The Child and His Welfare

THIRD EDITION

Fredericksen / Mulligan

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Dedicated to

Virginia and Paul

whose
help and encouragement
have enabled us
to complete this book

Preface

Our chief purpose is to provide a broad view of the field of child welfare, and to show how it has developed and is constantly changing.

The book is designed for a wide range of interested persons: undergraduate students who are considering a career in social welfare or child care; social workers in public-assistance and child welfare agencies; country supervisors; probation officers; juvenile judges; elementary and high school teachers who wish to learn more about the field of child welfare; board members of public and private agencies; and many others.

The field of child welfare is constantly expanding, and it should be—if we in this country are to develop a better prospect for that third of the population under eighteen years of age, who (we keep reminding ourselves) include our future leaders.

As authors we do not presume to have covered any one area of the field fully, or to have enunciated final principles. Progress in guid-

ing children to effective adult life demands constant evaluation and reevaluation. We cannot say a suggested procedure is *the* way, but only *a* way that we think will help children achieve a happier life.

We have not included a special chapter about children in minority groups, because we believe that all services and opportunities promoting health, education, and welfare should be of equal access to children in all stations of life, regardless of race, creed or color. We have not overlooked the fact that children in minority groups are often at a cruel disadvantage. We are convinced that what produces a happy wholesome life for one group of children should be provided for all.

We wish to express our appreciation to the large number of generous people who have given time and thought to the discussion of materials presented in this book.

January 1, 1972   *Hazel Fredericksen*
                                                     Raymond A. Mulligan

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American society is changing so rapidly today that parents are unable to predict with any degree of certainty what lies ahead for their children. The factors underlying these changes are both technological and social. An example of the social factor is the increasing tendency of young people to speak out on various aspects of our social order, and as a result some of our most cherished social values are being questioned by them.

Social change as an entity neither guarantees progress nor automatically promotes social disorganization. It may either advance the welfare of children or create additional child welfare problems. Its effects are determined by the values of the social system in which it occurs, and how such change is evaluated depends on the judgments of the population making up the society.

Social change—and consequently child development, child welfare problems and the services for neglected, dependent, or delinquent

children—are affected at least indirectly and at times directly by economic, technological, demographic or social value fluctuations. If we are to understand the implications of social change for the field of child welfare, we should first look at some of the variables operating in this process.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

Technological change, generally considered the prime mover in social change, has been taking place in America with increasing acceleration for the past 150 years. It has influenced agriculture, food processing methods, building techniques, modes of transportation, types of entertainment, and communications, as well as many other areas of our society. Technological changes or material inventions have pervasive rather than unitary effects in our social system. For example, a technological change in mode of travel may affect not only our transportation system but, in variant degrees, public education, industry and business, and other types of activity that are interrelated directly or indirectly with that travel.

The causes of social change are not confined to mechanical inventions. Social inventions, too, may bring about social change, though not as much as mechanical innovations. Social legislation is an example of a social invention. Such social inventions as child labor legislation and compulsory school attendance laws are said to have changed some of the authority of the family by reducing the control of parents over their children. Dramatic or profound modifications in social institutions are brought about when clusters of several inventions, either social or material, come together.

The most striking technological change in modern times has been in the methods of production and distribution by means of power machines. As a result, throughout the years industry has been moved from the home to the factory. In turn, the advent of the factory and railroad led to the development of urban centers. In the cities, slum housing and concentrations of economic, racial, and ethnic minorities arose, as did high crime, delinquency, morbidity, and mortality rates.

In subsequent years, manufacturing and other types of production and business were moved from population centers to small towns or to the outlying districts of larger cities. Many middle class families also

moved from areas near the inner city to outlying better residential districts or to the suburbs.

The movement of businesses and people from the central city, aided by rapid transportation and the automobile, left behind not only many vacant shops and buildings, but the poor and their children. In past years, the abodes and neighborhoods of the poor and of certain racial and ethnic groups have deteriorated physically and socially so much that they are now commonly referred to as "jungles." Child welfare problems of every type and combination are found in these areas.

Social values as sources or potential sources of human behavior have been influenced in part by the changes in American society. The dynamics of social change, then, may be studied not only from the point of view of inventions, mechanical and social, but also from that of fundamental societal values. Social values change under social influences, and when the fundamental values are affected they exert significant changes in the behavior of individuals and in the organization of social systems.

"Social system" is a generic and relative term. Basically, it is an aggregate of behavior patterns loosely or formally organized on a long-term or short-term basis in order to pursue some group objective.

Society consists of one all-embracing social system. The family, or any other social institution, is a small social system unto itself, or a subsystem within a larger system. In turn, the family's behavior patterns may be more structured than those of a recreational group, but the degree of structuration does not make the family or any other group of interacting individuals any less a social system. We may refer to the behavior patterns of a highly structured social institution as a social system, as well as to the loosely organized and informal behavior of a child's play group that comes together from time to time.

