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Course 162

Socio-Cultural Elements in Social Work

The Space Ranger

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Socio-cultural Elements in Social Work

"There are no characters in this book, only situations, but I began to believe that people must really exist in order to create these situations, the reality of which cannot be doubted. And I could suppose that these people would some day present themselves in their actuality to some novelist who would believe that they really existed."

(21)p.93

So writes Trilling of Reisman's books "The Lonely Crowd" and "Individualism Reconsidered". Reading this led me to attempt this paper by first outlining the 'situations', that is the broad social situations. Then, because the people have presented themselves to me, not as a novelist but as a caseworker, I have examined this mid-twentieth century family and their life, as it is superimposed upon the cultural background from whence they came.

To understand more clearly a little boy's fears, we will begin then with the tremendous social upheavals which mark the transitional phase of Western Society's move from Agrarian to Industrial pursuits: from villages and towns to cities, and from an old world to the new (as far as this hopeful way of putting it indicates the true situation). The repercussions and implications of these vast forces will work themselves out through many generations, and its cost in terms of human adaptation can be found in many problems of modern family life.

This story is ably told by Handlin in "The Uprooted". It also can be found repeated in non-transcontinental terms (in such work as in the) Hammond's "The Village Labourer" and "The Town Labourer" where they describe the effects on the family life of the Industrial Revolution in England; and in international terms in "Cultural Patterns and Industrial change" edited by Mead. We cannot ignore the material misery and sufferings of these generations or the effects of physical deprivation and hardship but our attention here must focus upon the psychological impact of these happenings.

Titmuss sums it up for us as follows

"Viewed in terms of the long-drawn cycle of family life, the violent industrial upheavals of the 19th century, the poverty, the unemployment, the social indiscipline, the authoritarianism of men and the cruelties to children are by no means as remote to-day in their consequences as some economists and historians would have us believe...."

"If those who are first subjected to industrial change have had a stable childhood, spent within a coherent, meaningful social order, then they may be able psychologically to withstand the pressures of change. It will be their children and grandchildren, the next two to three generations, who may be more likely to show the full psychological effects of the long-drawn out processes of industrialising society. They will have been reared in an unstable culture; perhaps a home life of conflicting values by parents without a sure sense of direction or purpose

"We now know that what is passed on through the family the central mechanism for the transmission of culture cannot be rapidly changed. External social changes often involve, however, traumatic changes in the roles played by members of the family, particularly the inner or nuclear family. Different norms of behaviour and different roles that often have, in consequence, to be adopted have to be internalised. People, we should remember, do not 'play' roles like actors. A role is something the person is. It follows, I suggest, from our understand of these processes that the capacity of the family to function as a kind of institutional brake cannot, therefore, be stretched too far without running the risk, perhaps some generations later, of causing wide spread instabilities in family life and much mental ill health." (20)

Ways of life which had formulated for the individual and the family the prescribed responses to the time-worn daily activities, and patterned for them the proper ways to deal with the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" broke down as they proved inadequate to the unforeseen magnitude of social change. These ways of life we call Culture.

"Culture is the accumulation of the group's experience, its way of solving the problems of life demands and needs, the attitudes, folkways, mores, ways of behaving and feeling that have been invented, tested, approved, and perpetuated in a particular people's history. All these habits and ways of doing things become organised into complexes and patterns, institutions for meeting economic needs, organising political relations, expressing religious worship, regulating marriage and family relations and the sum total of these we call, the culture of that people."

(3) pg.19

And as Mead tells us

"..... a great part of any human culture is lost to humanity when the group which has carried it, is dispersed, or destroyed, or forsaken the traditional ways for ways which are new."

(10)p 9

But we must hasten on to more refined situations than those of the mainstream of immigrant stresses and strains those of the Jewish immigrant. We must be aware that Jewishness, itself, implies the consciousness of being a minority group, which has given it a peculiar continuing cohesiveness and a cultural facility for change, as change has been met even in the slower-paced past. In the Jew, the usual dynamics of change can be seen in part exaggerated and in part muted.

The ancient awareness of racial socio-religious identification has been both the pride and burden of Jewry over many thousands of years. Therefore, the struggle of holding to, reinterpreting, or abandoning, these aspects which have become to mean Jewishness to any individual or group is sure to be highly charged with conflict and feelings.

