

FAMILY,

Socialization and Interaction Process

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CHAPTER I

The American Family: Its Relations to Personality and to the Social Structure

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The American family has, in the past generation or more, been undergoing a profound process of change. There has been much difference of opinion among social scientists, as well as among others concerned, as to the interpretation of these changes. Some have cited facts such as the very high rates of divorce, the changes in the older sex morality, and until fairly recently, the decline in birth rates, as evidence of a trend to disorganization in an absolute sense. Such considerations as these have in turn often been linked with what has sometimes been called the "loss of function" of the family.¹ This refers to the fact that so many needs, for example as for clothing, which formerly were met by family members working in the home, are now met by outside agencies. Thus clothing is now usually bought ready-made; there is much less food-processing in the household, there is a great deal of commercial recreation outside the home, etc.

That changes of a major character have been going on seems to be beyond doubt. That some of them have involved disorgan-

1. Emphasized particularly by W. F. Ogburn. See, for instance, Chapter XIII, "The Family and its Functions," *Recent Social Trends in the U. S.*, Report of President's Research Committee on Social Trends, 1933.

ization of a serious character is clear. But we know that major structural changes in social systems always involve strain and disorganization, so the question of evaluating symptoms of disorganization, of which we can regard the high divorce rates as one, involves the question of how much is a general trend to disorganization as such, how much is what may be called the "disorganization of transition."

Certain facts about the most recent phases of development seem to us to throw doubt on the thesis of general disorganization. First, after the post-war peak, the upward trend of divorce rates has been checked, though it is too early to judge what the longer run trend is likely to be.² To judge the impact of the instability of marriages, also the distribution of divorces by duration of marriage and by relations to children is just as important as the absolute numbers. As the figures show, by and large divorces are, and continue to be concentrated in the early periods of marriage and in childless couples. Even though married before and divorced, once people settle down to having children there is a relatively high probability that they will stay together.³

Compare to to facts about the CURRENTLY (late 20th, early 21st century) phases!

and Now?

2. Trends of marriage and divorce rates in U.S.—1920-1951

(RATES PER 1,000 POPULATION)

| Year | Marriage rate | Divorce rate |
|------|---------------|--------------|
| 1920 | 12.0 | 1.6 |
| 1925 | 10.3 | 1.5 |
| 1930 | 9.2 | 1.6 |
| 1935 | 10.4 | 1.7 |
| 1940 | 12.1 | 2.0 |
| 1945 | 12.2 | 3.5 |
| 1950 | 11.1 | 2.6 |

The divorce rate dipped a little lower to 1.3 at the depth of the depression and its high point was 4.3 in 1946. Every year since has shown a drop. The marriage rate reached its peak of 16.4 in 1946 reflecting demobilization but has remained consistently above 10 since.

Source: National Office of Vital Statistics, "Summary of Marriage and Divorce Statistics, United States, 1951," *Vital Statistics—Special Reports, National Summaries*, Vol. 38, No. 5, April 30, 1954.

3. "... two-thirds of those couples obtaining divorce are childless; one-fifth have only one child. In fact, there seems to be a definite relationship between childless marriages and divorce. That a relatively small number of children in the United States have divorced parents—may be owing, in part, to the fact that many couples do not stay married long enough to have a large family. Over 35 per cent of those divorced in 1940 had been married less than four years. The average length of marriages ending in divorce is less than six years." *new 30 Δs?*

H. E. Barnes and O. M. Ruedi, *The American Way of Life* (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1951) pp. 652-53.

