Developing Cultures

Essays on Cultural Change

Edited by

Lawrence E. Harrison
co-editor of *Culture Matters*
and Jerome Kagan

Developing Cultures

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Introduction

LAWRENCE E. HARRISON

In April 1999, a group of scholars, journalists, politicians, and development practitioners met in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to discuss the relationship between cultural values and human progress. What motivated the organizing of the symposium—and what has motivated my work on culture over the past quarter century—was the conviction that values, beliefs, and attitudes are a key but neglected component of development and that the neglect of cultural factors may go a long way toward explaining the agonizingly slow progress toward democratic governance, prosperity, and social justice in so many countries in Africa, Latin America, the Islamic world, and elsewhere. Understanding how culture influences the behavior of individuals and societies, and which forces shape cultural change, can, I believe, accelerate the pace of progress.[1]

In the 1999 symposium, sponsored by the Academy for International and Area Studies of Harvard University, a wide range of views was presented. Many thought that cultural values were influential in the political, economic, and social evolution of societies; but others disagreed. Economist Jeffrey Sachs argued that cultural values played an insignificant role and that other factors, particularly geography, were far more influential. Anthropologist Richard Shweder argued that the fundamental thesis of the symposium was invalid because the idea of "progress," and indeed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which offers a widely accepted definition of progress, is a Western imposition on the rest of the world.

One year later, in the spring of 2000, the papers prepared for the symposium were published in the book *Culture Matters*[2] along with commentary by its coeditors, Samuel Huntington, then Chairman of the Harvard Academy, and me. The book received favorable critical attention in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe, Foreign Affairs,* and *Time,* among other newspapers and magazines. Eight foreign-language editions have been published: two in Chinese (Beijing and Taipei), and one each in Estonian, German, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish. A ninth, in Arabic, was contracted in 2005. Not least important and gratifying, *Culture Matters* was for several years a best-seller at the World Bank bookstore.

During the final session of the 1999 symposium, we tried to focus attention on the malleability of culture and what might be done to strengthen the values and attitudes that nurture progress. No one at the symposium believed that culture is genetically determined. Everyone believed that culture is acquired—transmitted from generation to generation through the family, the church, the school, and other socializing instruments.[3] But it was clear in that final session that the collective wisdom, substantial though it was, was not prepared to address cultural change and what promotes or impedes it. We did not have a satisfactory disaggregation of the word *culture* into components that would allow a better understanding of *how* culture influences the behaviors that promote progress. The participants in the symposium agreed that culture changes, but many were uncomfortable discussing measures to encourage or facilitate cultural change. Thus, my introduction to *Culture Matters* called for a comprehensive research program aimed at better understanding culture, cultural transmission, and cultural change, and particularly the factors that drive change.

By the spring of 2002, two years after the publication of *Culture Matters*, we had raised the money necessary to make that research program possible. Since then, more than sixty professionals from around the world, mostly scholars but also journalists, development practitioners, politicians, and businesspeople, have participated in the Culture Matters Research Project (CMRP) administered by the Fletcher School at Tufts University. The goal of the CMRP is to produce guidelines for strengthening the values and attitudes that nurture human progress as defined by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

- The right to life, liberty, and security of person
- Equality before the law
- Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
- The right to take part in...government...directly or through chosen representatives
- [The right to assure that] the will of the people [is] the basis of the authority of government
- The right to an [adequate] standard of living
- [The right to] adequate medical care and necessary social services
- The right to education

As I mentioned at the outset, anthropologist Richard Shweder views the UN Declaration as anything but "universal." He sees it as an imposition of Western values on the rest of the world, as did the American Anthropological Association when they opposed the Declaration. Allegations of Western bias notwithstanding, I believe that the large majority of the world's people would today agree with the following affirmations, which are essentially a restatement of the UN Declaration:

Life is better than death.
Health is better than sickness.
Liberty is better than slavery.
Prosperity is better than poverty.
Education is better than ignorance.
Justice is better than injustice.

I want to stress as forcefully as I can that the CMRP guidelines will only prove useful when political, intellectual, and other leaders *within* a society conclude that some traditional values and attitudes are obstacles to bringing about the kind of society to which they aspire. Any efforts to impose the guidelines from outside, whether by governments or development assistance institutions, are almost certain to fail.

To produce the guidelines, the CMRP sought to address three tasks:

Task 1. What are the values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence the political, economic, and social evolution of societies?

Task 2. What are the instruments and institutions that transmit cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes, and how amenable are they to application or modification for the purpose of promoting progressive values?

Task 3. What can we learn about the role of culture and cultural change from case studies, including studies of societies that have experienced political, economic, and social transformations?

With respect to the values and attitudes that matter (Task 1), the CMRP has produced a typology of cultural values that derives principally from the work of the Argentine journalist and scholar Mariano Grondona, who is a professor of political science at the National University of Buenos Aires and has been a visiting professor at Harvard. The typology consists of twenty-five factors that are viewed very differently in cultures conducive to progress and cultures that resist progress. By disaggregating "culture," the typology offers specific value, belief, and attitude targets for change. The typology is presented in the CMRP overview book *The Central Liberal Truth* by Lawrence Harrison, published by Oxford University Press. That title derives from Daniel Patrick Moynihan's aphorism, "The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself."

The instruments and institutions of cultural transmission and change (Task 2) are the focus of this book, including child-rearing practices, several aspects of education, religion, the media, political leadership, and development projects. The Task 3 case studies make up the companion volume *Developing Cultures: Case Studies*.

The *Central Liberal Truth* makes clear our appreciation that numerous factors other than culture influence the evolution of societies, prominent among them geography, including climate and the environment; the vagaries of history, including conquests and colonization; and leaders with a transforming vision. The CMRP attempts to trace one thread—culture—in a highly complex tapestry of cause and effect. But we believe it may be a crucial thread, one that has not been accorded the attention it merits.

Child rearing, education, religion, and the media are the principal means of transmitting cultural values from generation to generation, and modifications or reforms of these instruments or institutions are

central to the process of cultural change, strengthening the values and attitudes that nurture human progress.

