nobody, at least nobody important, doubts the truth of

so sublime a paradox (Lapham 9).

Discriminatory Generosity

Hence, we never hear acknowledgements of seniors' dependence on such goverment subsidies as Social Security and Medicare (Lapham 8), in spite of the fact that both are welfare programs: today's taxpayers pay today's beneficiaries (Samuelson 57). Politicians in search of votes have convinced the elderly that their check is coming out of their own account, and its not. It is being financed by their grandchildren and other people's grandchildren" (Chakravarty 232). In fact, because most social security income is now tax exempt, the tax burdens of younger, lower income workers are continually raised to provide tax relief for older, higher income Americans (Samuelson 57). These taxes are literally pushing young people into poverty (Chakravarty 228).

What makes matters worse, is that by any reasonable measure, a remarkable number of Social Security and Medicare recipients do not need these supplements. 4.4 million, or 18%, of the 24 million households receiving benefits in 1986 had other retirement income of $25,000 or more. That sum was almost 16% higher than the median income of all full time workers. Almost 1.2

million had other retirement income over $50,000 in 1986. Nonetheless, in 1990, the federal government handed out an average of $11,400 worth of benefits to every American aged sixty-five or over--more than ten times what it gave to each child (Howe 94). To pay for this generosity to the elderly, Social Security taxes have risen astronomically. In 1958 the maximum tax was under $95. In 1988 it was almost $3,380 (Chakravarty 225).

One reason people cling to these myths is a deeply embedded value common to virtually all civilized societies, that those who have wealth are obliged to share with those who are unable to provide for themselves. If, however, people can convince themselves that the poor are undeserving, or somehow to blame, they can justify not sharing (Iggers 146).

Such determinations are arrived at by means of a simple mechanism: discrimination, that is, the process of treating people unequally based on opposing interests and different personal characteristics. Such tendencies indicate that Americans are both aware of their differing locations in the stratification hierarchy, and active in maintaining them (Beeghley 6, 7).

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Chapter IV: Epilogue

When I wrote on my door:
"Leave your traditions outside,
Before you come in,"
Not a soul dared
To visit me or open my door.

--Kahlil Gibran

1. Paradigm Validity and Ideological Visions

Paradigm Validity

As a result of the crowd of ideas which presented itself to my mind (Montesquieu 135), I proposed to examine the validity of some commonly held American views that have persisted across generations in America. By comparing and contrasting how people's ideas relate to their actions (Bellah, preface), I have tried to represent some of the hopes, fears, values, goals and beliefs of Americans. The problem of making sense out of the changes taking place in America today, however, seems to be more a matter of having some general framework for showing the interconnectedness of data in many different disciplines, than it is a matter of being an expert in any one of those disciplines (Harris 10).

Our entire philosophic tradition, ancient and modern, takes the relation of mind to society as the most fruitful beginning point for understanding the human situation (Bloom 263). The underlying premise seems to be that society cannot thrive without ideas held in common by it's individuals. If a society is to prosper, it is necessary that the minds of all the citizens be held together by certain prevailing ideas (Tocqueville 8). These shining mirages are a reflection

of our own heart's desires abstracted and refined, and are defended and rationalized after they are adopted (Durant 421).

Nothing is considered good or beautiful that does not fit into this collective schema. All those who cannot or will not fit are either overlooked, forgotten, repressed, or denied (Jung 292, 105). So, what is important, is people's perceptual apparatus, the realm of symbolic experience which structures and determines to a significant degree the physical world Americans see with their own eyes, or don't see (Beard xxvii).

Ideological Visions

In this context, then, the ideological might be best understood as a reflection of the universal psychological need for a system of ideas that provides a convincing world view. Each group, class, faction, or party attempts to persuade the others to its vision of the world or to mock or destroy some contrary vision. They seize and manipulate all the possible instruments of persuasion the culture provides: symbols, central icons, devices to achieve laughter and those to create tears, rhetorical flourishes of all kinds including the enormously effective use of key words or phrases

(Susman 53, 288).

So important is our way of perceiving the world in giving us an identity and anchoring us to our social substance that we surrender it with great hesitancy, often refusing to accept the reality of our experience if it interferes with our preconceptions. Some of the ideals most frequently associated with the American character: citizenship, duty, democracy, work, conquest, honor, reputation, morals, manners, integrity, manhood (Susman 53, 273-274), gratitude, generosity, charity, truth, justice, courage, etc. (Sheehan 31).

