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Effects of Urbanization Process on the American Way of Life During the Twentieth Century

By Mary J. Huth, Ph.D.

One of the most important trends in the United States during the past sixty years has been the rapid growth of urban population, even when allowance is made for the Census Bureau's liberalizing of its urban area definition in 1950. Whereas prior to 1950 only *incorporated* places of 2500 persons or more were classified as urban, in that year *unincorporated* settlements of the same size, as well as the densely settled fringe of incorporated and unincorporated places around cities of 50,000 population or more, were also officially categorized as urban.¹ The Census Bureau thereby increased the validity of its urban area definition, because, for three or four decades prior to 1950, rapid transportation and communication facilities had been enabling many more people to live in an urban manner without having to reside in the center of places that were large, densely settled or legally incorporated as cities. This trend accounts for the fact that the most important of the areas included in the foregoing definition of urban are the Standard Metropolitan Areas, each of which consists of a large central city with at least 50,000 inhabitants and the densely settled contiguous counties which are socially and economically dependent on it, even if located in one or more neighboring states.² The Census Bureau delineated 212 Standard Metropolitan Areas in 1960, with a total population of 112 million, as compared with 168 in 1950, with a population of 89 million.³ And when the populations of smaller urban places are added to those of the Standard Metropolitan Areas one observes that about 120 million persons, or 63 percent of the United States population of 190 million, lived in urban areas in 1960, as compared with 59 percent in 1950, 56.5 percent in 1940, and 39.7 percent in 1900.⁴

At the turn of the century, 8 states, of which 6 were in the northeast, had a majority of their population in cities, but it was not until 1920 that the United States *as a whole* had 50 percent of its population residing in urban areas. Between 1930 and 1940, however, there was a slump in the urban trend and no additional state increased its proportion of city residents beyond the 50 percent mark reached by 13

1 Noel P. Gist and Sylvia Fava, *Urban Society*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964, p. 42.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

of them in 1930.⁵ But during the 1940's and 1950's, a period of wartime and post-war activity, the rate of urbanization was sharply accelerated. Between 1950 and 1960, for the United States as a whole, urban population increased by 29 percent, resulting in 39 of the 50 states having more than half of their population living in cities by 1960.⁶ Even in preponderantly rural states the population has become increasingly urbanized. In 1900, less than 10 percent of the population was urban in 6 states — Idaho, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Arkansas and North Carolina.⁷ Sixty years later, *none* of these states had less than *one-third* of its population living in cities; indeed, 60 percent of Oklahoma's population was classified as urban in 1960, and even the most rural of the 50 states, North Dakota, had 35 percent of its population residing in urban communities.⁸

Since the northeastern section of our country was the center of early industrial and commercial developments, that area was highly urbanized as early as the turn of the century. Although the northeast still leads so far as *degree* of urbanization is concerned, the south and west, especially the states of Florida, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and California, are setting the pace in *rate* of urban growth.⁹ The location of numerous military bases and defense industries in the south and west during World War II had the effect of drawing population to cities in those areas, and the trend continued in the postwar years. Proximity to an abundant supply of labor and raw materials and an enlarging body of consumers appear to be the principal reasons for more recent industrial developments in these sections. In addition, however, Arizona, Florida and California have widely publicized their climatic assets for recreational, health and retirement purposes. The efficacy of such propaganda is reflected in the fact that during the 1950-1960 decade California surpassed New York as the most populous state,¹⁰ Ft. Lauderdale's population increased by 130 percent and Albuquerque's by 108 percent.¹¹

In contrast to the marked expansion of urban population from 1950 to 1960, rural population declined, according to the 1960 census, for the first time in the history of the nation.¹² Although, previously, rural population had always increased *at a lower rate* than the urban population, nevertheless, it had increased.¹³ With continued advances in rational farming and mechanization, however, an ever-decreas-

5 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

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ing labor force is required in the rural-agricultural segment of the economy. Conversely, the United States possesses all the ingredients essential to a civilization that is thoroughly urban and industrial; blessed with an abundance of natural wealth, a location favorable to international trade, and a literate, energetic population with a propensity for science and technology, the United States has experienced a tremendous expansion of its industries, services and trades, of its transportation facilities, and of its population, both through natural increase and immigration, together with the universal concomitant of such expansion — the growth of cities.