Political leadership with a vision of a better society has been the driving force behind many of the transformations the world has witnessed in the past 150 years, among them Japan's rapid modernization under the Meiji leadership starting in 1868; Mustafa Kemal's cultural revolution in Turkey starting in 1923; Seretse Khama's visionary democratic leadership of Botswana following its independence in 1966; Lee Kuan Yew's leadership of Singapore's economic and social transformation; and King Juan Carlos's democratic vision for Spain.

Since the 1950s, "development," initially focused on accelerating economic growth but subsequently embracing social and political dimensions, has been the dominant priority of the poor, mostly authoritarian and unjust, countries. The rich, mostly democratic countries have attached varying priorities—high in the Scandinavian countries, lower in the United States—to helping the poor countries, bilaterally and through multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the UN Development Program, and regional development banks, as well as through their support of nongovernmental organizations such as CARE and Catholic Relief Services.

Fifty years later the results have, with a few exceptions, been disappointing, even disillusioning, above all in Africa, but also in Latin America and the Islamic countries. Fifty years ago, many development experts expected poverty and injustice to be eliminated from the world by the end of the twentieth century. That so much poverty and injustice is still with us importantly reflects, I believe, a failure to appreciate the power of culture to thwart or facilitate progress.

For most development institutions, cultural change is a taboo. This attitude is driven by cultural relativism, the idea that no culture is better or worse than any other. This idea was initially propagated by anthropologists and now is largely accepted throughout the development and academic communities. As a result, cultural analysis has largely been limited to adapting projects to the existing culture.

Most of the contributors to *Culture Matters* rejected this conventional wisdom, concluding that we have failed to confront culture and cultural change at great cost. The Culture Matters Research Project both confronts culture and presents guidelines for cultural change grounded in the lessons of experience. The essays in this volume address the principal tools available to promote progressive cultural change.

Notes

1. I appreciate that the word *progress* implies a value judgment with which some people may be uncomfortable. I use it in this book as shorthand for the goals of democratic governance, an end to poverty, and social justice articulated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
3. In its 3 June 2005 edition, the *New York Times* reports on a study by three researchers at the University of Utah that presents evidence that higher-than-average IQs of Ashkenazic Jews are the result of a centuries-long process of genetic selection ("Researchers Say Intelligence and Disease May Be Linked in Ashkenazic Genes," p. A21). But one wonders how the comparably high IQs of East Asians would then be explained.

Part I
Child Rearing

1
Culture, Values, and the Family

JEROME KAGAN

The "Culture Matters" project celebrates the values of political democracy, social justice, and economic prosperity, societal features that parents can enhance by promoting ethical attitudes with their children. To analyze how families can advance or retard democracy, social justice, and prosperity, I examine a hierarchy of ethical values, then consider their origin in biology and nurturance, and suggest how families can change the hierarchy.

Factors Influencing Value Hierarchies

Many things shape a person's hierarchy of ethical values, among the most important of which are family values and practices, the values of the child's role models, the social class, religion, and ethnicity of the child's family, and the historical context.

Family Influences

The first influences on the development of values come from the family in the form of the behaviors that are rewarded and punished, as well as the behaviors parents display as role models for their children. Most children regard what parents do as more relevant than

what they say. One important value has to do with fulfilling role assignments. In his essay in this volume, Luis Herrera notes that Costa Rican children are frequently allowed to avoid responsibility for assigned tasks. Costa Rican parents tell children complaining of a headache or stomach ache that they do not have to go to school that day. Children often avoid accountability for mistakes. For example, if a child is confronted with something he broke, and he resists confessing, his parents will often not insist. Among adults, absenteeism is high: teachers in Costa Rica take many paid sick days, and disability payments to public employees are four times larger than in comparable societies. Furthermore, Costa Ricans, like many Latin Americans, are prone to ignore legal requirements or to treat laws as nonbinding. Children are told that, while they should obey the rules, it is chiefly important not to be caught disobeying them.

Identification

Young children are biologically prepared to seek and detect similarities among a number of objects or events. For example, most two-year-olds presented with a random array of four red cubes and four yellow spheres will touch successively all of the objects with the same color and shape. Most five-year-old girls believe that they share more features with their mothers than with their fathers. Therefore, a five-year-old girl who sees her mother frightened by a thunderstorm infers that a fear of storms might be one of her personal characteristics. On the other hand, a girl who perceives her mother to be bold and forceful with her father and popular with neighbors will assume that she, too, possesses these qualities.

A child's identification with her gender can be symbolically creative. The categories "male" and "female" are associated in the minds of both children and adults with concepts that seem unrelated to gender. By eight years of age, the concept "female" is linked, unconsciously, to the concept "natural" because all cultures regard giving birth and caring for infants as prototypically natural events. Therefore, the concept "female" is semantically closer to the concept "nature" than is the concept "male." This claim was affirmed in a study of seven-year-old American children. In ancient times, the Pythagoreans regarded the number two as female and the number three as male in the belief that natural events occur more often in pairs than in trios.

Humans award salience to categories defined by less frequent, or uncommon, features. The more distinctive the features shared between child and parent, the more strongly the child identifies with the parent. A father who is tall and thin, with red hair and freckles, would engender a stronger identification in a son with these features than in a son who is short, chubby, brown-haired, and without freckles. Members of minority groups in a society are more strongly identified with that group than with the majority. The distinctive facial features, food prohibitions, and religious rituals of Jews in Central Europe during the Middle Ages contributed to a strong identification with that social category.

Children learn the behavioral properties of the categories to which they belong and seek consistency. A Vietnamese child whose family has immigrated to Montana will believe she should behave in ways that accord with her understanding of the stereotype for children in Vietnam, not Montana. If she failed to do so, she would violate the principle of consistency and risk uncertainty.