But, unlike other immigrant groups, the Jew is to be found clustered together not solely out of social necessity, lack of opportunity, or out of loneliness when he finds that the values that he holds cannot be maintained in an alien society, but because Jewish values have been based to a large extent on alienation itself

"... their religio-cultural heritage is all the more vital because they lack the other basic elements of human group life - territory, state and language." (2)

This does not mean that he has not had to adapt drastically to change in the modern world. They have always been familiar with

".. .having lived in a world which included always at least two cultures, that of Jews and that of the particular nation among whom they lived..." (10) p 12

Thus the strange sight of seeing the peoples to whom they have had to adapt, now in a similar plight to themselves, as transients and aliens, is having a profound effect. The gentiles, too, were now immigrants

"Nowhere could they recapture the terms of village life; everywhere a difficult adjustment began with the disorganization of the individual, now grown uncertain as to his own proper role...."

"From the physical, as from the religious experience, with the New World, the immigrants had gained a deep consciousness of their separateness..... If the immigrants were to achieve the adjustment to their new environment, it had to be within the confines of the ghettos the environment created." (7)p 169

For the Jew this has upset his traditional pattern of adaptation. It also accounts, in part, for the prominence to which many Jews have arrived in secular affairs among the culturally disturbed gentile, for it is as though he has had five thousand years or more head start in response to alienation.

For the orthodox Jew, the American melting pot concept must be a source of great anxiety, for he sees the gentile becoming as he, in terms of alienation and minority groupness, and to this degree the Jew loses his own sense of uniqueness.

It is in the light of this orientation that we must view the meaning of orthodoxy and the acceptance of American middle class standards that we will see when we turn our attention to the characters in this human drama, and see how it plays into, and is part of, the emotional problems presented. As Horney tells us

"Cultural conditions not only lend weight and colour to individual experiences but in the last analysis determine their particular form." (8)

What I shall do in introducing the P. family is to tell its story briefly, selecting material that I feel is important in highlighting the socio-cultural dilemma and shall then proceed to interlock the cultural factors with the family history by attempting an interpretative diagnosis. Alongside (on the yellow paper opposite the appropriate material) I shall display cultural resource material. This does not mean that I shall describe the culture fully. I have merely chosen that which describes some of the usual relationships and illustrates areas of similarity and deviance in the family, and some of the cultural responses to specific situations such as the birth of handicapped children.

The culture is that of the Eastern European small town known as the 'shtetl' and although this may seem a far cry from Brooklyn 1957, I have found to my great enlightenment, the startling manner in which this family continues to echo the shtetl's sentiments and behaviour to an extraordinary degree. This is in line with Landes and Zborowski comment.

"It came as a surprise to all of the researchers to realise the seemingly considerable perseverance of traditional European modes in American surroundings, even in the third generation, despite some evidence of important changes or, at least, of shifts of emphasis. Shtetl Jews themselves expect perseverance and in orthodox religious circles decry any of the changes in family life." (9) p 448

I have tried to interpret the problem presented to the child guidance setting in terms of the whole family as far as my material would allow. This is my personal attempt to begin thinking in terms of the whole family as a primary group because I believe with Tennenbaum that

"a study of individual motivations and relationships does not usually supply a sufficient explanation of human behaviour." (19)

and this too is in line with current casework thinking in terms of complementarity.

"As social reform on behalf of the family gave way to emphasis upon psychological treatment of family members, the major concern of the caseworker shifted to the individual. Family casework now seems to be seeking a road back to concern with the family, while making full use of the knowledge of individual psychology gained in the interim." (12)

It is the bridging of the conceptual gap between the family and society, however, which is the difficult process and central to this paper's theme. This problem may well be aggravated by the dual nature of our social work thinking. Perhaps we must become clearer in delineating our clinical relationship to our clients with the use of casework techniques, and the professional relationship to our society which calls for a different kind of activity.

The socio-cultural elements certainly throw light on the aetiology of emotional and social problems and suggest all kinds of community, social and political activities to the social worker, but for the caseworker too, a proper understanding of the place of these elements is imperative

"... in producing cultural material the patient engages in a process of self revelation which may be diagnostically and therapeutically of high significance."(14) p 110

There are abuses too, as discussion (in class) on the case of Ray Fernandez (24) illustrated admirably. But the range of its value is suggested by Pollack.