As we have shown, however, the compact city of the nineteenth century has been superseded by the metropolis as more and more people, utilizing the superhighways, have migrated to the suburban areas outside the legal boundaries of our large cities, forming what urban planners call “strip cities,” the largest extending along a 1500-mile path from Washington, D.C., up the East Coast, westward to the Great Lakes, and down the Mississippi River Valley to Saint Louis.¹⁴ The J. Walter Thompson Company, an advertising agency that has made an intensive study of future markets, estimates that by 1975 the 13 major strip cities in the United States will embrace 60 percent of our population who, in turn, will account for 70 percent of the nation’s retail sales.¹⁵ This picture of “strip cities” from coast to coast across the face of the nation does not mean that the big central cities are dying. On the contrary, many big cities are alive with expansion as the result of urban renewal “face-lifting” operations. But the really explosive growth of this country, most experts agree, has been, and will continue to be, *outside* the big cities, producing broad changes in our American culture or way of life.

About thirty years ago, Louis Wirth, a prominent University of Chicago sociologist, delineated the three most important determinants of urbanism as a way of life — large numbers of people, high population density, and heterogeneity of population characteristics, and derived from them various implications for urban personality and social organization, such as anonymity, the weakening of kinship and other intimate ties, and the corresponding growth of large, formally-organized special interest groups.¹⁶ More recently, in 1960, Richard Dewey expanded on Wirth’s classic analysis and summarized the social implications of the urbanization process cited by various experts on the subject as follows: (1) more highly differentiated interests and associations; (2) increasing division of labor and greater occupational specialization; (3) the bureaucratization and impersonalization of human interaction; (4) the growing tendency to transfer social functions from small non-profit groups to large commercial enterprises and to government; (5) the increasing control of groups serving the local community by extra-community forces; (6) value changes;

14 “Next-Cities As Long As Highways,” *U.S. News and World Report*, XLIII (April 5, 1957), p. 30.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Louis Wirth, “Urbanism As A Way of Life,” *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIV (July, 1938), p. 23.

and (7) the remarkable growth of suburbs.¹⁷ Let us now examine these trends in greater detail as they manifest themselves in our urban society in 1965.

(1) *The Trend Toward More Highly Differentiated Interests and Associations*

In our highly urbanized American society, family members no longer work together as an economic unit; the great size, heterogeneity and mobility of many neighborhood populations make it difficult to cultivate deep, lasting friendships near one's home; household appliances and birth control have simplified women's role in the family, inducing them to take advantage of job opportunities outside the home in the expanding professions, services and trades (whereas in 1920 only 20 percent of women in the labor force were married, in 1962 over 60 percent were married¹⁸); the task of educating youths for today's highly competitive labor market has grown beyond the competence of the family as all fields of knowledge have increased in scope and difficulty; and modern methods of transportation and superhighways have shortened the time, but increased the distance, between various sections of the metropolis. As a result, human interaction is primarily on the basis of similarity of interests rather than residential propinquity, and the tone or quality of relationships tends to be segmental, formal, and impersonal (like that of lawyer-client, salesman-customer, home owner-repairman, student-teacher) rather than intimate, intense, and personal as is traditional with members of one's family or neighborhood. Under these circumstances it is understandable that relationships of a primary-group or quasi-primary-group type often tend to spring up *within* secondary-group settings. Thus, the customer gets to know the supermarket employee well enough to call him by his first name, the restaurant patron gets to know the waitress well enough to inquire about her sick mother, and small cliques in the office or plant work unit regularly go on coffee breaks and to lunch with one another. This tendency for segmental relationships to become more intimate does not entirely compensate, however, for the close, secure and enduring primary relationships of rural and small-town America which have been supplanted. As Ralph Linton has observed:

The modern city, with its multiplicity of organizations of every conceivable sort, presents the picture of a mass of individuals who have lost their bands and who are trying, in uncertain and fumbling fashion, to find some substitute. But membership in the Rotary Club is not an adequate substitute for friendly neighbors.¹⁹

The preponderance of secondary-group relationships in urban societies has

17 Richard Dewey, "The Rural-Urban Continuum," *American Journal of Sociology*, LVI (July, 1960), p. 65.

18 *Converging Social Trends and Emerging Social Problems*, Welfare Administration Publication, No. 6, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964, p. 55.