Young adults who decide that their childhood identification is a source of shame or anxiety may try to change their category membership. However, attempts to dilute a childhood identification may generate guilt if the person believes that the original category is the true one. An attempt to alter one's identification is an act of disloyalty to other members of the category and can have some of the same emotional consequences that would follow abandoning one's family. John McWhorter argues that many African Americans who identify strongly with their ethnic category believe that whites are morally tainted because of their prejudice, greed, and hypocrisy and, therefore, are not desirable role models. One sad consequence of this belief is an unwillingness to work diligently at school because these distrusted middle-class whites want them to master academic tasks, attend college, and become professionals. In this case, blacks' strong ethnic identification thwarts actions likely to benefit them.

Increasing ethnic diversity in the United States has made the category "American" more fuzzy than it was a century ago and identification with a national category more difficult. Many Mexican immigrants who have lived in America for a decade believe they are here temporarily and will eventually return to their native country. Many Dominicans living in America say, "One foot here, one foot there."

Social Class

The features that define social class, as distinct from ethnicity, are less salient and less stable, since those that define class are apparently more malleable. The signs children use for class include the quality of residence, neighborhood, and material possessions. Most seven-year-olds can distinguish between drawings of homes belonging to poor and to wealthy families, even though few parents remind their children of their social class and our society has no rituals linked to class membership. Thus, a child's discovery of his social class is conceptually difficult and more diffuse, and probably does not form before age six or seven.

Marx wanted to make class a more important psychological category than ethnicity or religion, but the nonviolent collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union, compared with the violent conflicts in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East, proves how difficult it is to do this. Because many Americans believe that only hard work and intelligence are needed to gain wealth, class has a greater potential for shame in America than in many other parts of the world. Youth who identify with their poor families are vulnerable to feelings of shame or impotence if they wonder whether the reason for their status is that their parents are lazy or incompetent. The emphasis on material wealth as a primary goal makes it theoretically possible for all American citizens, no matter what their ethnic, national, or religious origin, to believe that they can attain a higher status. The price of this change in social accounting is increased narcissism, selfishness, disloyalty, and, for those who remain poor, a readiness for shame that is hard to rationalize.

Of course, identification with a less advantaged social class may also provide some protection from shame or guilt over a family's class position. Protective beliefs of this kind include the notion that the rich are corrupt and morally flawed, that secure jobs in a competitive society are scarce, that employers are prejudiced against the poor, or that the middle class is inherently more talented. Each of these rationalizations permits adolescents who identify with a disadvantaged family to mute the intensity of their feelings of shame. These protections are becoming more difficult to exploit as American society tries to eliminate prejudice and provide more opportunities for the poor. As such psychological protection is torn away, adolescents from poor families confront their status without a healing rationalization. It is

possible that today, for the first time in American history, adults who grew up poor regard this personal feature as a serious stigma.

Parents' social class affects their preferred practices for socializing their children. Working- and middle-class parents participating in a study conducted in 1980 heard a tape recording of a brief essay that compared the relative value of restrictive and permissive strategies of socialization. Each parent was told that he or she would have to remember as much of the essay as possible as soon as the reading was over. American working-class mothers recalled more of the essay emphasizing that excessive restrictiveness was bad for children because it made them excessively fearful. Middle-class mothers remembered more sentences claiming that permissiveness would place their child at risk for delinquency and poor school grades. How can we explain this difference?

Working-class American mothers, anxious over their less secure economic position, do not want their children to be afraid of risk, for that trait might put them at an economic disadvantage. As a result, they favor a more permissive regimen. Middle-class mothers have become apprehensive about their children not performing well in school, or being tempted by asocial friends; hence, they have favored a more restrictive regimen since World War II.

Finally, family myths aid a child's identification. Children are emotionally moved by stories of heroic family members who displayed qualities symbolic of strength, bravery, compassion, or intelligence. Jewish parents oppressed during the Spanish Inquisition probably told their children that, although their lives were harsh, they could trace their religious identity to the patriarchs celebrated in the Bible. In *Angela's Ashes,* Frank McCourt's chronically unemployed father reminded him that, as a son of Ireland, he possessed the courage of those who came before him. These family myths help children cope with anxiety and shame.

Environment

Another set of influences includes the values of friends and teachers. The values promoted in the school are usually those promoted by the majority in the society. Hence, children from the majority group find support for what they were taught at home, while those from a minority group, whether ethnic or religious, may be exposed to a

different set of values. They can either resist or change their childhood beliefs. In Mao's postrevolutionary society, Chinese adolescents who were born in the early 1930s had to suppress the values they were taught by their mothers and grandmothers in order to fit in.

A final set of influences involves conditions in the immediate environment, especially social demands necessary to maintain social harmony, civility, and productivity. Each person tries continually to gain qualities that will increase her self-respect, while simultaneously trying to avoid acquiring features that diminish it. Most individuals are risk-averse; faced with the slim possibility of gaining an important goal following effort, and the relatively certain expectation of experiencing shame and guilt following failure to attain that goal, they favor the latter, avoidant strategy.

Childhood experiences usually generate one or two serious sources of doubt or uncertainty that exert a strong influence on life choices. The doubts usually center on one or more of the following properties: talent, acceptability to others, physical attractiveness, social status, economic position, sexual potency, and moral character. Obviously, these qualities are not independent. Wealth is usually, but not always, correlated with higher social status and greater ability at the skills the society values.

The intensity and timing of each source of uncertainty are influenced by the importance the community places on that quality. For example, contemporary American society places a higher value on sexual potency than on piety; the reverse was true three hundred years ago in Puritan New England. Eighteenth-century Chinese society placed a higher value on talent and status than did the People's Republic of China in the mid-twentieth century; contemporary Chinese resemble modern Americans.

Democracy, Social Justice, and Prosperity: Are They Biologically Prepared Motives?

Some psychological characteristics are relatively easy to acquire—language is the obvious example—while others, like learning to read and to manipulate numbers in an equation, are more difficult. It is useful to ask, therefore, whether children find it easy or difficult to understand, and eventually to favor, the concepts of democracy, social justice, and prosperity.

