STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Was ist das Schwerste von allem?
Was dir das Leichste dünket,
mit den Augen zu sehen,
Was vor den Augen dir liegt.

(What is the most difficult of all?
That which seems to you the easiest,
To see with one's eyes
What is lying before them.)

—Goethe, *Xenien Aus Dem Nachlass #45*

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Introduction and purpose

Introduction

The impetus for this study grew out of the Positive Deviance in Nutrition Research Project, a five-year, three-country study for UNICEF New York and the WHO/UNICEF Joint Nutrition Support Programme, which investigated a wide range of factors contributing to good child growth and cognitive development under conditions of underdevelopment (Zeitlin, Ghassemi, and Mansour 1990; Zeitlin 1991). The main conclusion of this research was that good overall development of the child in poverty is a product of high-quality child care, taking place mainly at the level of the well-functioning family. Children thriving in poor communities were statistically most likely to live in families characterized by traditional fireside family values, devoted mothers and fathers, happy marriages, and warm cooperative bonds with siblings, grandparents, other relatives, and the broader community.

We use the terms "family social health" and "family social wellness" to designate these positive aspects of family functioning. We wished to capture the wellness concept and at the same time to emphasize that the family is a living entity and that the health of this entity in one generational cycle generates continued health in the next.

Goals

The goal of this research project was to identify the characteristics of healthy families in order to understand better how family social health improves the well-being of children and how family functioning interacts with national and international development. Therefore, the word "development" in the title refers not only to child development but also to social development more generally.

The following steps were taken to reach this goal:

1. Review family literature from sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, and international development programmes such as international health, nutrition, and child development, focusing on definitions of family social wellness, correlates of family functioning, and relationships between family care in the present generation and developmental outcomes of the children.
2. Use findings from this literature to construct systems models of material and social resources, cultural values, family-level care, and developmental outcomes. While focusing specifically on children, we articulate generalizable analytic approaches that could be applied equally well to other family members, such as the elderly.
3. Use these models to explore further our positive deviance project conclusions with data sets from Indonesia and Nigeria, to investigate the strength of associations between "social health" at the family level and "overall development" at the child level, and to test the hypothesis that the same family measures that predict individual dimensions of child development also predict the other dimensions that contribute to the concept of "overall development."
4. Synthesize a cross-disciplinary paradigm of "family social health" or "family social wellness" in relation to national and international development – a paradigm relevant to both current and future family entities, represented by children.
5. Draw conclusions for further research on family functioning to support social policies and programmes.
6. Recommend policies and programme designs to improve family social health in the context of a sustainable, food-secure environment.

Project scope

We were unable to review in depth the vast literature on the family – over 5,000 listings in Harvard libraries alone; we therefore relied strategically on review volumes and inevitably left areas uncovered.

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In this pass through our subject matter, we wished to reveal the most readily accessible conclusions about the social health of the family, to make these findings available for policy purposes, and to invite scholars specializing in the different branches of family and development studies to carry these ideas further.

To meet these requirements we reveal the fact that the smallest unit of analysis for sustainable development is not the household or the individual, but rather the biosocial family with its hereditary physical, social, and material endowments. It is the fundamental viability or, for want of a better term, "social health," of this cross-generational unit that we attempt to define and spotlight. We explore the language and logic used by the different disciplines to analyse and prescribe solutions to problems of family functioning. We relate these findings to a broad spectrum of development-assistance activities, as we seek to identify ways to strengthen the long-term viability or social health of families.

In-depth descriptions of two very different family types, the Javanese of Indonesia and the Yoruba of Nigeria, counterbalance the dominance in our cited literature of studies of Western – mainly North American Caucasian – families, as well as our lesser number of contrasting studies from Japan. We return repeatedly to the Yoruba and Indonesian cultures for details of family life that may contradict, validate, or expand generalizations from the Western literature.

Need for a family focus

Almost all development strategies now recognize the problems confronted by families. The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations (1987) listed the problems faced by families in developing countries, including poverty, low levels of education, poor health and nutrition, inadequate housing and sanitation, and unsupervised and unwanted children. Yet until recently, in the design of development policies and programmes, families have remained an invisible layer sandwiched between the individual and the community.

As stated by the Agency for International Development (AID) in 1990, many development programmes have been designed and their impact measured with emphasis either on the individual level or on the national level. According to the United Nations (1987), the emphasis in development activities is almost always on individuals and only rarely on families as units. Policies and programmes have been

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focused on individuals who comprise the family – children, mothers, the young, the ageing – whose interests and needs are related, but not identical, to those of the family. Thus, children's allowances are based on number of children; educational programmes are based on children in primary and secondary schools, and occasionally on vocational training for adults; and health programmes are based on prenatal care, postnatal care, and child health.