Second, divorce certainly has not led to a general disillusionment with marriage, so that people prefer to stay single or not to try again. In spite of a situation where it has become economically easier for single women to support themselves independently than ever before, the proportion of the population married and living with their spouses is the highest that it has ever been in the history of the census and has risen perceptibly within the recent period.⁴ *RIGHT, THAT WAS THE BABY-BOOM PERIOD.*

Third, though down until the mid-thirties there had been a progressive decline in birth rates until on a long-run basis the population was for a time no longer fully reproducing itself, by now it has become clear that the revival of the birth rate which began in the early forties has not been only a matter of catching up the deficit of war-time, but has reached a new plateau on what appears to be a relatively stable basis.⁵ This is certainly suggestive of a process of readjustment rather than of a continuous trend of disorganization. *so, if the birth rate has declined--*

In this connection it should be remembered that the immense increase in the expectancy of life since about the turn of the cen-

4. See footnote 2.

5. Crude Birth Rates, 1915-50, United States

RATES PER THOUSAND POPULATION

| Year | Rate | Year | Rate |
|------|------|-------|------|
| 1915 | 29.5 | 1945 | 20.4 |
| 1920 | 27.7 | 1946 | 24.1 |
| 1925 | 25.1 | 1947 | 26.6 |
| 1930 | 21.3 | 1948 | 24.9 |
| 1935 | 18.7 | 1949 | 24.5 |
| 1940 | 19.4 | 1950 | 24.1 |
| 1941 | 20.3 | 1951 | 24.5 |
| 1942 | 22.2 | 1952* | 24.6 |
| 1943 | 22.7 | 1953* | 24.7 |
| 1944 | 21.2 | | |

*Provisional

It will be noted that a consistent rise started in 1940. Even the lowest war year was only down to 20.4 (1945) and the rate has remained substantially above the level of the thirties since.

Source: National Office of Vital Statistics, "Summary of Natality Statistics, United States, 1950," *Vital Statistics—Special Reports, National Summaries*, Vol. 37, No. 7, May 19, 1953.

Note: The national office estimates that the slight drop from the 1947 boom (itself caused by demobilization) is accountable by the following: drop in first children because of lowered marriage rates, 1946-49; but rise in births of second, third and fourth children during 1946-49.

Last three years, source: Office of Population Research, Princeton University, and Population Association of America, Inc., *Population Index* (July, 1954).

tury⁶ has meant that continuance of the birth rates of that time would have led to a rate of population increase which few could contemplate with equanimity. The transition from a high birth rate-high death rate population economy of most of history to one where low death rates have to be balanced by substantially lower birth rates than before is one of the profoundest adjustments human societies have ever had to make, going as it does to the deepest roots of motivation. In processes of such magnitude it is not unusual for there to be swings of great amplitude to levels which are incompatible with longer-run stability. There is at least a good case for the view that the low birth rates of the nineteen-thirties—not of course confined to the United States—constituted the extreme point of such a swing, and that extrapolating the trend up to that point simply failed to take account of adjustive processes already at work. At any rate, the recent facts have shifted the burden of proof to him who argues that the

The opposite turned out to be the case.

6. Estimated average length of life in years:

ALL RACES, BOTH SEXES, UNITED STATES

| | |
|------|------|
| 1900 | 47.3 |
| 1910 | 50.0 |
| 1920 | 54.1 |
| 1930 | 59.7 |
| 1940 | 62.7 |
| 1950 | 68.4 |

Source: National Office of Vital Statistics, "Abridged Life Tables, United States, 1951," *Vital Statistics—Special Reports, National Summaries*, Vol. 38, No. 5, April 30, 1954.

The way birth and death rates have balanced out can be better seen from the following estimates of the net reproduction rate for the United States. It will be seen that during the 1930's the population was not quite reproducing itself but that at present rates a substantial, perhaps indeed an excessive, rate of increase is being maintained.

NET REPRODUCTION RATES FOR U.S.A.

| | |
|---------|------|
| 1930-35 | 0.98 |
| 1935-40 | 0.98 |
| 1940 | 1.03 |
| 1941 | 1.08 |
| 1942 | 1.20 |
| 1943 | 1.25 |
| 1944 | 1.18 |
| 1945 | 1.15 |
| 1946 | 1.37 |
| 1947 | 1.53 |
| 1948 | 1.45 |
| 1949 | 1.45 |
| 1950 | 1.44 |

Source: Office of Population Research, Princeton University, and Population Association of America, Inc., *Population Index* (April, 1954).

disorganization of the family is bringing imminent race suicide in its wake.