3. **Truth, Reason, Morals** and **Motives; Death, Fear, Desire and Virtue**

Truth, Reason, Morals and Motives

This is not, however, to imply that truth has been determined by American voters (Zindler 28) or that the opinion of the majority is the final proof of what is right (Sedgwick, title page). I do not believe that there is any such thing as a uniquely determined common good, identity or mission that all American people can agree on or be made to agree on by the force of rational argument (Carnoy 34). In fact, just the opposite seems to be the case. If you can engage people's pride, love,

pity, ambition (or whatever is their prevailing passion) on your side, you need not fear what their reason might do against you (Chesterfield, 1746 227).

Because there is very little common moral ground in America today, and therefore little public relevance of morality outside the sphere of minimal procedural rules and obligations not to injure (Bellah 141), our rational system requires a moral prop in order to function without collapsing back into the primal slime from which people cannot re-emerge. It's important to note, however, that it is precisely these primal, untamed, and hidden drives, that are the real motives of the higher American endeavors (Bloom 209, 245, 231).

Death, Fear, Desire, and Virtue

All people, (Bloom 287), for example, because they have been led by nature to prefer their own good to every other good (Durant 99), are animated by pretty much the same fundamental desires, passions, and fears (Machiavelli 216). Pushed by instinctive drives and pulled by invented purpose or meaning (Tageson 40; Matson), the common tradition of moral discourse (Bellah 21) leads each of us down the road we all have to take--over the Bridge of Sighs into the eternal (Kierkegaard 23) woods made sacred by the mysteries of

our fathers, and ancient awe (Tacitus 727). At the gates of the forest, the surprised man of the world is forced to leave his estimates of great and small, wise and foolish. The knapsack of custom falls off his back (Emerson, Nature 353).

Death is the eternal enemy (Durant 317), and confronting it is an experience all people share (Bloom 191). However, because the average man cannot easily reconcile himself to death, he invents innumerable philosophies, theologies, or ideologies; the prevalence of a belief in immortality is a token of the awful fear of death. Nonetheless, the fact of having been born is a bad omen for immortality (Durant 328, 500), and so suffering and frustration often stem from our difficulty in facing a basic fact of life, that everything around us is impermanent and transitory (Capra 95). As long as there are human beings they will be motivated by fear of death (Bloom 278). In this sense, identifying an enemy on which all agree, is useful to help understand and explain collective action (Gans 111-112).

It is by consoling each other in our sorrows and unending vulnerability (Bloom 275), and reflecting on what we have in common with others that we come to know

ourselves (Lonergan 111). What is really important is what all people have in common (Bloom 191). How dear life is to all living things--(Durant 317)!. The heart of those who always look too far in the future, however, is gnawed all day long by the fear of death, poverty, or some other calamity; and has no respite from anxiety but in sleep (Hobbes 79), dreams, myths, or illusions. Fear is a powerful stimulant (Atwood 268). Luckily, the widespread belief in a moral sense reaffirms the timeless unity of mankind (Sheehan 28), thereby helping society deflect things that frighten it (Fallows 314) about the mysterious future.

Unfortunately, human desire is infinite, and fulfillment limited--(Durant 323). Hence, principles approved of by the moral sense, and enforced by natural rewards and punishments (Sheehan 28), have helped Americans to elaborate a system of abstract thought (Marger 69) that seeks to justify power in the eyes of the ruled, and at the same time hide selfish motives.

Historical necessity (Bloom 218) has helped us to devise a system of concepts and symbols which constitutes the American map of reality, although it represents only some of reality's features (Capra 31), and thus, involves inherent contradictions that impel a