19 Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man*, New York: Appleton-Century, 1936, p. 230.

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particularly important implications for social control. Traditional controls such as public opinion, gossip and ostracism have great effectiveness in simple folk (rural) societies where the individual is entirely dependent on small primary groups like the family and the neighborhood for the fulfillment of his needs, where he values and internalizes their norms, and where their opinion of him is important to his self-concept. In advanced urban societies, however, where the individual can function *without* these traditional primary groups, or at least depends on them to a lesser extent, especially after reaching young adulthood, their ability to control his behavior is greatly reduced, and such secondary-group controls as rules and regulations, laws, police and court actions must be substituted. But the difficulty of effectively implementing these secondary-group controls when primary-group controls have weakened to the extent they have in the United States is reflected in the 8 percent rise in juvenile delinquency²⁰ and the 13 percent increase in adult crime²¹ between 1963 and 1964, according to statistics reported by the Children's Bureau and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Similarly, approximately 268,000 American infants were born out of wedlock in 1964, representing a rise of 24 percent in the illegitimacy rate since 1960.²² Dr. William J. Brown, Chief of the Venereal Disease Branch of the United States Public Health Service's Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, Georgia, reporting recently on syphilis epidemics raging in 25 or 30 of our largest metropolitan centers, pointed to the sharpest increases in venereal disease among teenagers. Cases of new syphilis in persons under 20 increased more than 200 percent between 1956 and 1963, according to Dr. Brown.²³

The multitude of specialized secondary associations in metropolitan communities creates still another problem, namely, that of establishing some means by which these different interest groups can exercise proportional influence in community policy-making, preserving, at the same time, some measure of primary-group control in this area. Many large cities have solved the problem by providing for a variety of policy-making organizations, some of which permit representation according to neighborhoods (the City Council and Neighborhood Councils) and others according to interests (the Community Welfare Council and the United Fund). Among city planners and urban sociologists, however, one of the major topics of controversy is the extent to which they should attempt to encourage more *neighborhood-based* community planning and action.

(2) *The Trend Toward An Increasing Division of Labor and Greater Occupational Specialization*

A relatively recent effort to describe different types of occupations in the United States

20 "Delinquency Rate Highest in U.S. History," *Dayton Daily News*, March 7, 1965, p. 14.

21 "Zooming Crime Belies Image," *Dayton Daily News*, December 11, 1964, p. 24.

22 "Illegitimacy Up," *Dayton Daily News*, Parade Magazine Section, March 7, 1965, p. 10.

23 "Venereal Disease Making Comeback," *Dayton Daily News*, December 13, 1964, p. 16.

labor force resulted in the identification of some 22,000 distinct jobs.²⁴ This fact documents a condition which is readily observable in American urban communities — an increasingly elaborate division of labor and specialization of occupational effort. In a penetrating analysis, Durkheim pointed out the most obvious concomitant of this trend — increasing interdependence of people, united as functionally interrelated parts of a complex system, rather than by virtue of sharing the same type of occupational skills, problems and points of view.²⁵

What else does the increased specialization of occupational effort imply for the individual in the urban community? Most directly, it means that his productive activity is separated almost completely from his consumption of goods and services. In American society, the highly self-sufficient family farm has represented the closest type of relationship between a unit of production and a unit of consumption, but for several decades the absolute as well as proportionate number of farm families in the American economy has decreased. More and more, small farms have been consolidated, with the result that the average farm size in the United States now exceeds 250 acres.²⁶ Farming has become a big business — specialized, mechanized, scientific, and so productive that the storage of its surpluses alone costs the federal government over \$1 million per day.²⁷