There is a further bit of evidence which may be of significance. The family after all is a residential unit in our society. If the family were breaking up, one would think that this would be associated with a decline of the importance of the "family home" as the preferred place to live of the population. Recent trends of development seem to indicate that far from family homes being "on their way out" there has, in recent years, been an impressive confirmation that even more than before this is the preferred residential pattern. The end of World War II left us with a large deficit of housing facilities. Since then, once the shortages of materials were overcome, there has been an enormous amount of residential building. In this building, as is indicated by the figures, the single family house occupies an extraordinarily prominent place.⁷ It seems that the added mobility given our population by modern means of transportation, especially in making possible a considerable geographical distance between place of residence and place of work, has led to a strengthening of the predilection to have a "home of our own." In the face particularly of a level of geographical and occupational mobility which makes permanence of tenure of a residen-

Substantiated by

7. Total new construction value, 1937-51, corrected 1947-49 values

(IN MILLIONS)

| | |
|------|----------|
| 1937 | \$13,714 |
| 1940 | 16,873 |
| 1943 | 12,841 |
| 1945 | 8,439 |
| 1946 | 15,546 |
| 1947 | 17,795 |
| 1948 | 20,759 |
| 1949 | 22,180 |
| 1950 | 26,852 |
| 1951 | 26,650 |

% OF VALUE OF TOTAL NEW CONSTRUCTION OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING, 1937-51

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Type of construction | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 |
| Private, residential, nonfarm* | 21 | 23 | 28 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 28 | 33 | 35 | 32 | 40 | 32 |
| Operators' dwellings, farm | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL % for new private residential construction** | 22 | 24 | 29 | 31 | 27 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 31 | 37 | 38 | 35 | 43 | 35 |

*Does not include hotels, dormitories, clubhouses, tourist courts and cabins.
**Does not include new public residential construction, which averages 1-3% during peacetime years, and includes barracks, officers quarters, etc.

It is not possible to find figures which exclude private multiple-family units, but the general evidence is that the proportion of these has decreased, not increased.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *New Construction, Expenditures 1915-51, Labor Requirements, 1939-51*, 1953.

tial location highly problematical, this is a most impressive phenomenon.

The situation with which we are concerned may be summed up by noting again that, in spite of divorces and related phenomena, Americans recently have been marrying on an unprecedented scale. They have been having children, not on an unprecedented scale, but on one which by contrast with somewhat earlier trends is unlikely to be without significance and, third, they have been establishing homes for themselves as family units on a very large scale. Since the bulk of home-provision has been on the financial responsibility of the couples concerned, it seems unlikely that the having of children is a simple index of irresponsibility, that we have, as Professor Carver used to put it, produced a generation of "spawners" as contrasted with "family-builders."⁸

At various later points in this volume we are going to argue both that there are certain very important elements of constancy in the structure and in the functional significance of the family on a human cultural level, and that these elements of constancy are by no means wholly or even mainly a reflection of its biological composition. But this view is, in our opinion, by no means incompatible with an emphasis, in other respects, on certain important elements of variation in the family. The set of these latter elements on which we wish now to focus attention is that concerned with the level of structural differentiation in the society.

It is a striking fact of sociological discussion that there has been no settled agreement on either of two fundamental problems. One is the problem of the structural and functional relations between the nuclear family on the one hand, and the other elements of the kinship complex in the same society. Structural analysis of kinship is, we feel, just reaching a point where the importance of clear discriminations in this field is coming to be appreciated. Second, there has been no clear conception of what are the important "functions of the family." Procreation and child care are always included, as is some reference to sexual relations, but in addition there are frequent references to "economic" functions, religious functions and various others.

8. T. N. Carver, *Essays in Social Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1915).

There has been little attempt to work out the implications of the suggestion that there are certain "root functions" which must be found wherever there is a family or kinship system at all, while other functions may be present or not according to the kind of family or kinship system under consideration (and its place in the structure of the rest of the society).