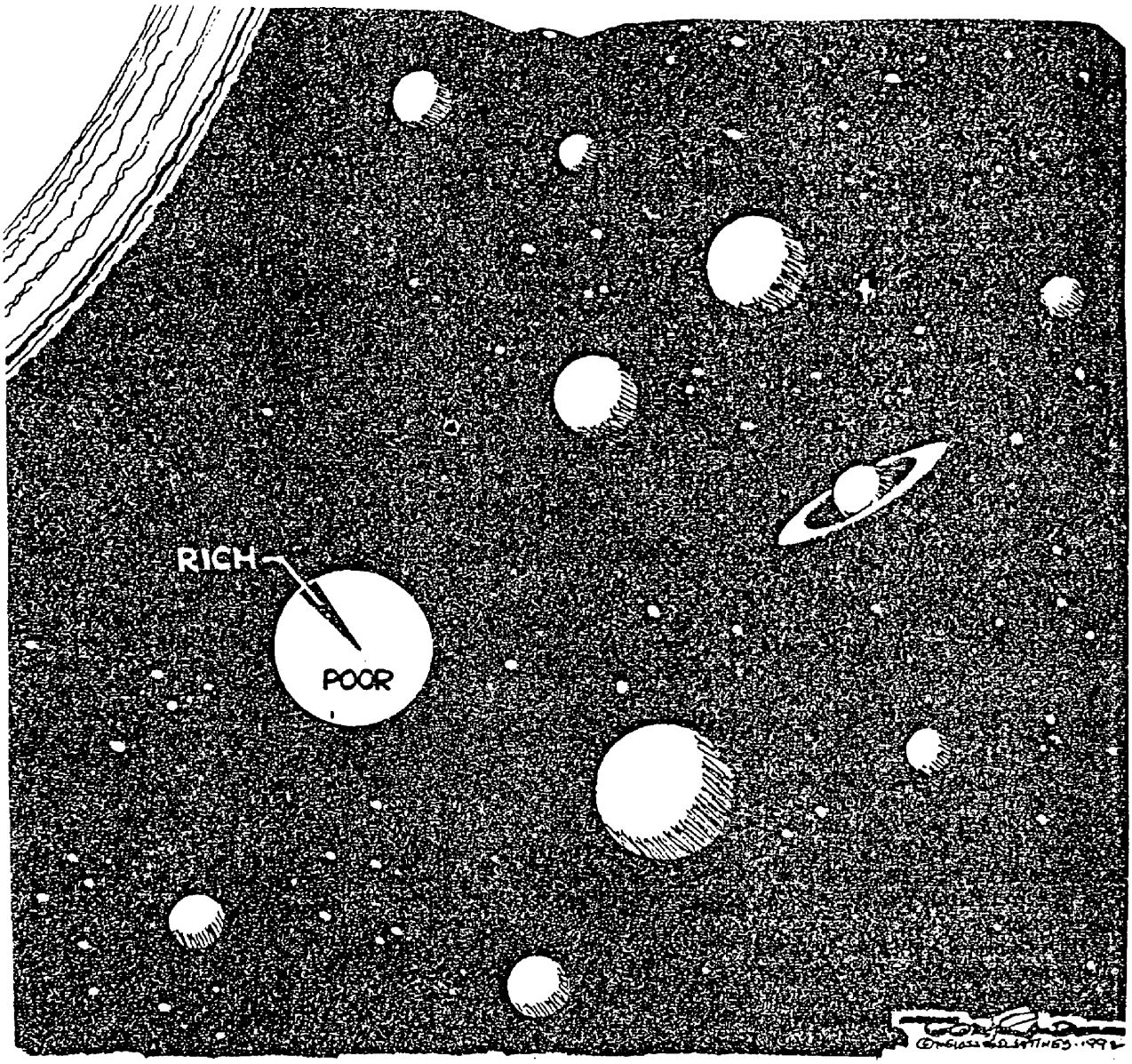
search for truth (Bloom 264-265).

Truth is, after all, the secret of both eloquence and virtue, the basis of moral authority; it is the highest summit of life (Amiel, Dec. 17 151). But because virtue is merely the wisdom which harmonizes passion with reason, and pleasure with duty (Helvetius 11), Americans often promise according to their hopes, and perform according to their fears (Rochefoucauld 10). In a universe of manipulated contradictions the critical dialectical tension between "is" and "ought" (Marcuse 194, 133) epitomizes the paradoxical aspects of American experience (Capra 51), its social order, and how it solves its problems (Susman 68).

5. Two Americas: Power, Success and Social Control vs. Conformity, Failure, and Poverty

Power and Conformity

America is, in fact, two countries, one of the poor, the other of the rich [see p. 123], each at war with the other (Durant 20). Put differently, a high rate of poverty is normal in U.S. society, and some groups have an economic interest in keeping its level high (Beeghley 2). The augmentation of private wealth is made possible by depriving one part of the citizens



THE NEW WORLD ORDER

(New A6)

of their necessary support (Montesquieu 45). It becomes apparent that the poverty of millions pays for the affluence of a few (Durant 504), once one recognizes that the poor get less out of the welfare state than any group in America (Harrington, Poverty 170).

We may admire human society as much as we please; it will be none the less true that it necessarily leads men to hate each other in proportion as their interests clash, and to do one another apparent services, while they are really doing every imaginable mischief (Rousseau 363). The primary and sole foundation of virtue, or of the proper conduct for American life, seems to be advancing your own cause (Spinoza 214). Hence, selfishness, the twin-sister of religion (Shelley 98), authorizes and empowers those who are able to shape opinion and mold institutions, to do so in a way that helps them achieve their goals (Nash 182), with little concern for anything except the imposition of their own will (Hellman 122).