Increasing occupational specialization also means a change in one's perception of his work, for there are significant differences in job satisfaction depending upon whether a close, remote, or practically unknown relationship exists between one's work and the final product. Inasmuch as the latter two situations prevail in the big businesses and industries which hire over 75 percent of the United States labor force,²⁸ substitute satisfactions must be found, such as identification with the prestige of the company for which one works; the security and good will represented by such fringe benefits as pensions, paid vacations and holidays; the more creative use of leisure time; and more active participation in union activities, in management-sharing plans, and in employee recreational programs.

On the community level, a high degree of labor specialization has resulted in an increasing proliferation of goods and services with an accompanying rise in the standard of living; a more intricate social class structure; and a weakening of the contribution which shared occupational interests make toward community cohesion. Indeed, the urban wage-earner may not even know what his next-door neighbor does for a living. It is interesting that Durkheim, who commented with approval on the

24 *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949.

25 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, translated by George Simpson, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1947, p. 127.

26 Kimball Young and Raymond W. Mack, *Systematic Sociology*, New York: American Book Company, 1962, p. 272.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

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growth of organic solidarity accompanying initial increases in the division of labor, observed in his classic study of suicide that this division of labor, when carried to extremes, as is characteristic of urban societies like the United States, can result in a certain degree of normlessness or “anomie,” a condition in which there is no longer general agreement among individuals as to the norms which should guide their behavior.²⁹ “Anomic suicide” was the name which Durkheim gave to the taking of one’s own life because of a feeling that the society in which one lives lacks the cohesiveness and solidarity resulting from a high degree of value consensus. While suicide rates in the United States have generally declined since the turn of the century,³⁰ other forms of personal disorganization have increased. For example, about 153 persons out of every 100,000 in the population entered a mental hospital in 1963 as compared to 92 out of 100,000 in 1940,³¹ and statistics on deaths from liver cirrhosis, upon which the most reliable estimates of the extent of alcoholism are based, indicate that there are currently more than 5 million victims of this disease in our nation, constituting the fourth largest public health problem.³²

(3) *The Trend Toward the Bureaucratization and Impersonalization of Human Interaction*

The bureaucratic form of large-scale organization has become so widespread in the Western world because it is the most efficient means of administering the complex institutional systems of its advanced urban-industrial societies. Thus, while bureaucratic structures have been negatively associated with the transformation of many types of choices from the free “market” type to the manipulated or “administered” type, in a more positive sense they do provide the procedural vehicle through which decision-making can take place in a more organized and efficacious manner. The individual gift choice, for example, becomes administered through the Community Chest; the individual work choice becomes administered through a labor union; the individual motion picture choice becomes administered through the censorship activities of a religious organization or patriotic society; and the individual activity of cooperating with one’s neighbor becomes administered through a neighborhood council.

In complex, urban, industrial societies, the process of bureaucratization takes place throughout all the various institutional areas — government, education, business, religion, the helping professions, and so on. The increasing specialization of subject matter; the proliferation of separate areas of professional competence requiring certification — music teacher, vocational guidance director, school psychologist,

29 Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, translated by John A. Spaulding, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951, p. 67.

30 Young and Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

31 *Converging Social Trends and Emerging Social Problems*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

32 *Ibid.*

attendance supervisor, social studies instructor, the rigid supervision and control of curricula by various divisions and bureaus of the state department of education, and the development of detailed specifications for promotions and tenure give one some idea of the bureaucratization process within the school system alone.