The broad range of issues that simultaneously affect family members, and that family members may perceive to be their most urgent problems, finds no forum in these fragmented, issue-specific initiatives. This void leads to lack of commitment and participation at the level of the family entity, which is the management unit that cares for family members. By materially rewarding an individual-centred approach to family problems, existing programmes may contribute to the breakdown of family functioning.

An additional need to focus on the family arises from recent rapid increases in female-headed households among the poor. This growing detachment of women and children from the earnings and the care of their men is linked to worsening conditions of the poor (Bruce and Lloyd 1992).

Definitions of the family and its functions

Families are groups related by kinship, residence, or close emotional attachments and they display four systemic features – intimate interdependence, selective boundary maintenance, ability to adapt to change and maintain their identity over time, and performance of the family tasks listed below (Mattessich and Hill 1987).

The tasks performed by families include physical maintenance, socialization and education, control of social and sexual behaviour, maintenance of family morale and of motivation to perform roles inside and outside the family, the acquisition of mature family members by the formation of sexual partnerships, the acquisition of new family members through procreation or adoption, and the launching of juvenile members from the family when mature (Mattessich and Hill 1987).

Definitions of the family must be flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of family forms. According to Walker and Crocker (1988), a family system can be defined as any social unit with which an individual is intimately involved, and which is governed by "family rules." One key concept of the family system is recursive causality, in

which family members reciprocally influence each other over time. Another concept is that the family is greater than the sum of its members.

Leaving room for alternate arrangements, we can assume that the majority of families centre on residential units containing parents and their children, a mother and her children, or a childless couple, with a number of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other kin living at varying distances from the core group. We also need to note that the reduction of distances by communications technology and other post-modern changes makes it increasingly difficult to generalize about actual or desirable family forms or residential arrangements.

Potential multiplier effects for family interventions

To the extent that enhancement of family social health simultaneously improves multiple dimensions of child development, we expect multiplier effects from family-level inputs compared with the effects of the same inputs directed through vertical programmes for individual children (Schorr 1988).

Seeking development from within each culture

We seek to nurture the family in newly emerging technological societies in a manner that maintains continuity from the past to future, and that avoids mistakes made by the industrialized countries. This goal was a part of the Positive Deviance Project. Family, as the cradle of culture, cannot be approached generically.

In Africa, the goal of development from within has been explicit since the introduction of the terms "Negritude" or "African Personality" by Senghor and "African Socialism" by Nkrumah, starting in the 1940s and 1950s (Lloyd 1972, 267–287). Failure of some attempts by political movements to harness African traditional values in the service of socio-economic development has not changed the importance of this agenda, nor that of agendas of uniting Africans of different ethnic groups around their common values and continuing to look for models, such as the Japanese experience, for incorporating family and lineage values into newly emerging industries (Babatunde 1992, 222–240).

In Indonesia, the unity and the diversity of that country are manifested by *Pancasila*, Indonesia's national ideology. There were conflicts, during the struggle for an independent Indonesia, over the kind

of basic principles upon which the future state would be founded: one group proposed Islam as the basis, while other groups favoured a secular state. On 1 June 1945, President Sukarno delivered a famous speech in which he proposed a compromise that the state would be neither an Islamic nor a secular state but a *Pancasila* state. From then on, 1 June has been celebrated as "the birth of *Pancasila*." Literally, *Pancasila* means "five principles," namely:

1. The Principle of One Lordship (One God);
2. A Just and Civilized Humanity;
3. The Unity of Indonesia;
4. The Principle of Peoplehood Which is Guarded by the Spirit of Wisdom in Representation;
5. Social Justice.

The appeal to believe in one God is a message of religious tolerance to citizens of all religions, from Islam to Christianity, to Hinduism, to Javanese Mysticism, and an appeal to worship God by practising their own religion. Indonesia has more than a hundred distinct ethnic groups with a wide array of languages, and *Pancasila* has sustained their unity in diversity based on the concept of "harmony and balance." Over the years, the present Indonesian Government has been seriously committed to national development, with economic development as the central focus. It has shown remarkable progress. At the same time, the Government has also conducted an intensive and pervasive educational programme on *Pancasila*, ranging from the primary school to the top management level, assuming that *Pancasila* will provide a needed moral basis for national development, even though this assumption has been questioned (Darmaputera 1988).