> Power is ever stealing from the many
> to the few.
> --Wendell Phillips

> Power without charity ends up in cruelty
> --Rollo May, Power.

Power is, of course, the birthright of every human

being. Nonetheless, one of the the chief reasons many people often refuse to directly confront the whole issue of power, is that if they did, they would have to face their own powerlessness (May, Existence 243, 20-21), in the face of our eternal enemy.

Our passions and fears possess so much metaphysical subtlety and overpowering eloquence that they insinuate themselves into the understanding and the conscience and convert both to their party (Niebuhr 142). Hence, because the principles we apply in our lives are largely opposite to those we preach (Durant 387), the ability to convert illusion into reality and fiction into truth, transforms imagination into an instrument of progress (Marcuse 248), and power. The power of progress now seems to be defined by the ability to reorder images in the head to fit the changing realities of the world (Susman 117).

People in power always suggest that they have vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak (Niebuhr 142), and often feel they are entitled to represent society because they have its best interest at heart (Gans 117). The combined effect of the following: 1) a public performance of ceremonially "correct" rituals, performed to counteract the evil

hovering in the background (Jung 131) and maintain one's position in society (D'Souza 181); 2) a little social engineering of consent that teaches deeply felt needs (D'Souza 11) and compliant attitudes toward the status quo (Giddens 41); 3) and an indisputable confession of beliefs made to suppress doubts once and for all; is to immediately fill powerful people with an unshakable feeling of rightness and righteousness (Jung xix, 155).

Those seeking to keep others from destroying the fabric of an order from which they personally benefit, devise newer and more effective techniques for the manipulation of men (Susman 121). The result has been a social mechanism that legitimates the existing distribution of status inequalities by repressing discontent, sometimes by structuring perceptions so that low status individuals may view themselves as higher and therefore "better" than some others, or by creating bonds of vicarious identification with those in higher positions (Lipset 271). Such devices help those who regard themselves as morally superior, to maintain order and control (Susman 42).

Crafty people, willing to stoop to any indignity to serve the purposes of their ambition, busy themselves

searching for those whose condemnation might be agreeable (Montesquieu 37). Hence, non-conformity is often viewed as socially useless because it involves tangible economic and political disadvantages, and threatens the smooth operation of the society (Marcuse 2).

Success and Failure

Because success is measured by how well one fits in, how well one is liked by others, and how well others respond to the roles one is playing (Susman 200), the necessity, temptation (Bloom 283), and spontaneous acceptance to live in conformity with the natural and legitimate demands of the human community (Susman 200) are overwhelming.

Failure is personal, not social, and success is achieved by adjustments, not in the social order but in the individual personality (Susman 165). The moral American in this sense is simply one who conforms to the behavior other Americans expect (Niebuhr 149). If you differ with, or from those in power, no matter how many pieties they profess, they will punish you for disturbing them (Hellman 49). The impact of progress, has for many, turned reason into a submission to the facts of life (Marcuse 11).

The result has brought American mores which take the existing social order as necessarily central (Susman 68), and impose certain taboos that naturally extend to public-policies (Grenier A6). Policy is the product of policymakers--of individuals--who are driven by a variety of interests and are buffeted by various pressures, but whose ultimate objective is personal benefit (Nincic 146).

Poverty and Social Control

For several centuries, now, Americans have been embarked on a great effort to increase their freedom, wealth, and power. For over a hundred years many American people have imagined that the meaning of life itself, lies in the acquisition of ever-increasing status, income, and authority, from which genuine freedom is supposed to come (Bellah 284). At the other end of the spectrum, "the citadel of world capitalism, the United States, has never liked to admit that millions of its citizens are poor" (Marable 205), although poverty appears to be a permanent feature of this society (Feagin 70).

Poverty, properly understood, is the comparative relationship between those who are deprived of basic human needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing, medical

care) versus the most secure and affluent members of a social and economic order (Marable 205). Poverty is not an accident. Instead, impoverishment is built into the U.S. social structure (Beeghley 108).

The welfare state structure corresponds to the needs of those who played the most important role in organizing and forming it (Harrington, Poverty 170). It has always been people with political power who shape the prevailing beliefs and ideology that help explain the social and political arrangements in America (Feagin 22). Typically, they either derive their authority from God, or another version is expressed by the notion that all power resides in the people (Marger 69). In either case, socializing institutions that control our means of communication, are able to effectively stifle opposing ideas (Marger 94).

The human inclination to attach especially profound significance to time-tested mental creations (Capra 277), be they from reason or passion, also whittles down opposition to the status quo. Overwhelmed by the confusion as to whether one should focus on words or deeds, people often lose the critical dimension of reason (Marcuse 11).