"A lack of awareness with regard to cultural differences might lead to the diagnostic evaluation of a patient's behaviour as a deviation, while this might not be the case in terms of his culture. On the other hand, an apparent conformity with cultural norms might give an impression of normality, while its very intensity might be an expression of pathology."(15)p10

And Sandi

"The psycho-cultural approach enables one to look at the total personality, to scrutinise individual personalities as variations from the cultural patterns and also to reveal some form of individual conduct as either a product of a cultural tradition, a product of conflict between cultures or finally as a product of conflicts within one culture. It implies exploring the basic personality pattern of the members of any given society and gauging the individual behaviour in the light of such a basic personality type." (17)

And Spencer underlines this

"Just as, on the one hand, culture can operate constructively on the process of personality integration, so also can it be misused to answer and reinforce particular personality needs....., in situations of cultural change it may be difficult to detect to what extent commitment to a particular cultural pattern stems from the strength of personal integrity, to what extent it represents a frantic adherence to what is familiar at a time of strain and crises or whether it may be a symptom of deeper personality maladjustment" (18)

Let us then introduce the P family.

Mr. and Mrs H , the parents of Mrs. P were born in Russia. Mrs. P expresses a great admiration for her mother. Mrs. H fought in one of the early and unsuccessful revolutions and this action along with her Jewishness, and the movement of immigrants of the times, had sent her along the by now well-worn if still rugged paths to the United States and New York. New York, the immigrant gate-way to the new world which became for those many who were in varying degrees of world-weary exhaustion, the resting place for several generations.

"Though it had become the mouth of the continent.... it was not yet the maw. After the Civil War, despite the energetic rise of Chicago, New York City became an imperial metropolis, sucking into its own whirlpool the wealth and the wreckage of the rest of the country and of the lands beyond the sea." (13)

In New York she found the relative security amongst the Jewish immigrants (her own people, the people of the diaspora) who were now gathering here from the troubled countries of Europe. Europe where the breakdown in the agrarian way of life gave way to industrialisation with its growth of cities and where violence broke out against " the chosen people". There Mrs H married and reared her family. Mr H seems to have been less forceful than his wife, but he worked hard to keep the family which was important enough for the traditional "Remember the Sabbath Day and Keep it Holy" to become holy, in the sense of providing for his family in the strident convulsive city of New York.

Mrs P was the eldest and at nine years old was working part time in a shop to supplement the family income. At fourteen, she began work full ,time to help keep the younger ones in school. In the Jewish tradition, learning is prized and though she was female and therefore not fully in the scholarly tradition, her mother, a forceful woman had great hopes for her children and encouraged Mrs P's interests in education. Mrs. H had two older girls before the son and heir of the family was born.

"Our data suggest that women, being the less honorifically placed and as such neglected by the codified prescription found widening opportunities exactly under conditions of stress. They took on the responsibilities brought to them

Within the traditional community where almost all values and ideals and honorific activities are cast in male terms and references, and are understood to be such when not explicit, the private life of the family emerges as the responsibility of women and is largely dominated by them ".

(9) p 463

Mrs P remembers her mother as a deeply religious woman in the sense of understanding the suffering people in this world with an abiding respect for the struggles of mankind, and compassion for the foolish, the ignorant, and even the arrogant. Mrs H kept a Jewish house and insisted on respect for her husband as head of the house though in later years the children were to know where the strength lay. Orthodoxy was less important to her than her family's advance. Though she honoured the devout, she smiled at the trappings and at times the bigotry of ritual without human goodness to give it dignity. At least this is the way that Mrs P (now aged 46) remembers her mother, and her tears as she describes her are those of loss, gratitude and, I suspect, inferiority at not being like this idealised figure of motherhood.

Mrs P worked hard and after her day's work attended night school. It was with a great feeling of triumph that she graduated on the very day her younger sister graduated from full time studies which she had in some part made possible by her financial contribution. Mrs H, somewhat fearful at her eldest daughter's time and energy consuming efforts, encouraged her to take up less academic subjects, such as music, for example, so that she would have feminine attributes and not become pre-maturely worn, and an old maid - a real failure in this cultural milieu.

The family made its way and faced the vicissitudes of life. It celebrated the Bar-Mitzvah of the thirteen year old son and mourned the sudden and unexpected death of the twenty year old daughter (Mrs. P's nearest sibling). These occasions with deep feelings and meaning were marked in the time honoured way.

Relative poverty did not stop Mrs P - an active and emancipated young woman - from joining the local Jewish organisations and it was at one of these she met Mr P. He came from an orthodox family, somewhat more financially secure than that of Mrs P's. He was learned in the Talmud, had been a good scholar at the parochial school (the Yeshiva) and had brought honour to his parents. Mrs P's father insisted that the boy's people should know that he worked on the Sabbath and they were aghast at this information. Mr P's mother objected strongly to the match. The young couple decided they could not continue seeing each other in these circumstances.