Organization and overview

Chapter 2, on Social Change and the Family, reviews the literature (sociological, anthropological, psychological) on changes that call into question traditional family values and supports while preparing children for new lifestyles. During the process commonly referred to as modernization, rational bureaucratic authority and impersonal markets gradually come to dominate social life. Ties to kin weaken, face-to-face interdependencies are reduced, and impersonal markets and agencies of the state increasingly mediate between individuals and between small families. The break from the past never is clean, as the old either persists or evolves into the new. Moreover, the order

in which these changes occur and the forms they take vary greatly from one society to another (Dizard and Gadlin 1990).

We view family life among our Yoruba sample as highly susceptible, and our Javanese sample only moderately vulnerable, to disruption by secular change. Therefore, the discussion of the family in Nigeria and the Nigerian model consider these influences much more explicitly than do our chapters on Indonesia. As detailed in the chapter introducing the description of the Javanese family (ch. 6), Indonesian socio-economic development appears to follow an East Asian pattern best documented among the Japanese; in this pattern, traditional hierarchies and value systems, forms of respect, and dependencies developed in feudal eras appear to contribute positively to the industrialization process.

For Nigeria, on the other hand, problems attendant on rapid social change are elaborated by the authors cited in our chapter on the Yoruba family (ch. 7), and many of these appear to be concerns similar to those voiced by Dizard and Gadlin (1990) in the United States. In Africa, low self-esteem derived from perceived inequalities in wealth and technology increases the disruption of traditional social norms. Major cultural discontinuities, such as those that occurred for the immigrating population of the United States and during the colonial domination of Africa, throw populations into transitional states in which the formation of new cultural norms is particularly vulnerable to market forces. Barnlund (1989) points to the discontinuity of the American experience, compared with the long continuity of Japanese culture, as an explanation for the US obsession with individualism as contrasted with Japanese authoritarian hierarchies.

Powerful cultural differences pervade global trends. In promoting democracy, the United States must be wary of exporting aspects of American culture that are not essential to the democratic process. Much of what is distinctive in American values has been traced to the constant mobility of its early settlers, including good traits such as optimism, individualism, achievement orientation, and love of novelty, and negative aspects of superficiality, alienation, loneliness, and materialism (Slater 1980; Darling 1986). Chapter 2 explores these cultural differences.

Chapter 3, on economics, distils relevant findings from research methods using mathematical equations that are relatively inaccessible to non-economists. Mathematical game theory used by economists to study bargaining between husbands and wives, for example, cannot be applied by marriage counsellors. Yet economics increasingly sup-

plies useful mathematical models for more general applications. Used to the rationality of the market, economists studying the family are in the midst of a fascinating process of redefining their concepts to accommodate cultural and psychological determinants of household behaviour. These adaptations hold out the promise of quantifying the effects of family change on economic development and human welfare.

Chapter 4, on psychological theories, spans thousands of documents, which we were forced to deal with mainly through review volumes and articles. Psychological studies of families as systems provide a broad inventory of concepts and measurements for use in cross-disciplinary synthesis of methods and findings.

Chapter 5, on development-assistance approaches, highlights the pioneering role of early childhood development programmes in working with families. This programme type strengthens the family's capacity to play its socialization and educational role, while protecting the family member at highest risk and strengthening, through the child, the foundation for the family's next generation.

Chapters 6 and 7, on Javanese and Yoruba family life, illustrate family concepts and family life in two well-known non-Western and less-industrialized cultures. Rather than focusing on social wellness of the family as an entity, we set forth each culture's own concepts of family life and values. Chapter 8 presents and tests empirical models using field data contextualized in the previous two chapters.

Chapter 9 draws upon the earlier chapters to produce a unified cross-disciplinary paradigm of the socially well family. Chapter 10 provides a list of policy and programme priorities that is limited to those approaches that improve family social health and the conditions of children, either through, or in parallel with, the conditions of the family.

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Social change and the family

Sociological, anthropological, and historical perspectives

Pre-modern families

Early hunting-and-gathering societies appear to have lived first in small nomadic bands and later, in some locations, in larger, more settled, and hierarchically organized communities (Wenke 1984). Judging from groups of !Kung, Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, and others whose lifestyles have remained relatively intact into recorded history, small kin groups of hunter–gatherers tended to be cooperative and relatively egalitarian. Although marital partnerships were formed, hunter–gatherer bands valued compatibility among their members more highly than continuous co-residence with a single band, and individuals might fluidly move from one related band to another (Quale 1988). They have been idealized by ecologists for holding values of living in harmony with other life forms instead of striving to dominate and exploit them. However, the integration of such families into modern life tends to be a long and difficult process.

Most herders and pastoral nomads tend to have patriarchal families and a tendency toward polygyny (Schneider and Gough 1961; Maccoby 1966). Women's productive work tends to be limited to