Social controls are frequently introjected to a

point where individual protest is affected at its roots. The intellectual and emotional refusal to go along is labeled neurotic and impotent (Marcuse 9). At this point, the greatest infamy on the part of the group is often not disturbing, so long as the majority of one's fellows steadfastly believe in the exalted morality of their society (Jung 101).

4. Stereotypical Indifference and A War For Resources

Indifference

If ever proof were needed of the overwhelming power of ideas to shape society (Magnet 45), the diseases of personality (Jung xi) and crimes of ethnicity, gender, and youth, etc., which help legitimize politically convenient notions of nature's delight in punishing stupid (Emerson, Journals 115), immoral, and spiritually deficient people, will certainly testify. In America, morality has become an attitude adopted toward people one differs with, or from, personally (Wilde, Husband 46).

Attempts to avoid the unpleasantness of American life have fostered attitudes of indifference to human suffering and denials of personal fault. Those concerned with appearances cloak their actions in

sanctimonious virtue or moral probity, to help insure their social position, while ignoring the misfortunes of their fellows (Horton 187). As long as there is no economic need for the underclass, one solution is to stereotype everyone in it as culturally, morally, or spiritually diseased and thus not entitled to help (Gans 151). "Everyone but an idiot knows that the lower classes must be kept poor, or they will never be industrious" (Morgan 324).

As an example, I would like to reintroduce in a succinct way, the perpetual problem of American Indians as a totally disenfranchised segment of the population that has traditionally been ignored by the government (Rollins 36). In North America, the indigenous population was all but completely wiped out by the end of the nineteenth century (Giddens 141), and today progress has reduced First Americans to the lowest rung on the socioeconomic ladder (Takaki 186).

Those who console themselves with the belief that Native Americans, are morally, culturally, spiritually, or otherwise undeserving, imply that they do not deserve decent jobs and incomes (Gans 96) to provide for their families. The 'reality' of the inheritance of physical traits serves as the raw material for social sorting

devices, by which both stigmata and privileges may be systematically allocated (Nash 6).

Similarly, the victims of the last decade are the poorest 25 percent of American families. By any measure, they have lost real ground in the income sweepstakes to inflation--and also to middle-income groups as well as the run-away rich. These poorest of America's families are trying to raise almost a third of the nation's children (Thomas 45). In fact, children today are America's poorest citizens. Some 13 million youngsters--two million more than in 1980--live in households whose annual incomes fall below the poverty line (Richman 38). "A person 6 years or younger has seven times a greater liklihood of being poor than a person 65 or older" (Chakravarty 231-232). By 1991 a fifth of American children were living in poverty--still ill housed and ill nourished--while a fifth of the dollars spent by major federal benefit programs went to households with more than a $50,000 income (Howe 93).

Statistics alone, cannot relate the youthful, non-Anglo face of today's economic misery (Marable 211), but they do help reveal and portray the American pattern of dealing with the morally irrelevant. In each case the important consideration is the lack of participation in

the dialogue (Williams 11). Young poor Americans in general, and natives in particular, seem to have become invisible (Feagin 69).

Today's young adults, who are as an aggregate the best-educated population in the country, vote less, pay less attention to the news, and appear generally less interested in organized politics than other age groups, especially the old (Gans 89). They don't believe the system works and think it strange that Americans once viewed government as their friend (Nesbitt A11). That is a tradition which no longer stands for life and experience in America, but only in support of the established order (Susman 78). One major source of misunderstanding, is that political silence is taken for tacit consent (Rousseau 420) to the status quo.

Resources

The preservation of misery in the face of unprecedented wealth constitutes the most impartial indictment of this society (Marcuse xii), and testifies to the fact that American social relations are based on sharp differences in control over basic resources (Feagin 23). As the poor become more aware of the affluent society from which they are excluded, a sense of relative deprivation (Harrington, Fragments

231) focuses their attention upward.

The same people who deny others everything are now famous for refusing themselves nothing (Hunt 147). The disproportionate wealth and income in America implies socioeconomic interests at odds, and a vast over-representation of Anglo-seniors in key institutions, which easily translates into significant political and economic power. On the one hand there are those who control major banks, corporations, and foundations, the elite universities, and the largest mass media organizations (Carnoy 212). On the other, there is "the forgotten people at the bottom of the economic pyramid" [see p. 134], the "one-third of America that is ill housed, ill-clad, ill nourished" (Roosevelt Radio 1176).