The popular conception of bureaucracy is derogatory. It is felt that bureaucracy is wasteful of manpower, materials and money; that democratic control becomes difficult in bureaucratic organizations; that the individual bureaucrat displays excessive loyalty both to his profession and to the bureaucracy which employs him; and that communication through the hierarchical ranks of bureaucratic organizations to the policy-makers is frequently non-existent, slow, or distorted. In other words, bureaucracy is generally identified with such negative characteristics as red tape, "pass-the-buckism," inflexibility, unimaginativeness, excessive centralization of power, and impersonality. As Luther L. Bernard pointed out many years ago, one of the major difficulties in modern urban community life is the lack of an adequate set of norms to govern relationships in large secondary groups.³³ Thus, bureaucratic impersonalization and dehumanization are but the reverse of the coin whose other side is favoritism, personal whim, and the misuse of power. Confirming this fact, Max Weber commented as follows in his famous analysis of bureaucratic organizations:

The more complicated and specialized modern culture becomes, the more its external supporting apparatus demands the personally detached and strictly objective expert, in lieu of the master of older social structures who was moved by personal sympathy and favor, by grace and gratitude.³⁴

The individual in a bureaucratic position, therefore, often confronts situations where "following the rules" seems to be an affront to ordinary human values. Moreover, the rigidity, impersonality and coldly rational operation of the bureaucratic organization give him a sense of powerlessness epitomized by the admonition: "Go fight City Hall!" This conflict between the just exercise of official duty and the obligations in charity which a person owes his friend or neighbor is a great human theme running throughout history, but one which is particularly cogent in modern urban society where so many essential functions are performed by impersonal bureaucracies. Primary-group norms somehow seem more appealing than those of the large secondary group; love seems superior to justice. But as theologian Emil Brunner maintained, "love must transcend justice, not fall short of it. That is to say, rather than failing to meet secondary-group obligations, love must meet them and then go be-

33 Luther L. Bernard, "The Conflict Between Primary Group Attitudes and Derivative Group Ideals in Modern Society," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLI (March, 1936), p. 79.

34 H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, translators and editors, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, "Bureaucracy," New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 216.

yond them.³⁵ Thus, whether one confronts bureaucracy in the business enterprise, the labor union, the government office, or the voluntary association, its disadvantages are closely related to its advantages.

(4) *The Growing Tendency to Transfer Social Functions from Small Non-Profit Groups To Large Commercial Enterprises and to Government*

Every society is confronted with the choice of which types of institutional structures it wants to entrust with the performance of various essential functions. As an example, housing can be provided by the individual family through its own efforts, by several families in a neighborhood through a voluntary association such as a cooperative, by commercial housing contractors, or by government. In our modern urban society, however, goods and services are *decreasingly* provided by such primary groups as one's family, friends and neighbors and *increasingly* by secondary groups, such as business and governmental units, for a price or for taxes. Examples of this trend include the growth of restaurants, laundries and dry-cleaning establishments; the increasing variety of semi- or full-prepared canned, boxed, or frozen foods; and the commercialization of such traditionally home-based operations as clothes-making, hair-cutting and styling, home maintenance and improvement. Much recreational activity has also been shifted from the family and neighborhood to voluntary organizations like the Scouts and Y's, to commercial motion picture theaters and bowling alleys, and to government-owned parks, schools and playgrounds. Other important family functions such as child care, education and guidance have been increasingly delegated by parents to public and private day care centers, to public school teachers and counselors, and to professional child guidance clinic staffs. Similarly, the family's provision for the dependency of its aged members takes place largely through federal and state government programs such as Old Age and Survivors' Insurance, Old Age Assistance, and Medicare. The principal effect of transferring these activities from the family and neighborhood to formal and impersonal "outside" agencies has been to reduce the importance of the former by eliminating some of their "reason for being." This fact is reflected in the rising divorce rate of the United States as it made the gradual transition from a rural, primary-group oriented society to an urban, secondary-group oriented one. The annual ratio of divorces to marriages hovered between 1 to 12 and 1 to 10 until 1915, and between 1 to 9 and 1 to 6 from 1915 to 1940.³⁶ In 1962, however, there was one divorce for every 3.9 marriages, about the same ratio that had prevailed since 1957.³⁷

35 Emil Brunner, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, p. 233.

36 Arnold W. Green, *Sociology: An Analysis of Life in Modern Society*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964, p. 435.