"Mental disease the patient's illness is not his alone. It is the illness of the entire family whose integrity is thereby threatened." (1) p 113

"Mental illness Parents will seldom give up hope of curing the shameful condition, going from doctor to Tsaddik and from the Tsaddik to 'the professor '. The ultimate shame is to consign the afflicted one to the asylum and if this happens it will never be mentioned.." (22) p 356

"The client's wish to check the opinions of various doctors against each other." (24)

But in time, spontaneously it seems, a neighbour, as matchmaker extolled the virtues of Mrs P and her family to the parents of the young man and they agreed to receive Mrs P's parents. Mrs .P tells how her mother spoke to her after this planned meeting, calling her by her pet name she said " I am ashamed for what I have had to do to day but if it is for your happiness I will be content ... if you will not be happy it will be hard to bear."

Mrs P began her married life in strict orthodoxy in a society where every day (and not even imperceptibly) orthodoxy of the East European manner became less easy. Very soon her husband who was in the wholesale grocery business was out of work and was then offered a money making position which necessitated his working on the Sabbath. "What shall I do?" he asked his wife and she, seeking guidance from her mother was told " ... on this he must make up his mind, you must promise me not to influence him, for his family will say it is you who have brought this about." Mr P pressed his wife for a decision but she would not help him with this - he decided against the work. She has never forgotten her mother's words.

They moved away from New York and in time Mr P started his own business in a university town with a growing Jewish population where Mrs P enjoyed her large house and the friends she made. They had students as boarders and this appealed to her intellectual pursuits. But there was to be tragedy in their lives - their first born was an imbecile and this personal and cultural disaster was reinforced when their second child developed epileptic seizures. Tremendous efforts went into seeking a cure or at least a change of diagnosis for the first child. But these efforts subsided when a perfect male child was born and the eldest was institutionalised and virtually forgotten "for the sake of the youngest".

As this third child grew to be a very intelligent little boy in all areas, an equilibrium seemed to have been achieved. At least the family had a place, a past, and a future. The family had weathered this terrible period and rejoiced when a second 'perfect male child' reinstated their feeling of "being a normal family". This is the impression given by the informant.

But this period was short lived for at eighteen months the baby became ill and died at the age of two. It is not easy to disentangle what happened then, for feelings long since lulled have obliterated the details and sequence and it would take us too far into the minutia of the situation.

"The mother is extremely jealous or resentful of her son's interest in another woman, even though she wants him to marry, for that is the Jews obligation, and to have children." (9)p 454

"The relationship between a woman and her daughter-in-law is expected to be one of tension," (9) p458

"something is always wrong with the 'kaleh' (bride). (22) p 276

" 'I can't find anything wrong with my son's girl, But I have got to criticise her' " (9) p 450

"In the traditional culture of the East European Jews arranged marriages have been usual although in recent times they are by means as much taken for granted as previously.....

Even in the United States arranged marriages are still frequent in certain circles among the very orthodox. The arranged marriage presumes less concerning the emotional relationship between husband and wife than concerning the mutual duties which derive from their marriage." (24)

Three years following the death of the child we find the family considerably 'changed'. They have returned to the Jewish quarter in Brooklyn. Mrs P encouraged to get out and about with the other mothers, wants to concentrate on her home. She shows signs of not 'belonging' to her contemporaries and yet wishes to do so while deprecating their values. The third child who has a high IQ was sent to a friend in New York soon after the death of his brother and was there for two years before he was reunited with his parents when they moved back to the city. Much is expected of this child, he has fears of dying and currently, while in treatment, his Hebrew studies are said to be of a less high standard than formerly.

Thus we might begin to look at our family in the context of the social pressures, when Mr and Mrs P meet in courtship. In a very general sense their two families had taken the divergent paths suggested by Reisman:

"However, the Jew emerging from the European ghetto was not met at Ellis Island by the representatives of the Enlightenment. At most he was given a choice between accepting the melting pot and the ethics of success ... or trying to retain his traditions as a transient in a voluntary ghetto. If he took the latter course he was seldom stimulated towards any effort to reinterpret the meaning of his ethical background in terms of the American context; rather he tended to freeze defensively in his memories and rituals. If he took the former - perhaps more typical - course, he altered his ethical and intellectual inheritance so that it could be turned to account in the struggle for success.... " (16)p 57

But these young people were only aware of these forces in the context of the warm human passions that surrounded planning for their marriage. Mr P's mother took exception to the behaviour of her son's choice, in respect of the unorthodoxy of his intended in-laws. Mrs P modern in her behaviour objected to arranged marriages (although she had been influenced directly in her choice by her mother) but nevertheless the neighbour, hoary in the cultural tradition played the role of the matchmaker. In so arranging the marriage, a resolvment of the conflict of forces was brought about.