Social phenomena may consist of music, law, religion, science, architecture, literature, folkways, mores, the social organization of the family, the social system of a factory, formal and informal prison systems, and so on.

American society has been described as a society that is undergoing accelerated social change. It has also been described as one whose value system is highly material—in other words, one that is influenced more by sensory values than spiritual. In addition, modern Americans have been described as self-oriented in their drives rather than other-oriented or group-interested. Whether these values and attitudes are the result of inventions or have developed independently of technological change is not relevant to our discussion. What is important is

that some of our basic social values are changing in the areas of morals, authority, and power, and that such changes are bound to have significance for the welfare of children.

All societies consist of a multitude of apparently diverse social phenomena and relationships that at first glance appear unrelated to one another. However, upon closer examination and study it is often found that there is some unity to these parts and that they are in harmony with a fundamental principle or basis value. According to sociological theory, the dominant parts of all the important social systems of a society, mores and manners, articulate a basic principle or value.

The dominant basic value in our society today is the belief that true reality is sensory, that only what we experience through our sense organs is real and worthwhile. This principle has been increasingly articulated by our modern society in all its main compartments. In contrast to the "supersensory" principles basic to some other societies, the basic principle of our society is worldly, secular, and utilitarian.

Values bring about social change by expanding into important areas of a society and becoming more dominant than the existing ones. For example, for many years mutual aid was a common practice in the rural areas of our country, but less so in urban settings. But as urbanization has increased, mutual aid has become less common, and individual- or self-interest has become an important theme throughout the nation.

Beside the technological and value changes that influence society, another important source of change is the dynamics of population. Although population changes are affected by social change, they also influence various social institutions, such as business, economics, education, and agriculture.

Population changes have been continually taking place in the United States for years. The national population jumped from 3,929,000 in 1790 to 39,905,000 in 1870, and to 203,185,000 in 1970; the projected figure for 1980 is 272,600,000, and it is 300,000,000 for the year 2000.

One dramatic population change has been in the percentage of children and youths (0–19). In 1900, there were only 33,700,000 in this age bracket, and in 1970, approximately 99,000,000. This increase gives young people a numerical authority, and presents the rest of society with certain problems in controlling the internalization of the prevailing social values. Youth, and what values it does internalize, is vital because it is a potential business market in clothing, cars, enter-

tainment, motion pictures, and older youth is a significant political force.

In spite of the decline in our birthrate, which began in about 1957, evidence indicates a future increasing population for the United States. The number of births in 1969 exceeds the number for 1968. Women in the childbearing ages of 20–29 will increase by 35 percent in the 1970's. Even with a relatively low birthrate we should expect a significant population increase, owing to the increasing number of young women of childbearing age in our society.

In addition, it appears that these large numbers of children and young people will continue to grow at an increased rate for the next several decades. Unless we also attain an ideal society in which we will have no child welfare problems, the increasing numbers of children in out population means our social services for children and youth will have to continue and expand.

In a rapidly changing society rules of behavior are tenuous. Moral codes tend to be very general, if they are to survive, and in the absence of specific guidelines or rules, the individual tends to be guided by the anticipated consequences of intended behavior instead of established social values.

Ideally, a well balanced society is one in which its social institutions and other major behavior patterns are adjusted to one another. When its major components do not complement each other, imbalance results, and the previously harmonious social relationships which were in a state of equilibrium are disturbed.

Sources of a society's problems that may lead to social disorganization are many. However, it is generally felt that the sweeping advances of science and technology in the United States in recent years have been major causes of rapid change in our education, health, and economic systems, thus creating, in certain areas of our society, imbalances such as unemployment in technological fields and increased poverty.

Social change does not affect all parts of a society, and those it does are not affected evenly. Some institutions change faster than others under the impact of outside influence. Since social systems are highly interrelated, a change in one system sets up strains in another. Also, part of a system may start moving in one direction while component parts have not yet adopted any of their functions to the change. This resulting social lag inevitably produces disharmony in the system (such as too large a number of students for an old school), which in turn affects individuals and their community in the realm of social adjustment.

The American family as a component of our society and the one social institution that has the greatest influence on children during their formative years has been directly and indirectly subjected to some of the forces that are generally considered as sources of social change.

The basic or conjugal family in American society consists of father, mother, and children. It is influenced not only by its own members but also by such local outside sources as relatives, primary groups, and the community. Lesser influences might be collective representations, such as the federal or state governments. In addition, certain international developments and problems may have influenced the American family through the news media. Certainly these developments have caused some married couples to debate the wisdom of bringing children into a world of conflict that presents so many future uncertainties.

The family as a social institution is closely related to other institutions in our society, and changes in any one of these institutions are soon felt in the others. For example, fluctuations in our economic, political, or religious systems are transmitted to the family as well as to other social institutions in our society. Social situations that affect adults often influence their social relationships with their children in the course of a short or a long period of time, depending on the valence of the outside agent of change.