The aspect of this problem in which we are particularly interested concerns its relations to the problem of structural differentiation in societies. It is well known that in many "primitive" societies there is a sense in which kinship "dominates" the social structure; there are few concrete structures in which participation is independent of kinship status. In comparative perspective it is clear that in the more "advanced" societies a far greater part is played by non-kinship structures. States, churches, the larger business firms, universities and professional associations cannot be treated as mere "extensions" of the kinship system.

The process by which non-kinship units become of prime importance in a social structure, inevitably entails "loss of function" on the part of some or even all of the kinship units. In the processes of social evolution there have been many stages by which this process has gone on, and many different directions in which it has worked out.

Our suggestion is, in this perspective, that what has recently been happening to the American family constitutes part of one of these stages of a process of differentiation. This process has involved a further step in the reduction of the importance in our society of kinship units other than the nuclear family. It has also resulted in the transfer of a variety of functions from the nuclear family to other structures of the society, notably the occupationally organized sectors of it. This means that the family has become a more specialized agency than before, probably more specialized than it has been in any previously known society. This represents a decline of certain features which traditionally have been associated with families; but whether it represents a "decline of the family" in a more general sense is another matter; we think not. We think the trend of the evidence points to the beginning of the relative stabilization of a new type of family structure in a new relation to a general social structure, one in which the family is more specialized than before, but not in any general sense less important, because the

structural differentiation
functional specialization

CLAIM^s
modern (U.S.) society is MORE exclusively
dependent on the nuclear family
[10]

FAMILY, SOCIALIZATION AND INTERACTION PROCESS

(*) society is dependent more exclusively on it for the performance of certain of its vital functions.

We further think that this new situation presents a particularly favorable opportunity to the social scientist. Because we are dealing with a more highly differentiated and specialized agency, it is easier to identify clearly the features of it which are essential on the most general level of cross-cultural significance. The situation is methodologically comparable to the relation between the emergence of the modern type of industrial economy and the problems of economic theory. The high level of differentiation of economic from non-economic processes under modern conditions, has made possible a kind of natural experimental situation which has been crucial to the development of modern economic theory.

The American Family in the Total Society

(*) From this perspective, then, let us review some of the most essential features of the structure of the American family-kinship system in its relation to the rest of the society.

The first feature to be noted is on the level of kinship organization as anthropologists ordinarily treat this; namely the "isolation" of the nuclear family and its relation to "bilaterality" with respect to the lines of descent. This "isolation" is manifested in the fact that the members of the nuclear family, consisting of parents and their still dependent children, ordinarily occupy a separate dwelling not shared with members of the family of orientation of either spouse, and that this household is in the typical case economically independent, subsisting in the first instance from the occupational earnings of the husband-father.⁹ It is of course not uncommon to find a surviving parent of one or the other spouse, or even a sibling or cousin of one of them residing with the family, but this is both statistically secondary, and it is clearly not felt to be the "normal" arrangement.¹⁰

9. Cf. R. M. Williams, *American Society*, Chapter IV (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951). Also T. Parsons, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States," *Essays in Sociological Theory* (rev. ed., Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954).

10. "Sixty-four per cent of husband and wife families in 1940 had no adult relatives eighteen years old and over living in the home. Very few, about one-eighth,

THE AMERICAN FAMILY

[11]

Of course with the independence, particularly the marriage, of children, relations to the family of orientation are by no means broken. But separate residence, very often in a different geographical community, and separate economic support, attenuate these relations. Furthermore, there is a strong presumption that relations to one family of orientation will not be markedly closer than to the other (though there is a certain tendency for the mother-married daughter relation to be particularly close). This bilaterality is further strongly reinforced by our patterns of inheritance. In the first place the presumption is that a newly married couple will "stand on their own feet," supporting themselves from their own earnings. But so far as property is inherited the pattern calls for equal division between children regardless of birth order or sex, so that the fact or expectation of inheritance does not typically bind certain children to their families of orientation more closely than others. Furthermore, though it is not uncommon for sons to work in their fathers' businesses—almost certainly much less common than it was fifty years ago—this tendency is at least partially matched by the phenomenon of "marrying the boss's daughter," so that no clear unilateral structure can be derived from this fact.