But if we are to understand the nature of subsequent events we must stop here and examine what we know was invested in the conflict and what cost this resolvment was to exact. And indeed we may well ask whether the resolvment was not merely a bringing together in marriage of two sides of a social cultural and personal dilemma that would but defer to the next generation the same problems which remained unresolved for this one.

"A girl's place in the family is a reflection of her mother but her truly affectionate tie is with her father. She is peculiarly his; At all ages she is the one family member in whose company he can relax; and when she marries he finds joy in her husband ,,,," (9) p455

"Marriage is seen as a legal outlet for man's sexual desire, which is given to man in order to procreate (Schulchan Aruch CL.9) This desire if not satisfied, handicaps a man's prescribed study of sacred law.... (Schulchan Aruchi CKLV) " (9) p449

"According to the old orthodox pattern, boys receive as much education as possible and parents will strain and sacrifice to achieve it, while girls are supposed to have little book learning" (24)

"The father supervises the son's education. A daughter is not encouraged in advanced study but may teach herself from any available source" () A story tells of a female Chassidic leader who disconcerted the community with her male scholarly behaviour until the elders were able to lead her into marriage and thus into a familiar female role" (9) p 450

On the question of orthodoxy Mrs P returned to the fold. But today, though she rigorously upholds and defends her orthodox position, there is ample evidence to suggest her latent resentment. And observe, the humiliation with which the idealised mother had to contend in the agreement with the in-laws, and Mrs P herself was at least temporarily abandoned by her intended because of his family's disapproval of her parental lack of orthodoxy. Mr P's feelings are not clear., he bows to his parents wishes, but it is not too long after his marriage that he stands poised to enter the way of life which his wife had formally given up, and for the same social reasons that Mrs P's father had taken the same road. There is a tragic irony in the manner in which it is then his wife's mother who is instrumental in preventing a break from orthodoxy and the emotional trap is sprung.

We need not here examine Mrs P's mother's motives, but we must note that it is she, Mrs P idealises, and her father (as far as his shadowy figure emerges at all) whom she belittles. He was the one who was unorthodox to begin with and it is he who does not have the mother's redeeming strength and humane goodness. Here is a parental tangle which suggests a mixed identification and conflict for Mrs P around her femininity. (Her mother always wanted nice clothes and jewellery for Mrs P but she was much more interested in intellectual activities).

Let us then turn our attention away from her marriage to her previously intense pursuit of learning- a pursuit to which marriage is subordinated in this culture. There is an undeniable weight of evidence of Mrs P's intense sibling rivalry in this area of learning. Ostensibly this rivalry was with the sister next in years, but we cannot rule out the intensification of this unconsciously related to her young brother and the dramatic differences of attention given in this culture to the sons and daughters. It is in this masculine role of learning (though it was here secular "I just couldn't learn Hebrew") that is the arena for competition. There is the challenge to, and resentment of, the male and the consequent rejection of her femininity. (Psychodynamically we may note that there is also rivalry with a partially deaf passive girl friend who is given the opportunity of higher education).

.The reversal of roles male, and female and the intensity with which the question of learning is pursued, though this latter is understandable in cultural terms, is too exaggerated for us not to view with clinical interest. We cannot view with equanimity the sudden death of the

rival sister and Mrs P's subsequent loss of interest in her education: in her giving up her very active and emancipated life pattern; and the submission to her mother's fears of her becoming an old maid which led to the embracing of orthodoxy and its traditional role of wife in the circumstances of the courtship which have been outlined.

Competition for Mrs P in an open way has ended in the psychological disaster of the death of her rival, and henceforth her challengingness, and the sibling situation, and learning became areas of great discomfort.

"Goodness" has two different meanings for her, the adaptable humanness of her mother's social actions and the goodness of orthodox living. In giving primacy to the latter she embraces the full weight of her cultural tradition in the religious sense and gives secondary place to the social sense on the other side of the cultural coin. In accepting Mr P's family's concept of goodness she gives acknowledgement to the traditional superiority of the male, and for entirely different reasons finds that her mother's and his mother's attitudes hold to the orthodox position. (Again psychodynamically we can speculate that her relation to her mother is ambivalent and that the challenge to her mother has been psychologically quite heavily repulsed somewhere in childhood.).