Most students of human nature agree that chronic uncertainty over meeting survival needs and maintaining status with group members generates a universal motive to mute this undesirable feeling. Hence, it is easy for families to promote a desire for economic security and the accumulation of wealth. However, the case for democracy or social justice is less obvious, because these values pit an early childhood assumption about people against a moral imperative acquired later.

Anthropologists suspect that most early humans were communitarian, concerned with the opinions of their neighbors, empathic toward those in need of help, and loyal to the ethical requirements of the social categories to which they belonged. Humans were neither democratic nor egalitarian during the first eighty to ninety millennia of our existence. This fact suggests that some of the values promoted by the Culture Matters project, including political democracy and competitive capitalism, do not have an obvious priority in human biology.

Democracy

The deep assumption behind a preference for a democratic society is that all persons should have equal power to select the community's representatives; no one should have more voice and no one less than another. This belief does not strike children as having obvious validity. Most families are not democratic, not even those headed by politically liberal parents with doctorates in sociology. Children's experiences lead them to conclude that some individuals are rightfully entitled to more power to decide what will be done. When parents are, in addition, nurturing, just, and affectionate, children assume that an authoritarian arrangement does not violate natural law. Indeed, children want parents and some legitimate authority figures to protect them from yielding to temptations they suspect will be psychologically harmful. When, many years ago, I asked my twenty-year-old daughter what mistakes my wife and I had made during her childhood years, she replied that we gave her too much freedom during early adolescence, having assumed, incorrectly, that she could handle those challenges easily and wisely.

The first human foraging groups, consisting of thirty to fifty individuals, were not democratic. Nor were the ancient civilizations that matured after agriculture was invented around ten thousand years

ago. Although Western schools and colleges teach students about the creative intuition that led to Athenian democracy, most teachers and professors do not dwell on the fact that the slave residents of Athens had no political power.

The task, then, is to teach children that, despite obvious differences in experience, abilities, character, and wisdom, members of a community should have an equal voice in deciding political matters. In order to promote this democratic ethic, parents must encourage a sense of personal agency in their children by providing experiences that allow them to feel they have some power to affect family life. Put simply, consulting the child, asking her opinions, and, when appropriate, taking the child's preferences into account, should strengthen the child's sense of agency. Psychologists call parents who adopt these practices authoritatively democratic. Research indicates that such families are more common in Europe and North America in homes where parents have attended college. This last fact does not mean that parents who have less education cannot promote this standard, only that it is a bit more difficult for such parents, many of whom feel less agency themselves, to believe that children should have a deep faith in their own potency.

The assumption that all legitimate members of a community should have equal power to decide on the future of the community is harder to promote than a sense of agency, because this premise requires the child to understand the difference between economic gain and symbolic signs of status, on the one hand, and political privilege, on the other. Students who are more talented in mathematics should have preference in admission to schools of engineering; those who are more adept with their hands should be given preference in surgical residencies; and those who have acquired a firmer conscience should be awarded prized judicial positions. The exception to the principle that variation in privilege should be a function of personal qualities is the belief that the power to decide who should govern belongs equally to all.

One important reason why children resist the notion that all have equal political influence derives from the human moral sense. One psychological consequence of the large frontal lobe that evolved in our species between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago is the conviction that people can be sorted into categorical bins labeled "ideal," "good," "bad," and "evil." This evaluation is based on the degree to which an individual's characteristics are or are not in accord with

community mores. Since political power belongs in the "good" bin, it can be difficult to persuade youth that people categorized as bad because of their personal qualities should have an equal vote with good ones. This lesson requires adolescents to understand John Donne's message that the vitality of the larger community should, on occasion, take precedence over a person's sentiments. That is why a Boston judge several decades ago ordered busing of African-American and Caucasian children to schools miles from their homes, and why the American Civil Liberties Union defended the right of neo-Nazis to march in an Illinois city.

Unlike a sense of agency, which can emerge before age seven, this more abstract idea has to wait until the years before puberty, when the maturing cognitive abilities make it possible for youth to understand that the vitality of the community should, on some occasions, have priority over the desires of the individual. Promotion of this goal requires discussion between parents and children and is accomplished less easily through parental rewards and punishments. Parents have to be clever, sensing when it is appropriate to teach this lesson.

One class of opportunities occurs when a member of the extended family who lives some distance away is ill or lonely. By insisting that the visit include the child, even though he may have had a different plan for the day, families teach the child that the psychological state of the larger family unit can take precedence over personal wishes. By emphasizing the social categories to which the child belongs—family, clan, ethnicity, and religion—and explaining why the requirements of these groups deserve priority, parents prepare youth to award a similar allegiance to the political community

Social Justice

The task of persuading children that impoverished or disenfranchised members of the society deserve empathy confronts the same difficulties that accompanied teaching them that all should have an equal political voice. Families have an ally as they try to meet this assignment. Nature has endowed nearly all children with the ability to empathize with those in physical or psychic distress. An empathic concern over a whining puppy or a crying infant comes easily to all children. This sentiment, which Hume assumed was the foundation of human morality, is part of what makes the teaching of social justice possible.

Reminding children regularly of the deprivation experienced by disenfranchised citizens should, by adolescence, create a concern for strangers in need. It helps, of course, if parents not only promote this ethic in conversation but also display it in their behavior. We noted earlier that because most children identify with their parents, they are more likely to believe in the validity of an attitude if they see it practiced by their role models. Words alone, without support in the daily behavior of role models, are often too weak to maintain a strong empathic concern for the less privileged.

Promotion of social justice requires concern for the vitality of the community. A comparison of European with East Asian cultures in the eighteenth century, before the West began to influence the latter, reveals that the individual was the primary social entity in European society. Each person was to attain salvation, wealth, status, and happiness on his or her own. Community praise for success and blame for failure were assigned to the individual, not to his family or the actions of others. For East Asian youth and adults, in contrast, the imperative was to seek harmony with, and become part of, a group: first family and later peers and community. In these societies, each person's pride or shame rested on the success or failure of the groups of which he was a member, and not only on the individual's talent or perseverance. Both an individualistic and a communal ethic are possible human properties, but once one of these values is practiced for a while it becomes a bit difficult to adopt the other.