At present, American society is stressing not only the rights of minorities, the poor, and women, but also those of youth and students. Of course, for years many middle class families reared their children permissively, and this permissive philosophy may have contributed to the aggression in youth behavior that is prevalent today. Democratically oriented societies carry the ultimate potential of maximum individual rights, but not out of balance with group rights. Permissive child rearing in the modern American family supports the emphasis placed upon individual rights found currently in so many parts of our social system. Whether our society has gone too far in the direction of individual rights at the expense of group rights, such as in concessions for juvenile delinquents, or whether we can push for still more individual rights without destroying our societal equilibrium is uncertain at this time. It is equally uncertain whether the pendulum has begun to move toward group rights or whether a synthesis of our new values on a different social level is in process along with a more integrated society. However, regardless of the direction of change, we know that our society is in a state of flux that has implications for the future of our children and their welfare.

The effects of living in a materialistically oriented society, such as ours, tend to make material goals more desirable than nonmaterial objectives, although naturally not all families are influenced to the same degree. For example, in a family with children, what is more important —the needs and general welfare of the children, or the material desires of the parents? Is a new car every two or three years a more desirable goal for the parents than food in proper amounts and quality for their children? It is a fact that there are fathers who select new cars over the minimum and basic food needs of their own children. Parental self-interest can also take precedence to clothing, medical attention, proper education, leisure time activities, and proper housing, for the children. Whether child neglect increases as a society becomes more materialistic or, inversely, child neglect decreases with an increase of spiritual social values remains to be demonstrated empirically. However, we do know that child neglect and malnutrition occurs in families with relatively good incomes.

Another result of the influence of material values on family life is the emphasis on individual gain, advancement, or pleasure. Parents may not openly neglect their children, but may subtly compete with them for a disproportionate share of the time and money available to the family. For example, it takes time to converse and play with children. It takes time to accompany them to such places as the zoo, the homes of relatives, museums, sporting events, or settings of cultural events. Some parents are not willing to devote a fair share of their free time to their children's activities. Similarly, parents may divert a disproportionate amount of the family's excess income to their own desires, to the detriment of the children's normal needs. In other words, the self-sacrificing immigrant parents of a generation ago and the ambitious lower middle class American parents of the same era appear to have been replaced, in part at least, to less self-sacrificing parents who are not willing to invest blindly all of their time and fortune in their children. This change may be interpreted as being due to our individualistic and materialistic society. In turn, children are not expected to aid their aged parents even when they are in dire need. Mutual aid among neighbors may be dead or decreasing in many communities throughout American society, but at the same time it has been diminishing in our families and in other primary groups.

As the child matures he eventually discovers the community in which his family is living, and he is influenced by it in proportion to the control exercised by his family. By "control," we mean the degree to which the family supervises the child's behavior outside of the home:

Is he allowed to associate freely with all children, or only with children whose behavior is considered by his parents to be desirable? Is the child allowed to leave and return home according to his wishes, or is he kept to a strict schedule and held accountable for his time by his parents? The stricter the parental controls, the less influential uncomplementary community norms will be on the behavior of the child.

The use of the term "community" has been used to designate populated areas from large cities to small towns. The term implies a territorial area, a high degree of interpersonal acquaintance, and a character that may distinguish one community from others or, in large cities, one neighborhood from another.

The influence that a community or neighborhood may have on the behavior of children and the child welfare services children may need in certain localities is quite well documented in sociological and child welfare literature. Various sociological studies of the past forty years have indicated (1) the influence that the social milieu has on the behavior of children and (2) the existence of a spatial distribution of social and child welfare problems in urban areas. For example, in a big city, the neighborhood in which a child's family resides determines to a large extent the possibility that child has of becoming a juvenile delinquent. The family's income determines the type of neighborhood in which a child is to live, and during his most formative years it influences much of his behavior. Social change has increased the rates of juvenile delinquency consistently since World War II.

In our large cities, neighborhoods vary greatly in many ways. Middle class neighborhoods differ from poor sections in housing, the cleanliness of the streets, the quality of schools, the adequacy of playgrounds, the quantity of public libraries, and the rates of juvenile delinquency and crime. Neighborhoods inhabited by the poor have higher mortality, morbidity, crime, and juvenile delinquency rates than do other areas. They tend to have a disproportionate number of high school drop-outs, poor school-attendance records, unemployed people, overcrowded housing units, and large families. The poor and their children in America do not receive adequate medical attention; as a result many have prolonged illnesses, and the average life span is shorter than that in the higher socioeconomic classes.

Rural communities have such advantages as clean fresh air, primary relationships, and low density of population, but they may in fact be inferior to various urban areas in some important ways. For example, the standard of living in nonurban communities is generally lower than that in urban centers. Social class differences are more visible in rural