It has been noted that the primary source of family income lies in occupational earnings. It is above all the presence of the modern occupational system and its mode of articulation with the family which accounts for the difference between the modern, especially American, kinship system and *any* found in non-literate or even peasant societies. The family household is a solidary unit where, once formed, membership and status are ascribed, and the communalistic principle of "to each according to his needs" prevails. In the occupational world, status is achieved by the individual and is contingent on his continuing

of the families in which the husband was under thirty-five years of age contained any of these additional adults. . . . Nearly three-fifths of these (adult relatives) were single sons or daughters of the couple who had not left home, of whom most were between eighteen and thirty-four years old. . . . About one-eighth of the adult relatives were married, widowed or divorced parents of the husband or his wife. . . . Thus, all but one-fifth of the adult relatives were children or parents (own or in-law) of the family head and his wife."

Source: P. C. Glick, "The Family Cycle," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April, 1947.

performance. Though of course this is modified in varying respects, there is a high premium on mobility and equality of opportunity according to individual capacity to perform. Over much of the world and of history a very large proportion of the world's ordinary work is and has been performed in the context of kinship units. Occupational organization in the modern sense is the sociological antithesis of this.

This means essentially, that as the occupational system develops and absorbs functions in the society, it must be at the expense of the relative prominence of kinship organization as a structural component in one sense, and must also be at the expense of many of what previously have been functions of the kinship unit. The double consequence is that the same people, who are members of kinship units, perform economic, political, religious and cultural functions outside the kinship context in occupational roles and otherwise in a variety of other types of organization. But conversely, the members of kinship units must meet many of their needs, which formerly were met in the processes of interaction within the kinship unit, through other channels. This of course includes meeting the need for income with which to purchase the goods and services necessary for family functioning itself.

In this type of society the basic mode of articulation between family and the occupational world lies in the fact that the same adults are both members of nuclear families and incumbents of occupational roles, the holders of "jobs." The individual's job and not the products of the cooperative activities of the family as a unit is of course the primary source of income for the family.

Next it is important to remember that the primary responsibility for this support rests on the one adult male member of the nuclear family. It is clearly the exceptional "normal" adult male who can occupy a respected place in our society without having a regular "job," though he may of course be "independent" as a professional practitioner or some kind of a "free lance" and not be employed by an organization, or he may be the proprietor of one. That at the bottom of the scale the "hobo" and the sick and disabled are deviants scarcely needs mentioning, while at the other end, among the relatively few who are in a position to "live on their money" there is a notable reluctance to do so. The "playboy" is not a highly respected type and there

is no real American equivalent of the older European type of "gentleman" who did not "work" unless he had to.

The occupational role is of course, in the first instance, part of the "occupational system" but it is not only that. It is an example of the phenomenon of "interpenetration" which will be extensively analyzed below. In this connection it is both a role in the occupational system, and in the family; it is a "boundary-role" between them. The husband-father, in holding an acceptable job and earning an income from it is performing an essential function or set of functions for his family (which of course includes himself in one set of roles) as a system. The status of the family in the community is determined probably more by the "level" of job he holds than by any other single factor, and the income he earns is usually the most important basis of the family's standard of living and hence "style of life." Of course, as we shall see, he has other very important functions in relation both to wife and to children, but it is fundamentally by virtue of the importance of his occupational role as a component of his familial role, that in our society we can unequivocally designate the husband-father as the "instrumental leader" of the family as a system.¹¹

The membership of large numbers of women in the American labor force must not be overlooked. Nevertheless there can be