The Western concern with social justice is revealed in the degree of dignity and power awarded women over the last few centuries. Most husbands in contemporary Western nations cede wives greater autonomy than in Islamic or Asian societies. Nikolas Gvosdev, in his contribution to this volume, notes that in Byzantine society, especially among the less well-educated in rural areas, women were regarded as less pure than men and were not entitled to serve in the ministry. Some clerics removed all references to women in books of canon law. Bassam Tibi describes a similar inequality in Islamic states.

These facts are relevant to economic development because, for most of human history, women only attained respect through the status and accomplishments of their husbands and grown sons. Hence, husbands and sons who wished to please their wives and mothers worked at accumulating wealth and prestige, thus enhancing the family's social status.

Economic Prosperity

The attainment of economic prosperity requires an ethic that celebrates individual achievement and associates work with virtue. Many have noted that this view, inherent in Luther's sermons, is one basis for the economic prosperity of Protestant societies. The belief that economic gain requires a work ethic has, as a corollary, the conclusion that those who are poor failed to learn or to practice a work ethic. If they had done so, they would not be economically distressed. Hence, empathy for their state is not a moral imperative, because their condition is their fault. As with the abstract idea of the priority of the community, parents must explain to children that some citizens are unable to improve their position because of structural conditions in the society rather than because of individual moral failure.

Changing Value Hierarchies

I have argued here that the values communicated to the child in the home during the first decade of life will greatly influence its moral standards as an adult and therefore the economic and political development of the society. In order to change behavior one must alter the family's value hierarchy. Sharon Kagan remarks that this goal has been achieved to some degree through more than fifty thousand parent-education programs that serve millions of American parents.[1] Unfortunately, these programs are small efforts with limited budgets. Most programs try to alter parental behavior, rather than parental values, not only because the latter is difficult but also because some regard changing parental values as an inappropriate incursion into family privacy. However, it is probably impossible to change parental behaviors with children without changing the adult values first.

Richard Niemi, Steven Finkel, and Thomas Lickona believe that schools can affect value systems. Lickona argues that contemporary American society will condone arranging school environments to promote the values of hard work, perseverance, honesty, respect for authority, compassion for others, and humility. He believes that these goals can be attained if the principals and teachers construct the school environment with sufficient skill and care. However, Niemi and Finkel remind us that contemporary high school and college students have become disengaged from their society and its politics and,

for that reason, believes that courses in civic education could play a benevolent role.

Who is the Beneficiary?

To promote one value over another we must first analyze the different interests of three distinct constituencies: the community, the family, and the individual. Although all three influence each other reciprocally, under optimal conditions what benefits one should benefit the other. This ideal is rarely attained.

Most communities wish individuals to conform to their laws and play their assigned roles efficiently. The efficient production of needed goods and services represents one important role assignment. The family is interested in a different set of goals; it wants loyalty and affection from its members. Neither intention presupposes conformity to community laws or a work ethic.

The individual, the central agent in Western views of human society, desires a select set of feelings: sensory delight and freedom from pain, fear, and intimidation. But each agent also wants symbolic affirmation that it is good, meaning a judgment that its character or personality is in accord with, and not seriously discrepant from, the ideal acquired during childhood and adolescence. This judgment defines a sense of virtue. When one fails to match the ideal, dissatisfaction, anxiety, shame, guilt, or sadness results.

In a perfect world, the interests of all three beneficiaries, like the complicated pieces of a puzzle, form a coherent pattern. The individual would work hard, obey laws, show loyalty and affection to the family, and, through these actions, experience sensory delights and a feeling of virtue. Unfortunately, this smooth meshing of interests is uncommon because few communities agree sufficiently on the features that define virtue. Finding a balance among the three constituencies is like walking on top of a picket fence: one is always off balance.

Consider the three goals of political democracy, social justice, and economic prosperity. Western nations contain many citizens who regard the freedom of the individual as more important than the needs of the society and an equal number who believe that the community has precedence. Social justice is a less pressing ideal among those who favor the individual. This conflict is captured in Garrett Hardin's essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons."[2]

I do not believe that the facts of human biology can help very much as we try to decide which balance of interests best accords with our genetic predispositions. Humans are equally capable of subduing self-interest in the service of a larger group and ignoring the group to serve only the self. Humans want to belong to groups that award the self a definition, status, protection, and affirmation of acceptability, but they also want to be free of group restraints. The popular song "It Is a Hard Time for Lovers" captures the tension in couples who want loyalty, love, and personal freedom at the same time.

Although most of us would like to believe that humans can arrange more ideal conditions, the controlling agency, hiding behind a curtain, is historical change, which brings new machines, new wars, new forms of contraception, new medicines, new forms of transportation, and new modes of communication. If cars, trains, planes, and the contraceptive pill had not been invented, the contemporary world would be very different. These changes hastened the celebration of personal agency and made democracy a desirable political form and concern for genetically unrelated strangers in distress a moral imperative. Neither ethic is in closer accord with our biology, however, than its opposite.

When asked what they want in life for themselves and their children, most Americans and Europeans answer, "to be happy." Usually, however, humans decide that they are happy when their life conditions and personal characteristics are not seriously discrepant from what they have come to believe is proper, good, and moral. The vicissitudes of history, like the changing cloud patterns on a blustery March afternoon, dictate what life conditions will frame that judgment. It is not obvious that a thirty-year-old American who commutes forty miles each way on a crowded highway to a factory assembly line, insurance office, or hotel kitchen experiences more sensory delight and feels more virtuous throughout the year than a laborer who worked on one of Pharoah's pyramids, a monk or nun in a medieval village, or George Bernard Shaw's nineteenth-century London flower girl heroine in *Pygmalion*.

At the moment, personal freedom to perfect oneself, free of restraint from the community or family, is a central feature of that judgment. For this reason, the promotion of democracy has become an ethical ideal. It is assumed that promotion of this ideal will be followed by social justice and economic prosperity for as long as history will allow.

What Should Be Done?