37 *Ibid.*

(5) *The Increasing Control of Groups Serving the Local Community by Extra-Community Forces*

Consider the tremendous variety of groups serving urban community needs: branch post offices and banks, churches of various denominations, public and parochial schools, the State Employment Service, Social Security and Public Welfare offices, chain supermarkets and department stores, plants of national manufacturing companies, Boy and Girl Scouts troops, American Legion posts, Salvation Army units, and PTA's. In every instance, major decisions are not made at these local levels of operation, but at the district, state, or national levels, because each local operation is but one small segment of a large economic, educational, religious, recreational or political complex which seeks uniform standards of service and consistency of performance throughout. Occasionally, however, such extra-community policy-making conflicts with local community interests, as when a branch-plant manager is ordered to cut down on production because of the company's national inventory condition, necessitating his laying off workers and aggravating the local unemployment situation. Still another example is when the local executive of a health association points out that his charter from the state or national organization does not permit his group to join the local United Fund.

A further consequence of the increasing "outside" control of the many groups serving our urban populations is the temporary character of their employees' relationship to the community in contrast to the permanent character of their relationship to the organization for which they work. Hence, William H. Whyte's "organization man" who, wherever he goes, finds that the norms, goals, rewards and sanctions of his work organization provide a familiar "environment," the demands of which will probably be far more consistent than those of the succession of urban communities to which he moves. Like a member of the armed forces, such an individual's loyalties are mainly to an institution rather than to a community. The greater the extent to which this situation prevails in any community, the more difficult it becomes to "involve" residents in community activities and to arouse their concern about existing social problems.

In a more positive vein, however, the tie between groups serving urban populations and their larger "parent" organizations benefits the community by providing an avenue for the periodic influx of "specialists." Thus, various experts from the federal and state governments are available to urban communities for consultation in such problem areas as education, transportation, race relations and urban renewal, and the professional personnel of both private non-profit organizations and commercial business enterprises regularly visit their subsidiary units with the purpose of improving service to the residents of the communities where they exist.

(6) *Major Value Changes in American Urban Society*

Values are the underlying principles according to which people make their choices.

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Individuals acquire these values or preferences for one style or pattern of living rather than another as they grow up in a particular society and become "acculturated" or "socialized." Let us review briefly some basic American values; then we shall be in a better position to note certain important value *changes* which have taken place during the twentieth century as our society has become increasingly industrial, urban, and complex.

One of our most important values, *freedom*, implies that large areas of choice should be left to the individual as to the way he is going to think, feel, and behave. The roots of this value lie deep in the early settlement of the colonies, many of whose inhabitants had chosen to migrate under extremely adverse conditions in order to free themselves from various restrictions on their religious, political, and economic activities. Indeed, Americans' high evaluation of freedom is an expression of their abiding propensity toward *individualism*, tending to measure good and bad principally in terms of the effect on the individual human being and hesitating to restrict the free activity of any individual, even when it constitutes a threat to the general welfare. Consider, for example, the Supreme Court's reluctance in recent years to ban obscene literature as well as the recent demonstrations opposing the House Un-American Affairs Committee hearings in Chicago. Still another expression of Americans' propensity toward individualism is their strong emphasis on *democracy* as a system combining government responsibility to the majority of the people with the simultaneous protection of minority rights. The diffusion of the concept of democracy to non-governmental institutions, as indicated by such familiar concepts as "democracy in education," "democratic family living," and "industrial democracy," is an important distinguishing feature of American society.

Americans are known the world over for their emphasis on *practicality*. "Will it work?" "Is it practical?" Such insistent questioning of a new idea, policy, or gadget illustrates this value, which is at the same time reflected in the much greater prestige held by the engineer, the physician, and the businessman in American society than by the school-teacher, the clergyman, and the philosopher. A related American characteristic is the tendency to evaluate things and people largely in monetary terms, as illustrated by the prevailing use of income as the principal criterion or measure of both individual success and national progress. This tendency is best described as *materialism*.