At the same time in taking up her traditional wife role she probably finds some real sense of security Mr P is considered a scholar and learned in the Talmud so that he is a good match and perhaps both husband and wife find relief from the intensity of the pressure on their orthodoxy by their move away from the Jewish quarter of Brooklyn to the University town upstate. Here is an acceptable compromise an orthodox home, middle class American standards, and Mrs P is able to satisfy if somewhat vicariously her own drive for learning (through her husband and with the student boarders) and enters as a valued partner her husband's business.

They begin to find a real place for themselves and apparently withstand the shock of finding their first two male children handicapped (the first an imbecile, the second epileptic). Mrs P's role of wife and mother must have been sorely tried, for this culture lives through its children, and the tremendous pride in their male offspring and their first born was denied them. But the marriage held and they withstood the tragedy and the shame. We wonder how far Mrs P must have felt she was being "justly" punished and we see the tremendous efforts the parents

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"Just as the success of a family member contributes to the family status so does his failure have intense reverberation. This reaction is intensified when the success or failure is in a field of cultural significance - that of the intellect." (1) p 11

To be childless is a source of guilt and bitter shame, a condition that draws pity from all but also arouses suspicion that there is some reason for this punishment." (22)p 310

"A couple fulfils its Jewish mission by raising its offspring, hopefully numerous and favoured with sons ,,,, The male child is officially preferred and the eldest boy is singled out as his father's legal heir., to receive respect from the younger siblings all his life." (9) p 450

*"It is common to say that people are "blessed with children" "gebench mit kinder" (22)
"Support in old age and sanctification after death are possible through his (the son). Intellectual power is prized above wealth and denotes an especially good heredity."(1)p 450*

"Parents distinguish between the eldest child who if male is the heir, and the youngest, who is the beloved baby." (9) p 458

"A parent has a right to expect from his children 'nakhes' or joys and gratification . . . so that parents are in a sense dependent on their children for successful performance of their role. Conversely the failure or disgrace of the child is regarded as a direct reflection on the parent who feels publicly branded and humiliated.

The common reaction is 'what have I done that my child behaves like this?' and the parents will reproach the child 'you give me no nakhes'" (23)

"We hear of boys of nine and ten being sent off to other cities to study with famous teachers" (9) p 455

"There are other devices to prevent the premature death of children whose mother has lost a number of babies, one being to 'sell' the child to a mother whose children 'stay with her'" (22) p 322

"The son is caught between the complaints of mother and wife" (9) p 459

make for the imbecile boy. The third and fourth children (still boys) at last promise to fulfil the parental and cultural roles of husband and wife. At last there is the possibility of the working out of the problems - or at least their hopes and expectations must have been raised and allowed for the stimulation of the image of a secure future. Naturally the foundations of the family would creak as they took the weight of parentally familiar psychological struggles working out through the children, but if they had held thus far there was tremendous hope.

The third child (the first to take his proper place) began the intellectual path laid down for him with joyous precocity and it was his father's wish for him to go to the Yeshiva as he had done. The child felt the pressures but responded. He had his problems -a strange brother mysteriously absent, another who had ' fits of dying' and he had to deal too with the arrival of the baby and his parents exuberance and pleasure and attention to the new member and his eagerly watched development.

It was at this very moment of the convergence of the ancient themes of learning, orthodox religious observance, maleness, and sibling rivalry and competitiveness that the baby became sick and died. The blow to Mrs P's newly developing and compensating strength in her traditional role of wife and mother wrecked havoc on the family structure . Her growing success was again plunged into disaster.

She felt afraid of doing further damage to her one remaining 'whole' child, she had to give attention to the ailing child that they had tended to neglect. The 'whole' child had to be protected and they sent him to the city, back to the Jewish quarter to the Yeshiva (and significantly to the learned friend now in her arranged marriage, and at the change of life who had three grown up daughters and no sons). The mother depressed and defeated considers accepting the guilt and overthrow of her role, in divorce.