This is nothing new. Nature has always subjected the weak to the strong (Seneca 331). The 1960s brought a "war on poverty." Now, the 70s, 80s, and 90s have brought a "war on the poor" (Kline A12), which most often injures those who are different, unconforming (Bellah 39), or not part of the power structure.

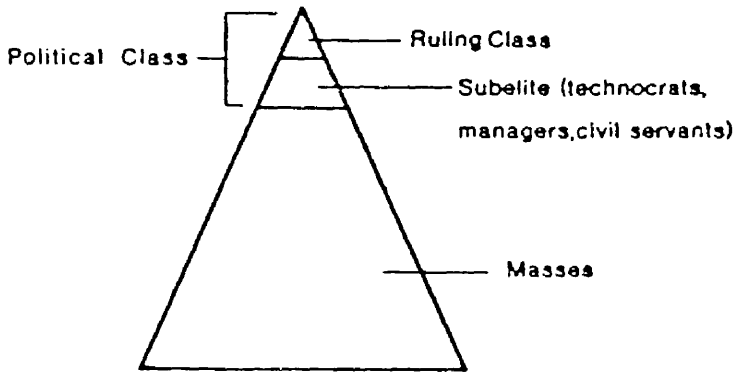
Some maintain that there is a fundamental psychological difference which sets elites apart from the masses. The argument here is that leaders emerge through "natural" processes involving innate superiority

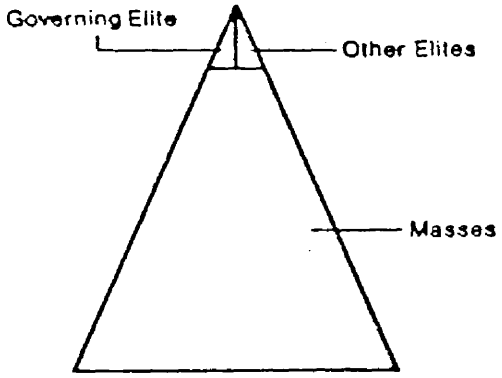
of personal resources such as intelligence, cunning, or skill (Marger 65). However, the anti-egalitarian character of American society, is not a consequence of the inherent cultural inferiority of non-Anglos or the immorality of our youth, but is instead a reflection of American social structures that distort the rough genetic equality of the human race (Harrington, Runner 121).

Intelligence, and its attendant mental capabilites as problematically defined by this society, are distributed along a "normal curve," i.e., one-sixth are exceptionally gifted, one-sixth are problematic, and two-thirds are in the middle, a formula that describes shoe sizes and many other things. But wealth and power follow an abnormal curve in which one-half of 1 percent occupy a pinnacle, 20 percent inhabit the depths, and the rest are in various stages in between (Harrington, Runner 121) [see p. 136].

5. Pretentious Burdens of Entitlement

Part of the problem clearly lies in the whole concept of entitlement [see p. 137], which says that every person over 65 is entitled to benefits from Social Security and Medicare, whether they need it or not





Two Versions of the Elite Model.

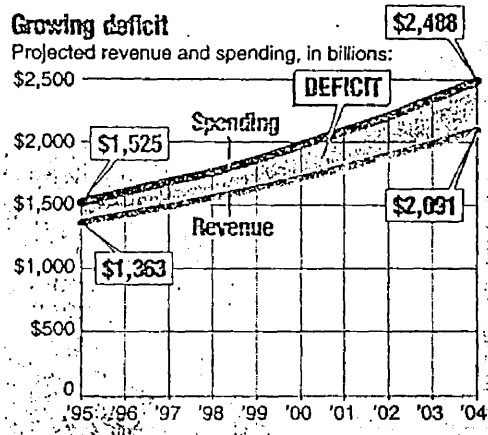
(Marger 68)

Entitlements responsible for growing deficit

The federal deficit is projected to climb over the next decade. But the proportion of federal spending subject to yearly appropriations by Congress (discretionary spending) is declining. The growth is largely in entitlements – mandatory spending programs that send federal tax revenues to all who qualify, without regard to yearly appropriations.