The tremendous importance placed on *education* in American society stems from our position as a world leader, from the need for an intelligent citizenry in our increasingly complex political democracy, from the rising demands of the occupational structure, from the recent emphasis on equality of economic opportunity for all persons, irrespective of race, religion, sex, or national origin, and from the prevailing belief that education is the most effective solution for various types of social problems currently plaguing our nation, such as poverty, divorce, and racial discrimination. Moreover, these practical reasons for the increasing importance of education in our society explain why the natural and social sciences are given much greater support

and impetus by students, faculty, school administrators, government agencies, and private foundations than are the humanities. *Science* has come to be almost a magic word in American society, expressing the growing confidence of millions of people in the rational method of understanding and controlling the world around them. And science *has* “paid off.” Since 1900, for example, it has lengthened the life span from 50 to 70 years and raised the general standard of living three to four times. Especially conspicuous at present is the indispensable role of science in our nation’s space and defense programs.

Another characteristic American belief is that things in general *can* be made better, along with the belief that things *should* be improved. The Enlightenment’s faith in the infinite perfectibility of man took deep root in American society with its emphasis on science and success, its abundant resources and open-class structure. Human progress was not only regarded as a possibility, but as a duty. This feeling of obligation to “do something” about the more unfortunate people at home and abroad is perhaps best described by the term *humanitarianism*. Like many other values, however, this one is not always consistently applied. For example, Americans send billions of dollars abroad to bolster various economies, many of which they are hampering at the same time by high protective tariffs. Similarly, great concern has been focused on victims of malnutrition, cancer, heart disease, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, and cerebral palsy, while alcoholics, drug addicts, homosexuals, and other equally sick persons have received less public sympathy. It is also important to realize that supernatural motivation does not necessarily underlie humanitarian programs; with the increasing *secularization* of American culture, temporal, material, this-worldly *happiness* has become an important goal of all types of humanitarian endeavors — happiness in terms of good public relations and a more positive self-image for the do-gooders and happiness in terms of pleasure or freedom from bodily misery, frustration, and anxiety for the underprivileged and unfortunate.

Let us now consider some major *changes* in American values which have occurred during the twentieth century, one of the most notable of which is the increasing acceptance of governmental activity in such fields as housing, education, health and welfare services, social insurance, scientific research, and industrial development as a positive value. Similarly, increasing intervention by government to regulate economic enterprise, to settle industrial disputes, and to protect consumers is generally regarded as a necessary and desirable trend. The alternative proposition, that “the government is best which governs least,” is rapidly fading as a standard for contemporary judgment, in accord with John Dewey’s contention that freedom and individualism under present conditions can only be realized through greater, rather than less, governmental activity.³⁸

Another important change in values is the gradual transition from a moral to an environmental interpretation of human behavior. There is a growing tendency to

38 John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, New York: Minton, Balch, 1930, p. 116.

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react to deviant behavior not with moral indignation and punishment, but with a therapeutic attitude, emphasizing the contribution which a negative physical and social environment makes to the development of socially unacceptable patterns. This relatively new orientation toward such aberrant behavior as homosexuality, prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism, mental illness, juvenile delinquency and crime is partly, at least, a result of the larger historical development by which a rational explanation for life has come to supplant a theological-moral explanation, which development is, in turn, part of the still larger transition from a "sacred" to a "secular" society. Whereas the great social reformers of a few decades ago, like Jane Addams and Homer Folks, tended to mount great moral crusades to reform misdoers and to bring social justice to the exploited, their counterparts today are social-agency board members and health-and-welfare council leaders who strive to prevent, alleviate and solve community social problems through rational planning. Moreover, the increasing complexity of life in contemporary urban society has led communities to delegate to specialized agencies the function of confronting the various social problem areas which earlier would have been considered appropriate arenas for action by any conscientious citizen.