The explicit goal of the Culture Matters Research Project is to persuade nations that do not now enjoy political democracy, concern for the disadvantaged, and economic prosperity to implement changes that will allow them to command these goals if they choose. A society can possess any one feature of this trio without the others. Many Latin American and African nations have some of the defining features of political democracy without social justice or prosperity. The People's Republic of China during Mao's reign was concerned with the plight of peasants but was a totalitarian form of government. Attainment of all three features requires those with political power, whether a dictator or an elected assembly, to acknowledge the will of the majority and to allocate resources and legal protections to the less advantaged.

Permanent social change, however, requires a change in the values of the community. Adoption of an ethic that combines democracy, social justice, and economic prosperity requires that youth be socialized by family, school, and media to believe in four propositions:

1. It is possible for every person to improve his or her economic and social position through education and the conscientious application of individual talents. Many people in less developed societies hold a fatalistic belief that they are passive victims of social forces they cannot change. As a result, improving one's talents in order to work toward a goal is unlikely to result in a better life. This attitude might be called the "helplessness ideology."
2. The political and judicial system is generally fair and just; conformity to the law is expected and violations are punished.
3. Individuals who are members of a social category that has experienced prejudice are entitled to dignity, freedom from bigotry, and an opportunity to improve their lives. The belief that members of some social categories are inherently less talented or less virtuous than the majority because of their historical origins or presumed biology is a formidable obstacle to progress. That is why, in part, Rwanda, Guatemala, Nigeria, and Russia are less prosperous than Botswana, Costa Rica, Chile, and France.

   Furthermore, people must identify with their nation more strongly than with their tribe, clan, or region. America's advan-

tage, as Tocqueville appreciated almost two hundred years ago, is that most Americans believe they are members of the same national category; hence they are receptive to the notion that all citizens have equal dignity and are entitled to equal opportunity and equal legal protection.

4. The accumulation of wealth, which usually brings status, is a virtue and does not imply that a person has violated an ethical standard simply because he is more advantaged than a neighbor.

Persuading a majority to believe in and to adopt these ideas requires the cooperation of family, educational institutions, and the mass media. The family's responsibility is to praise perseverance, academic achievement, and autonomy in children and to chastise the avoidance of responsibility, school failure, excessive dependence, and passivity. Parents, who are role models for their children, must display these desirable behaviors in their daily activities.

The school has a similar task and, in addition, must believe that children from disadvantaged or minority groups are sufficiently talented to profit from pedagogy. Teachers must communicate the idea that improvement in status can be a result of hard work, is a virtue, and is not a basis either for guilt or worry because some have attained a goal that others have not.

The media's responsibility is to celebrate the values of education, talent, and perseverance, and to praise heroes and heroines who conquer childhood disadvantages. The Abraham Lincoln story, among many others, is effective. These values are more difficult to promote in less developed societies, where individuals worry about the silent criticism they might provoke by attempts to improve their position. Australians use the phrase "lop off the tall poppies," implying that anyone who tries to attain a status higher than his neighbor is a legitimate target of criticism. Many youth in less developed nations persuade themselves that the few who are well educated or wealthy are morally compromised. George Comstock, the antihero of Orwell's novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, held this assumption. Contemporary Islamic societies denigrate America's conspicuous consumption. Hence, it may be difficult to persuade Islamic adolescents to adopt Western views, for if they do, they will become the "hated ones." This dynamic is an effective obstacle to attaining goals the individual may want but be unable to work toward, because these goals were

categorized as bad during childhood. All three sources of influence—family, schools, and media—must disseminate the same values. If any one source promotes a different ethic, it dilutes the moral power of the message.

Citizens within regions in America and Europe with a great deal of ethnic diversity are less certain than earlier generations about what is sinful and what is sacred. One benevolent consequence of this doubt is greater tolerance of minority values. But humans still want to believe in sins and sacraments in order to make a host of daily decisions after they have provided for food and shelter.

The balance between individual and community interests shifts with history as a result of inventions, migrations, wars, and national catastrophes. The West has enjoyed extraordinary gains in material comfort, health, literacy, and personal liberties over the past thousand years because each individual pursued a philosophy of self-interest. Millions living in remote areas know about, and compare themselves with, affluent citizens in North America and Europe. This comparison, which was impossible two hundred years ago, engenders a combination of envy, anger, and shame rather than awe or respect. This novel state of affairs makes it reasonable to consider whether advantaged societies should share more of their resources and technical expertise with the poorer nations, as America did with Germany and Japan at the end of World War II, while not insisting, at least initially, that these societies mimic all the features of the democratic West. The hope is that as the citizens of these nations become educated and their lives improve, they will feel empowered and demand democratic institutions and social justice.

In sum, the achievement of democracy, justice, and economic growth requires parents to reward educational achievement, perseverance, and perfection of self; teachers to believe in the potential success of all children; media to celebrate those who develop special talents and have compassion for those with a compromised status; and political leaders to legislate a concern for those with educational and material shortfalls and to enforce laws without prejudice. The state's critical responsibility is to guarantee a just judicial system, so that a majority believe that violations of the law will be punished in a fair manner. Because the United States has done this, when the Supreme Court decided that school segregation was unconstitutional, many citizens living in Southern states began to obey that judgment without starting a second Civil War.

Although nations with rich natural resources have a clear advantage, these resources are no guarantee of economic prosperity or democracy. Nigeria, despite its petroleum wealth, has less democracy and prosperity than Costa Rica. Attainment of the three ideals, like the creation of a perfect storm, requires many independent factors to converge in the proper temporal sequence. The first phase of this sequence for many contemporary societies is a change in the values that families, schools, and the media promote.

The extraordinary economic gains attained by Americans and Europeans over the past few centuries are correlated with political democracy, high levels of public education, a spirit of entrepreneurship, and individual liberty. As a result, many scholars have assumed that these four features must be necessary for economic progress. But it may not be true. Since the mid-1970s, the People's Republic of China has enjoyed greater economic growth than more democratic India. Although democracy and personal liberty did contribute to the West's rapid economic and political development, the inevitability of changing relations among social phenomena is a historical fact. The contemporary world represents a new constellation of features, and it remains possible that a new combination of factors will facilitate economic development in the next two centuries. Culture always matters, but the relations among values, political structures, and forms of economic activity are always changing.