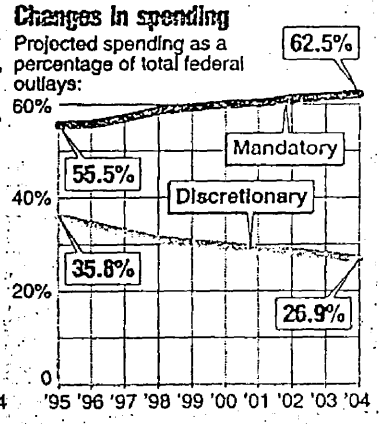
Growing deficit

Projected revenue and spending, in billions:

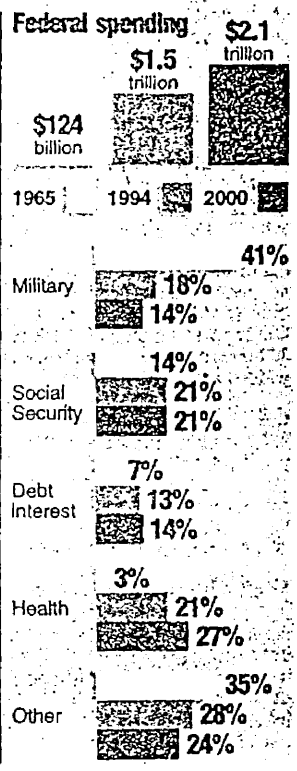


Changes in spending

Projected spending as a percentage of total federal outlays:



Federal spending



Discretionary spending examples:

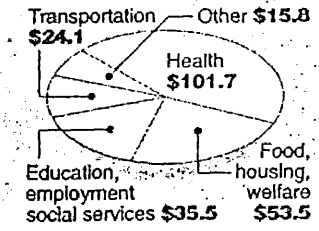
- Military
- Education and training
- Transportation
- Housing subsidies
- Justice system, federal courts
- Internal Revenue Service
- Environmental programs
- Public health
- Veterans' health care
- Space and science

Mandatory spending examples:

- Social Security
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Military pensions
- Civil service pensions
- Veterans' benefits
- Farm price supports
- Food stamps
- Welfare
- Student loans

State funding

States received $230.6 billion in outlays from the federal government for 1995. How the money is being spent, in billions:



Sources: Congressional Budget Office; Office of Management and Budget; Steven Gold, Center for the Study of the States

(Entitlements 4A)

(Chakravarty 230), "by mere virtue of being alive and present" (Cates 15).

The defining standard of need is poverty, not age. Once you accept that, some policies become crazy. Why do the elderly deserve special tax relief? It's hard to see why someone 68 should automatically pay lower taxes than someone age 28 with the same income. Yet that happens. (Samuelson 68). "Doesn't a time of scarce resources demand that public funds go first to those who have most need of them" (Cates 158)?

Because the economic rewards people receive in the United States today bear little or no relation to services or sacrifices (Lenski 2), the bulk of governmental spending does nothing more than sustain the pretensions of supposedly self-reliant Anglo-American senior citizens (Lapham 8-9).

The burden of this plundering--a virtual war against our own people--falls most heavily on working people, minorities, children and all who have been made into a castoff population of homeless, hungry, and untended sick (Melman 51). The test of a civilization is the condition of its dependents. So far the United States has opted to care moderately well for some, and not at all well for the others (Baca-Zinn 169).

6. A Cohesive Society of Contradictory Judgements

Individual and Social Meaning

Of the "real" universe we know nothing, except that there exist as many versions of it as there are perceptive minds. Each person lives and dies alone in their own private world (Bullet 44). It is, however, a powerful cultural fiction that we make up our deepest beliefs in the isolation of our private selves (Bellah 65). Although there is a great deal of unmapped territory within each of us (Eliot 75), it does not seem to be an exaggeration to say, that the thread of cohesiveness in American society is the inability to agree upon anything other than differences in beliefs. In other words, beliefs as to the rationale and justification of life may vary, but all can agree that there is a reason and purpose for life. "People will do anything rather than admit their lives have no meaning" (Atwood 215).

"Once the human mind brings social phenomena within its comprehension, and consolidates knowledge into one body of homogeneous doctrine" (Comte 84), connectedness to others in work, love, and community becomes essential to happiness, self-esteem, and moral worth (Bellah 84). There are at least ten basic things that all Americans

want and need: health, clothing, housing, food, sex, love and intimacy, work and mastery, playfulness, spiritual meaning, and security" (Bellah 80-81).

But because each human being loves itself more than all else (Pascal 159), and, so long as they "breathe," they will "judge" (May, Existence 201), images representing the many faces of reality (Capra 43) tell important truths about the tensions people experience, and their hopes for resolving them or somehow turning them to constructive use (Bellah 40). Dreams, myths, and illusions use the minds ability to see things in a myriad of ways to support what it wants to be truth (Ericsson 62), and are the source of the ultimate grounds of the folk minds that make peoples possible (Bloom 305). Both individuals and societies need dreams, myths, and illusions (Bloom 219), to help make the universe seem intelligible, beautiful, and rational (Boorstin 93).