Still another significant value change in the United States during the twentieth century has been the shift in emphasis from work and production to consumption and enjoyment and, related to it, the gradual abandonment of the Protestant ethic in favor of the social ethic, which stresses the values of leisure, installment financing, and consumption rather than those of industry, thrift and production. There is an affinity between this change in values and the historic shift from "inner-directedness" to "other-directedness" which formed the theme of Riesman's book, *The Lonely Crowd!*

We could say that inner-direction is the typical character of the old middle class — the banker, the tradesman, the small entrepreneur, and the technically-oriented engineer — who were innovators and who took pride in their creativity; other-direction is becoming the typical character of the new middle class — the bureaucrats, the salaried employees in business — who have little desire to exercise initiative and who are satisfied to simply execute policies established by others as long as they receive sufficient monetary compensation to enjoy affluent living.³⁹

Whyte has related the social ethic to bureaucracy in the following manner: "The social ethic could be called an organization ethic, or a bureaucratic ethic; more than anything else it rationalizes the organization's demands for fealty and gives those who offer it whole-heartedly a sense of dedication for doing so."⁴⁰

39 David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 42.

40 William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1947, p. 6.

The final major trend characterizing twentieth century American society which warrants considerable attention is the remarkable growth of suburbs. Between 1950 and 1960, for example, about 97 percent of total United States population growth occurred in the suburbs of our Standard Metropolitan Areas.⁴¹ Suburbs tend to polarize into two major types: “dormitory” communities whose residents work elsewhere in the metropolitan area, and employing or “industrial” suburbs which have a sizable economic base of their own. While the “dormitory” suburb is the modal or most common type, there is still a tremendous variety of suburban communities in American society. Wood, in a passage describing the growth of suburban communities, wrote:

Suburbs extracted, one by one, economic and social functions which had previously existed side by side in the central cities. Each tended to emphasize a particular aspect of society — residential living, industry, recreation, gambling, retail trade, and even slums. The result is that all kinds of suburban communities ring our great cities.⁴²

The negative impact of the exodus of city people to the suburbs has been three-fold. First, it has tended to draw large numbers of white middle-class people out of the city, leaving it with a population from the extreme ends of the income scale — the very rich and the very poor — and with an inordinately high concentration of non-whites. Second, it has meant that the city must maintain essential services not only for its own residents, but also for a great number of suburban commuters who utilize its facilities only during the day and on special occasions. Third, as the city center has grown, it has displaced residential neighborhoods, resulting in a marked depletion of population in many central cities. These three implications of the development of suburbs are part of the background against which such specific central-city problems as urban blight, illegitimacy and juvenile delinquency must be considered, for underlying all of these problems is the increasing inability of the city to raise through its tax base the huge sums of money required to provide necessary services for the entire metropolitan area and, at the same time, to confront the problems attendant upon the flight of large numbers of middle-class people to the suburbs.

From a positive viewpoint, however, suburbs seek to preserve or recapture not only the values of the small town, but also the values of small-town family living. Rootless and transient though it may be, social life in the modal residential suburbs strives desperately toward characteristics which are the antithesis of those prevailing in the central cities of our nation’s metropolitan areas — toward personal sentiment and informality in human relationships; toward association on the basis of propinquity rather than differentiated interests; toward the restoration of primary-group

41 Young and Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

42 Robert C. Wood, *Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954, p. 64.

Huth: Effects of Urbanization Process on the Allmerican Way of Life Dur contacts, a sense of neighborhood and neighboring; and toward individuals, families and voluntary associations resuming certain functions which have been transferred to commercial and governmental enterprise. Familism in the suburbs is not only reflected in such demographic indicators as a high percentage of married persons, a high percentage of people living in a family setting, high fertility rates, and a low percentage of women in the labor force, but in the frequent cook-outs, the omnipresent station wagon and family-room, the support of the PTA, and the popularity of "do-it-yourself" activities. Similarly, suburbanites' attempt to recover some functions from profit and tax-supported enterprises is represented by their car pools, community clean-up days, voluntary work on recreation centers, and raffles for swimming pools. Here, then, is adaptive behavior aimed at accommodating the great changes of twentieth century urban American society while preserving the semblance, if not the reality, of some of the basic social configurations which preceded them.