Notes

1. Sharon Kagan and Amy Lowenstein, chapter 3 this volume.
2. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243–48.

2

Parenting Practices and Governance in Latin America

The Case of Costa Rica

LUIS DIEGO HERRERA AMIGHETTI

Parenting styles and practices[1] and child development have rarely been included in discussions of economic development and social progress. The usual assumption is that progress is determined by such powerful and related factors as natural resources, political organization, and economic policies. Parenting does not seem, at first glance, to play any role. The implicit belief seems to be that values and attitudes affect the private lives of individuals and groups but not their way of wielding power, doing business, and managing public institutions.

Children of all cultures are genetically programmed, or "wired," to acquire the categories "good" and "bad." By the end of their second year, children are cognitively mature enough to understand some actions as moral violations.[2] Soon afterwards, they pay attention to parents' voices, nonverbal language, and other behaviors and can make mental representations and categorize events, even those they have not yet experienced, as good or bad.[3]

In a variety of ways, parents transmit their approval or disapproval and help children internalize standards. This process is not always apparent. Communication of what is desirable as a personal attribute, an attitude, or a behavior takes many subtle but powerful

forms that are interwoven with the myriad daily interactions between parents and children.

Behaviors directed toward children create in their minds a set of internal representations that guide their attitudes and behaviors in an often automatic, unconscious way. These adult behaviors are the result of informal social emphasis on the community's prevalent values, an essential part of its cultural landscape. Some parenting practices are more effective than others in enabling children to internalize these values.

However, it is possible to hold certain ideas, explicitly assume some moral standards, and meanwhile leave unchanged the behaviors that contradict them. Many people in Latin American societies, as elsewhere, pay mere lip service to some moral ideas or beliefs. For example, in Costa Rica, family planning methods are widely used by people who consider themselves committed Catholics, although the Costa Rican Catholic Church forbids such practices.

The evidence suggests that a major determinant of children's behavior is what parents actually do, regardless of what they say. Systematic studies have shown an insignificant correlation between children's behavior and what parents say they believe in.[4] One focus in this chapter is on such inconsistencies and double standards among Latin American elites. I am interested in the mechanisms by which children develop values and moral rules—in other words, how character and commitment are formed, which is the true test of a moral life.[5] I believe that parenting practices play a major role in determining to what extent an individual's declared principles and values actually influence how he or she makes use of power and manages business or public office.

The examples of child rearing patterns addressed in this chapter are mostly drawn from Latin American elites, though I believe they are widespread across Latin American societies. Because most countries in Latin America are heterogeneous in their cultural, ethnic, and social composition, the national identity of a given group is less informative than its social position. For example, from a sociocultural point of view, a Mayan group in Guatemala may be more akin to an Araucanian group in Chile than to the other social sectors in Guatemala. Within this analysis, it is appropriate to talk about cultural groups as a universe of implicit shared meanings and common practices, and to emphasize how groups behave rather than the ways they see themselves.

No one group, of course, is solely responsible for Latin America's generally disappointing rate of economic and social progress. But the ruling elites must bear paramount responsibility. As Carlos Alberto Montaner has written: "Those who occupy leading positions in public and private organizations and institutions are the ones chiefly responsible for perpetuating poverty."[6]

The World Bank defines governance as the way "power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development."[7] The international financing institutions view good governance as respect for the rule of law, integrity, transparency (less corruption), and accountability. Good governance reflects social norms: beliefs grounded in the prevailing values of a community, which designates behaviors as "desirable or legitimate in the shared view of societal members"; their violation "elicits at least informal disapproval."[8] Clearly, these social norms also apply to the private domain. Parenting practices, in particular, can be seen as both a source and a reflection of social norms.

I suggest that several socialization and parenting practices are unfavorable to good governance. These include: a culture of somatization[9] and lack of accountability; a confusing dichotomy between honesty and cleverness; overprotection and diminished autonomy; meandering styles of communication and fear of assertiveness; authoritarian and inconsistent parenting leading to impaired moral reasoning skills; and deficient future awareness associated with diminished capacity for delayed gratification. The progress-resistant values that result from these may constitute an obstacle to political, social, and economic development.

Somatization, Accountability, and Cleverness

In Costa Rica, among all classes and age groups, individuals commonly use physical complaints, illnesses, and vague symptoms and maladies to explain why they do not feel well at work, school, or home. This culture of somatization validates not doing homework, coming late or not showing up for work, procrastinating, and getting extra attention from those around the complainer. A prominent physician once remarked that Costa Ricans can be divided into two categories: those who are tired and those who have a headache.

This is not really funny. Data from *Latinobarómetro*,[10] a public opinion survey conducted annually in many Latin American nations, show that Costa Rica has the highest proportion of people who admit to feigning an illness to justify not showing up to work. Recently, there has been a public debate about the near bankruptcy of the Costa Rican social security system, which provides medical care nationwide. A significant cause is the abuse of disability pay for public employees, which is almost four times what it should be. It is also noteworthy that among all public sector employees, teachers have the highest rate of paid sick days.[11]

From birth, Costa Rican parents pay immediate and abundant attention to their children's physical complaints. Any headache or stomach ache is a good enough reason to skip school or not do homework. Parents who react differently may be perceived—even by themselves—as insensitive or negligent. Costa Ricans are socialized from early childhood in a culture where physical complaints are a way of rendering oneself unaccountable.

Accountability is, in fact, something new in Latin American culture. The word has no exact translation in Spanish. It is often translated as *responsibilidad*, or more recently, as *rendición de cuentas*. But *responsabilidad* is inaccurate, precisely because it lacks sufficient emphasis on the external element. The need to position oneself as unaccountable permeates everyday language. In Costa Rican Spanish, if one breaks, loses, or damages something or makes a mistake, this is expressed in a passive, impersonal form: "it was broken," "it got lost," "it got damaged," instead of "I lost it" or "I broke it." A child who is confronted with something that he or she broke will sometimes resist quite a while before saying "I did it." Very often parents do not insist, and their children's misbehavior or mistakes are ignored or quickly forgotten.