During this period we perceive the failure of her husband's business, and again he is out of work and does not take a Sabbath working job. They return to Brooklyn and they move into the apartment where her father lives and is shortly to die dramatically also. The large successful house in the upstate town is exchanged for the cramped apartment. The American middle class aspects of life are lost and back in the proximity of her in-laws her husband tends to belittle her in front of his mother. But at least in the matter of orthodoxy she does not allow them

"'She kills herself' people say of a good mother, in order to bring up her children." (9) p 452

"Though the marital obligations are fulfilled with the husband, the romance exists with the son"
(9) p 453

"The first reaction to illness or misfortune would be what have I done O my Lord that you punish me? Far vos shtrefst mich Gotenyu?"
(23)

"The husband's role places responsibility for propagating the family, which carries his name, but attributes the failure to the wife."
(9) p 449

"There is a saying that domestic harmony rests with the wife."
(9) p 452

"Therefore (she) suffers anxiety and guilt for crimes of which (she) is not clearly aware."
(23)

to have any reason to believe she has failed. Mother's efforts are now full of guilt and extraordinary determination for the success of the third son, especially in the Hebrew aspects of his school, and she makes prodigious efforts for the dull epileptic child's education.

The third child is referred to the Child Guidance Clinic for fears of dying (not surprising considering the succession of deaths in the family). But we see too concern about his school which is greatly emphasised by his mother. This must be partly in line with the tremendous emotional investment in this child and one suspects partly to overcome her identification, resentment, and ambivalence towards him and his education. Can it be that this child is destined to be caught in the unresolved conflict and question around orthodoxy which his parents have relegated to the back of their minds and have not found ways of meeting with each other?

It seems likely that the child is both encouraged and overly pressured to succeed on behalf of his parents and particularly his mother's status and yet undermined less success does damage to him, or by him to others, as his mother feels she has, and he feels he has with the baby and when the second child has seizures. (For they are rivals too.) He does better than his elder brother but his brother gets more maternal care and is home with mother, and wasn't he sent away to N.Y. while the elder was at home all the time and he gets shouted at and has to do things which his brother doesn't etc.etc.) The child's success is problematical too because again it is the failure of mother's goodness as opposed to her husband's. No wonder the child is threatened and afraid as he tries to assert masculinity and growing independence.

Mother's feelings of inferiority, unworthiness and resentment are reinforced culturally, does her husband not say in anger - "What have I done to deserve all this" (The tragedies) and "Good luck comes with the wife"? This is in direct line with her culturally understood assessment of the situation and reinforces feelings of guilt. Was she not of an unorthodox family? Does she not have secret reservations about orthodoxy? Has she not failed to produce healthy children ? (Even the third needs psychological help and half believes he is 'nuts') She is a failure then, not 'good' in her husband's sense and if she then compares herself to her own image of goodness in the likeness of her own mother is she not a failure also?

"In America 'success is central; we are provided with a catalogue of what is success and what is failure, and nothing matters except achieving the first and avoiding the second. Whoever accepts the prevailing social standards of our times is not alone, not morally isolated; even if he is a "failure" he related if only in fantasy, to the dominant theme".(16) 48

"A constant reproach to children is that they are not behaving like adults" (23)

Mrs P is unable to claim her role within an orthodoxy which has increasingly less social structure to support it, or able to claim a newer role which was her mother's and was also based on a social situation which has changed along with social conditions. In any case any such attempt would again conflict with the orthodox role. Mrs P can only resort to an insistence that perhaps Mr P has not met his obligations in the provision of secure domestic arrangements. Did we not come back, she asks, so that the child should attend the Yeshiva as his father wanted. But she understands that Mr P is behaving according to his orthodox role and even where he fails to succeed by American standards it is not altogether his fault for she senses her own part in the fall of the family's fortunes. The dilemma on the social cultural and personal levels, with the confusion surrounding both what ought to be, and in fact can be is, therefore poured into a tremendous sense of guilt which she is forced to placate by orthodoxy and untiring efforts for her children. These are culturally emphasised and wholly acceptable channels.

Seeking to find a new place for herself she seeks out matrons of her own age (many of whom have left strictly orthodox ways). She finds not only do they not adopt the same roles as she but social entrance turns on the material comforts which she does not possess. An exchange of house parties leaves her at a serious disadvantage. Even her clothes, once a real measurement of her worth upstate are looked at aghast. Their homes are not what Mrs P feels a home. She cannot leave the house much either for the epileptic boy's needs must be attended. She misses too the intellectual stimulus she had upstate. The problems here are undoubtedly that she is unable to compare herself comfortably to any acceptable group without feeling a high degree of deprivation.

This matter of group relatedness adds to her other difficulties when it comes to discussion about her son. There are few children in the immediate vicinity and he is not compared with any child in his class by any objective source of achievement. Sometimes she compares him with the students who used to board with her in order to spur his efforts which at his age and ability is not commensurate. He always has to compete with his own high standards of achievement, though mother admits sometimes that she forgets he is a child. Again these attitudes are culturally loaded as is the emphasis on book-learning. It sometimes complained that he will not sit and concentrate on his work although this child goes to school from 8a.m. to 5 p.m., has a heavy homework programme, and attends school on Sunday. He sees other

"In Eastern Europe no man hopes to be outstripped by his son. The opposite is true in American middle class families."