Change, Contradiction, and Differences

When trying to understand the nature of dreams, myths, and illusions, it is important to consider how change effects them (Barrett 56). Change is a constant in our society, making it difficult for individuals to construct and maintain a shared set of norms rooted in

reality. Many people find it difficult to locate a referent from which they can construct an enduring and commonly held perspective towards the past, present, and future.

The tendency to think according to nature; speak according to rules; and act according to custom (Bacon 1366), certainly does not help much. The clash between the individual desire for autonomy and the social demand for conformity that seems to be the fate of American individualism (Bellah 149), certifies that each American is an embodied paradox, a bundle of contradictions (Colton 408) and prejudices--made up of likings and dislikings (Lamb 83).

People who share common life styles and values, tend to discriminate against others who are different. This process occurs naturally, without much thought or planning, as people tend to practice social conventions with others who are like themselves. These social conventions are often revealed in subtle ways (Beeghley 44). For all the lip service given to respect for differences, many Americans seem to lack the psychological resources to think about the relationship between groups that are culturally, socially, economically, or temporally quite different (Bellah

206).

Predatory Habits of Civilization

Such abstract and self-evident subtleties must be reexamined in light of their costs and consequences (Williams 14). Unfortunately, because habit is the enormous flywheel of society, its most precious conservative agent (James, Psychology 121), one of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea (Bagehot 163).

I do not wish to exacerbate an already dismal situation by pitting age or ethnic groups against one another (Kane A6), but the facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored (Huxley 247). On the one hand, "man, biologically considered....is the most formidable of all the beasts of prey, and, indeed, the only one that preys systematically on its own species" (James, Memories 301). On the other hand, "civilization, or that which is so called, has operated two ways. To make one part of society more affluent and the other part more wretched than would have been the lot of either in a natural state (Paine 343).

American society is still organized in such a way that procuring the necessities of life constitutes the

full-time and life-long occupation of specific social classes (Marcuse 128). More Americans than ever are becoming pessimistic about the future: they fear they will never live as well as their parents and worry that their children may have it even worse (Reibstein 39). They have experienced a severe shakeup in their job expectations (Kane A1).

The reality is this: Breadwinners all over the country have been forced out of well paid manufacturing and management jobs into low-wage work they regard as beneath their dignity and living standard. Families of four struggle to survive on two $15,000 incomes, sacrificing virtually all of their free time together. Middle-aged Americans born into relative affluence in 1955 or 1960, believe not only that they have failed to achieve the comfort they expected in life but that they are never going to achieve it (Today's 4).

During the last decade, 1.2 million manufacturing jobs disappeared, according to the U.S. Labor Department (Kane A1-A6). More than 44% of the new jobs created in our economy during the same period, pay less than $7,400 a year--35 percent less than a poverty level income for a family of four (Demarco 32). For people stuck in these jobs, the American Dream grows further and further

out of reach (Kane A6)

Where is our outrage at the $4.25-an-hour minimum wage? This paltry wage is not only a labor issue, or even merely an economic issue--it is a reflection of who we are as a people. What are we saying about the respect we have for work and working families when we cooly tolerate a system in which a man or woman can work full time in this affluent country and still be condemned to a life of poverty, including all of the denial of opportunity that such indecent wages bring (Demarco 36)? Gone now too is Americans' assurance that good work will be rewarded with job security, and the expectation that employers will provide such benefits as secure retirement and health insurance (Kane A6).

Of course, "every age, every culture, every custom and tradition has its own character, its own weakness and its own strength, its beauties and cruelties; it accepts certain sufferings as a matter of course, puts up patiently with certain evils" (Hesse 28). And, it is, of course, a stupidity second to none, to busy oneself with the correction of the world (Moliere 198). But we can no longer be happy about "a system that pays large benefits to the well to do (Cates 158). "This is a luxury we can no longer afford" (Chakravarty 230).

However, if we are to ever transcend these patterned social structures which I have described, we must penetrate the veil of rehtoric which cloaks our system of inequality. We must acknowledge our current system of taxes and benefits as one that deems certain groups as more deserving than others, or American dreams, myths and illusions will certainly become nightmares for many people.

Concluding Remarks

My purpose has been to help to help readers see social inequality from a new angle. This orientation is based on the assumption that any study of society should help us to see things in a way that leads to discovery, and that all such discoveries more or less upset accepted opinions (Beeghley 2). I would like to make it clear, that I have been speaking only for myself, from a perspective my own experience has given me. I have certainly not been attempting to speak for America as a whole (Rogers 73). If I have inadvertently expressed some unpopular opinions, I hope they have not offended anybody (Durant 223), or exposed me as a traitor, as is often the case in an era of scoundrels (Hellman 85).

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