The rule of law in Latin America is a rare phenomenon. Children are taught many contradictory standards of behavior: they are supposed to abide by the rules, but if they break them, the important thing is to get away with it. Not being caught is an achievement. Parents often comment with pride on how their small children were able to take a shortcut, lie cleverly, or cheat successfully. This sends a powerful message that being shrewd is better than being truthful.

When adolescents from elite families break the law, they are almost always bailed out, either through political influence or through intimidation or bribery. The whole incident is often trivialized, glossed

over as the natural result of growing pains. Often I hear parents sharing anecdotes of how their child accomplished something cleverly but unethically. Parents—including those who explicitly teach honesty and truthfulness—delight in this supposedly astute behavior, even when it implies lying to them. They feel proud of being outsmarted by their children, choosing not to notice the moral inconsistency.

A set of very popular children's bedtime stories features the character Tío Conejo, whose core message to children is that being sly and cunning is a better way to get what you want than being honest and truthful. This, too, reinforces cultural attitudes that, in Costa Rica and other Latin American countries, all too frequently become sociopathic behaviors.

Overprotection and Diminished Autonomy

Licht, Chanan, and Schwartz, using Schwartz's model of cultural values, describe the bipolar dimension of Embeddedness/Autonomy, arguing that in many countries, diminished autonomy correlates strongly with poor norms of governance.[12] Mariano Grondona, referring to progress-resistant traits in Latin American and other poor regions, also argues that lack of self-confidence and autonomy undermine economic development.[13]

In affluent and middle-class families, many of whom send their children to private schools, parents, particularly mothers, are very involved in their children's activities and responsibilities. All parents want to believe that their children are competent to cope with increasingly difficult school requirements. Since this is not always the case,[14] many parents end up sitting with their children and assuming most of the responsibility for homework. Children get used to this scheme and depend on it. To outsiders, and even the school, it appears that the child is succeeding; privately, the parents know this is not true and often quarrel with their children about it. This dynamic teaches the child dishonesty, damages his sense of competence and productivity, and weakens his potential to trust his abilities to cope with external demands.

This kind of overprotection is not limited to schoolwork; it extends to other areas of children's functioning, such as choosing friends and learning from failures. Even if it does not damage self-esteem, it can harm children by fostering false confidence, an undue sense of being

exceptionally gifted or accomplished, based not on actual interaction with the environment but instead on their parent's overinvolvement. Entitlement follows as a consequence.

The result may well be an important segment of young adults who feel entitled to privilege. If their parents continue to support this feeling in adulthood, the children may never come to terms with reality. This dynamic obviously interferes with the child's internalizing an ethic of effort and reward and a sense of responsibility.

Ambiguous Communication and Fear of Assertiveness

Grusec and Goodnow[15] have made an interesting contribution to the topic of styles of discipline. They conclude that two factors determine how well values are transmitted. First, the child must accurately perceive messages involving values; here, parents' clarity, frequency, and consistency in expressing values are critical. Second, those messages must be accepted; here, what matters is the parents' fairness and persuasiveness, and the appropriateness of the message to the child's temperament and developmental level. Parental empathy and warmth are also very important.

Unfortunately, one salient aspect of parent–child communication in Latin America is a meandering, verbose style. Direct communication is avoided, and many kinds of circumlocution are employed to evade commitment, clear-cut answers, interlocutor disappointment, or potential confrontations. This trait is particularly evident when dealing with contentious or emotional issues. Very early, children receive the message that there is something wrong about being straightforward, claiming what you believe is just, or requesting compensation for wrongdoing. It is suggested that confrontation is impolite or rude, or that the other person may become angry, resentful, or vindictive. There is even an unrealistic, almost catastrophic, perception of the consequences of confrontation, as if there were only two options: acquiescence or violent confrontation. In Costa Rica, several colloquial expressions describe this oblique communication style: *paños tibios, plato de babas, enaguas meadas*.

This linguistic pattern interferes with the way demands and censure are transmitted to children. Children perceive this as ambivalence about the importance of certain values, which lends itself to a superficial internalization of norms. The indirect communication

style is intimately related to the fear of straightforwardness or assertiveness in Latin countries; although assertiveness is included in the official Spanish dictionary (*asertivo*), the thing itself is unknown to most people. When I explain to parents the concept and its relevance, they often seem perplexed, as if they have discovered a previously unknown dimension of human nature. They do not know how to be assertive and cannot model it for their children.

When we add to this oblique communication style and fear of assertiveness a weak emphasis on accountability and an informal encouragement of short cuts and getting away with bad behavior, the stage is set for children to resort to "illicit" strategies to affirm themselves and accomplish what is expected of them. These illicit strategies may well mold children's character and commitment and pave the way for corrupt behavior and disrespect for the rule of law during adult life.

Authoritarian and Inconsistent Parenting Styles

Several researchers have discussed how values are internalized and transmitted. Sears, Maccoby, and Levin found that mothers who used praise, affect withdrawal, isolation, and reasoning as a disciplinary style were more effective in developing their children's moral conscience (defined as the internalization of maternal values).[16] Martin Hoffman made a distinction among three different approaches to discipline: power assertion, love withdrawal, and appeals to children's sense of pride and need to be good.[17] In general, these theories of how children internalize values support the idea that power-assertive discipline, by itself, is detrimental to children's moral development, while love withdrawal, reasoning, and warmth all had more positive effects. However, it is important to consider the role that class, and particularly educational level, plays in mediating the relations between the form of socialization and children's development.

According to these views, mere power assertion inhibits the development of moral reasoning, while a persuasive discussion allows children to entertain psychological scenarios different from their own and thus fosters the development of empathy and respect for others. Diana Baumrind, however, has found a considerable difference between an authoritative and a merely authoritarian parenting style. Authoritative parents use a democratic style of communication,