(9)p 463.

children with a much less rigid programme but he is said not to question such facts as that he cannot ride his bicycle on Saturday. In addition his achievement will ultimately be gauged in terms of his success in the modern professional or business world in which orthodoxy may well be somewhat of a handicap as it has been for his father. The pressures upon him are great to succeed yet in part his efforts are undermined and he feels small, a baby, and unable to meet his parental demands. His fears and his clowning (in which he shows a great deal of wit) are the result.

Accustomed as we are to laying out case materials in terms of the individual and his social history we can see here that I have fairly heavily weighed what Erikson calls 'the societal process'

"We are speaking of three processes, the somatic process, the ego process and the societal process.. . As we review each relevant item in a given case, we cannot escape the conviction that the meaning of an item which may be 'located' in one of the three processes is co-determined by its meaning in the other two. An item in one process gains relevance by giving significance to and receiving significance from item in the other....." (5)

Where there is lack of balance it is due in part to insufficient clarity in conceptual thinking and, in part, due to lack of skill as a practitioner, who must needs be function whatever the theoretical gaps of understanding, and though versed in generalities must follow closely the idiosyncratic nature of his case . I hope however, that I have shown where cultural factors intrude, raise questions for us, and lead us to constructive speculations

The confusion of roles that arises when a culture is transplanted from the social structure that made these roles functional, to a society where other values and other roles impinge is clearly seen. Here is a section of the process of the breakdown of the close-knit shtetl type community to the emergence of the industrial nuclear family. The distress and sense of failure and guilt which goes into the mother's conflict what she ought to be, and what she is and can be is of great significance, since internalised roles are at odds with the roles it is possible and necessary to perform. Here is an area of great tension arising in large part from the different nature of the lives of the generations

I have found Merton's (11) discussion of reference groups of particular interest, (no doubt it can be applied to reference individuals too) for we can note very clearly how Mrs P finds problems of great moment in not finding appropriate reference figures or groups who might help

her make a more comfortable adjustment should she be able to make the transition (her one relief is in the company of other mothers who have severely deformed children where she captures a brief glimpse of her own fortitude). For the rest, she is much more aware of her failure and deprivation. Both parents have a different image of where they belong in a social sense, and this leads to a personal tension between them to which they find it hard to give recognition.

Many treatment problems arise for here I am caseworker, non-orthodox of Jewish origin which provides contrast to the family in a meaningful relationship. The child, puzzled at my lack of a 'yarmulke, skull cap' believed me to be Catholic). To find more 'natural' releases for the child's anxiety and hostility and for his growth involves careful handling of the orthodox position.

If the pressures on this child arise as I have suggested from the covert disagreement between the parents around orthodoxy, dislodging this pressure will disturb the status quo or personal involvement around their religious and social areas of adjustment. These by their very nature seem to call for development of the cultural dilemma itself, for my task will be to release them towards the fulfilment in which

" ... their children will be making their lives of new stuff. With the traditional capacity of the Jews to preserve the past, while transmitting it into a breathing relationship to the present, much of the faith and hope which lived in the shtetl will inform the lives of the descendants of the shtetl in other lands. But the laughter will change ... "
(10) p 10

They will be faced with the idea that it is not possible for them to know in the same way, what is best for their children, as it was possible for their parents.

Though in Poland, *"Little Jewish boys, committed by their culture to value learning and piety above physical prowess, read the stories of Polish heroes with admiration as well as with the required disapproval...."*
(10) p 17

in the United States, their son can answer to my question: what do you want to be when you grow up? "A Space Ranger!" and he noting my perplexity, continued - "you may think that is fantastic but in a very few years there will be such things". In the year 1958, not only does he speak the scientific truth, but already he ranges the space between the middle ages and the twentieth century, between Eastern Europe and the United States, between the ruins of the shtetl and the development of the some new human form of security, between sets of values and identities, and between the conflict existing between his parents..

Excellent

This is a prodigious paper, representing much work, reading, and sensitivity. It demonstrates not only understanding in social and cultural terms but an appreciation of human anguish. In these respects it is an unusual and penetrating discussion, and I have enjoyed reading it.

It is perhaps too much to have asked that you include also some consideration of how this rich diagnostic material is employed by the caseworker, but this in truth would have rounded out the presentation completely.

Herman D. Stein