11. Comparative data confirm this interpretation. We now have a good deal of evidence about social situations where there is neither a strong "lineage" structure in the kinship field nor a developed "industrial" type of occupational structure. One of the first perceptive studies of this type was made by E. F. Frazier in his *Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939). This has more recently been supplemented and refined by studies of kinship in the British West Indies. See F. Henriques, *Family and Color in Jamaica*, 1953; Lloyd Braithwaite, "Social Stratification in Trinidad," *Social and Economic Studies*, October, 1953; and especially the as yet unpublished study by R. T. Smith, *The Rural Negro Family in British Guiana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1954). Dr. Smith shows very clearly the connection between the "mother-centered" character of the lower-class rural negro family in the West Indies (his study deals with British Guiana) and the "casual" character of most of the available employment and income-earning opportunities. This is a sharp modification of the typical American pattern, but must not be interpreted to mean that the husband-father has, at the critical periods of the family cycle, altogether lost the role of instrumental leader. Dr. Smith shows that this is not the case, and that the impression to the contrary (which might for instance be inferred from Henriques' discussion) arises from failure to consider the development of the particular family over a full cycle from the first sexual relations to complete "emancipation" of the children from their family of orientation.

(*)

status?

which ones?

adults?

no question of symmetry between the sexes in this respect, and we argue, there is no serious tendency in this direction. In the first place a large proportion of gainfully employed women are single, widowed, or divorced, and thus cannot be said to be either taking the place of a husband as breadwinner of the family, or competing with him. A second large contingent are women who either do not yet have children (some of course never will) or whose children are grown up and independent. The number in the labor force who have small children is still quite small and has not shown a marked tendency to increase. The role of "housewife" is still the overwhelmingly predominant one for the married woman with small children.¹²

But even where this type does have a job, as is also true of those who are married but do not have dependent children, above the lowest occupational levels it is quite clear that in general the woman's job tends to be of a qualitatively different type and not of a status which seriously competes with that of her husband as the primary status-giver or income-earner.

It seems quite safe in general to say that the adult feminine role has not ceased to be anchored primarily in the internal affairs of the family, as wife, mother and manager of the household, while the role of the adult male is primarily anchored in

12. Population and labor force, by age and sex, December 1950

(IN THOUSANDS)¹

| Age-sex group | Population | In Labor Force ² | | Not in Labor Force | | |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------|--|
| | | Keeping House | In School | Other ³ | | |
| Total U. S. | 112,610 | 64,670 | 32,950 | 7,570 | 7,420 | |
| Total Males 14 and over | 55,420 | 45,640 | 120 | 2,930 | 5,740 | |
| 14-24 | 12,360 | 8,230 | — | 2,670 | 450 | |
| 25-34 | 11,660 | 11,090 | — | 240 | 310 | |
| 35-44 | 10,370 | 9,980 | — | — | 370 | |
| 45-54 | 8,680 | 8,180 | — | — | 480 | |
| 55-64 | 6,810 | 5,800 | — | — | 990 | |
| 65 and over | 5,550 | 2,360 | — | — | 3,130 | |
| Total Females 14 and over | 57,180 | 19,030 | 32,830 | 3,640 | 1,680 | |
| 14-24 | 12,150 | 4,780 | 3,580 | 3,600 | 180 | |
| 25-34 | 12,170 | 4,160 | 7,870 | — | 110 | |
| 35-44 | 10,800 | 4,240 | 6,430 | — | 130 | |
| 45-54 | 8,910 | 3,420 | 5,340 | — | 140 | |
| 55-64 | 6,940 | 1,840 | 4,900 | — | 200 | |
| 65 and over | 6,230 | 600 | 4,720 | — | 910 | |

1. Figures under 100,000 are not included.

2. Including armed forces.

3. Including persons in institutions, disabled and retired, etc.

Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Fact Book on Manpower*, January 31, 1951.

the occupational world, in his job and through it by his status-giving and income-earning functions for the family. Even if, as seems possible, it should come about that the average married woman had some kind of job, it seems most unlikely that this relative balance would be upset; that either the roles would be reversed, or their qualitative differentiation in these respects completely erased.¹³

The following table shows the status of women in the labor force by marital status. It will be noted that the percentage of married women living with their husbands who were in the labor force increased over the nine-year period from 14.7% to 22.5%.

Labor force status of women by marital status, April 1949 and April 1940

| Year and marital status | (IN THOUSANDS) | | |
|---|----------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| | Population | Number | In labor force % of population |
| 1949 | | | |
| Total over 14 | 56,001 | 17,167 | 30.7 |
| Single | 11,174 | 5,682 | 50.9 |
| Married, husband present | 35,323 | 7,959 | 22.5 |
| Other marital status (separated, widowed, divorced) | 9,505 | 3,526 | 37.1 |
| 1940 | | | |
| Total over 14 | 50,549 | 13,840 | 27.4 |
| Single | 13,936 | 6,710 | 48.1 |
| Married, husband present | 28,517 | 4,200 | 14.7 |
| Other marital status | 8,096 | 2,930 | 36.2 |

Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Fact Book on Manpower*, Jan. 31, 1951.

The concentration of women without children under 5 in the labor force is shown clearly in the following table.

Comparison of labor force status of married women, with and without children under 5, April, 1949

| Presence of children under 5 | (IN THOUSANDS) | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Population | Married women—Husband present | In labor force % of population |
| Total, ages 15-49 | 26,204 | 6,758 | 25.8 |
| Without children under 5 | 15,499 | 5,637 | 36.4 |
| With children under 5 | 10,705 | 1,121 | 10.5 |

Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Fact Book on Manpower*, Jan. 31, 1951.

13. The distribution of women in the labor force clearly confirms this general view of the balance of the sex roles. Thus, on higher levels typical feminine occupations are those of teacher, social worker, nurse, private secretary and entertainer. Such roles tend to have a prominent expressive component, and often to be "supportive" to masculine roles. Within the occupational organization they are analogous to the wife-mother role in the family. It is much less common to find women in the "top executive" roles and the more specialized and "impersonal" technical roles. Even within professions we find comparable differentiations, e.g., in medicine women are heavily concentrated in the two branches of pediatrics and psychiatry, while there are few women surgeons.

AmT

not so any more!

The Principal Functions of the Nuclear Family

Within this broad setting of the structure of the society, what can we say about the functions of the family, that is, the isolated nuclear family? There are, we think, two main types of considerations. The first is that the "loss of function," both in our own recent history and as seen in broader comparative perspective, means that the family has become, on the "macroscopic" levels, almost completely functionless. It does not itself, except here and there, engage in much economic production; it is not a significant unit in the political power system; it is not a major direct agency of integration of the larger society. Its individual members participate in all these functions, but they do so "as individuals" not in their roles as family members.¹⁴

The most important implication of this view is that the functions of the family in a highly differentiated society are not to be interpreted as functions directly on behalf of the society, but on behalf of personality. If, as some psychologists seem to assume, the essentials of human personality were determined biologically, independently of involvement in social systems, there would be no need for families, since reproduction as such does not require family organization. It is because the human personality is not "born" but must be "made" through the socialization process that in the first instance families are necessary. They are "factories" which produce human personalities. But at the same time even once produced, it cannot be assumed that the human personality would remain stable in the respects which are vital to social functioning, if there were not mechanisms of stabilization which were organically integrated with the socialization process. We therefore suggest that the basic and irreducible functions of the family are two: first, the primary socialization of children so that they can truly become members of the society into which they have been born; second, the stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the

14. In terms of our technical analytical scheme we interpret this to mean that the family belongs in the "latency" or "pattern-maintenance-tension-management" subsystem as seen in functional terms. We so interpreted it in *Working Papers*, Chapter V, Sec. viii. (T. Parsons, R. F. Bales, and E. A. Shils, *Working Papers in Theory of Action* [Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953], hereinafter referred to as *Working Papers*.)

→ functional prerequisites of societies + individuals
vs indispensable functional contributions of
institutions.

society. It is the combination of these two functional imperatives, which explains why, in the "normal" case it is both true that every adult is a member of a nuclear family and that every child must begin his process of socialization in a nuclear family. It will be one of the most important theses of our subsequent analysis that these two circumstances are most intimately interconnected. Their connection goes back to the fact that it is control of the residua of the process of socialization which constitutes the primary focus of the problem of stabilization of the adult personality.

In subsequent chapters we shall develop, in a variety of applications and ramifications, the view that the central focus of the process of socialization lies in the internalization of the culture of the society into which the child is born. The most important part of this culture from this focal point consists in the patterns of value which in another aspect constitute the institutionalized patterns of the society. The conditions under which effective socialization can take place then will include being placed in a social situation where the more powerful and responsible persons are themselves integrated in the cultural value system in question, both in that they constitute with the children an institutionalized social system, and that the patterns have previously been internalized in the relevant ways in their own personalities. The family is clearly in all societies, and no less in our own, in this sense an institutionalized system.¹⁵

But it is not enough to place the child in any institutionalized system of social relationships. He must be placed in one of a special type which fulfills the necessary psychological conditions of successful completion of the process we call socialization, over

15. It is important not to confuse this sense of institutionalization with the usage of Burgess and his associates when they distinguish the "institutional family" from the "companionship" family. To contrast the institutional and companionship family, Burgess and Locke characterize the institutional as a family with "family behavior controlled by the mores, public opinion and law." It is a family "in which its unity would be determined entirely by the social pressure impinging on family members." The companionship form of the family has "family behavior arising from the mutual affection and consensus of its members... and intimate association of husband and wife and parents and children." E. W. Burgess and H. J. Locke, *The Family* (New York: American Book Co., 1950), pp. 26-27.

From the present point of view both types of family are institutionalized. The statuses of marriage and parenthood are most definitely linked to expectations and obligations, both legal and informal, which are not simply discretionary with the individuals concerned.

a succession of stages starting with earliest infancy. One of the principal tasks of the subsequent discussion is to explore some of these conditions. A few of them may, however, be noted here, while the reasons for their importance will be discussed as we go along. In the first place, we feel that for the earlier stages of socialization, at least, the socialization system must be a small group. Furthermore, it must be differentiated into subsystems so the child need not have an equal level of participation with all members at the same time in the earlier stages of the process. We will show that it is particularly important that in the earliest stage he tends to have a special relation to one other member of the family, his mother.

In this connection a certain importance may well attach to the biological fact that, except for the relatively rare plural births, it is unusual for human births to the same mother to follow each other at intervals of less than a year with any regularity. It is, we feel, broadly in the first year of life that a critical phase of the socialization process, which requires the most exclusive attention of a certain sort from the mother, takes place. Furthermore, it is probably significant that in our type of society the family typically no longer has what by other standards may be considered to be large numbers of children. Partly, in earlier times the effects of higher rates of birth have been cancelled by infant mortality. But partly, we feel the large family—say over five or six children—is a different type of social system with different effects on the children in it. We will not try to analyze these differences carefully here. *why not?*

Another very important range of problems in the larger setting concerns the impact for the outcome of the socialization process of the role of relatives other than members of the nuclear family. Particularly important cross-culturally are siblings of the parents, the role of whom varies with the type of kinship structure. Some of the setting for consideration of these problems will be given by Zelditch in Chapter VI. In the conclusion there will be a brief discussion of their general character, but it will not be possible to deal at all adequately with them in this volume.

We should like to suggest only that what we have called the "isolation of the nuclear family" for the contemporary American scene, may, along with reduction in the average size of fam-

ily, have considerable significance for the character of the contemporary socialization process. This significance would, we think, have something to do with the greater sharpness of the difference in status, from the point of view of the child, between members of the family and nonmembers. It will be our general thesis that in certain respects the modern child has "farther to go" in his socialization than his predecessors. There seem to be certain reasons why the number of fundamental steps of a certain type is restricted. If this is true, each step has to be "longer" and it is important that the "landmarks" along the way, the "cues" presented to the child, should involve extremely clear discriminations.

A primary function and characteristic of the family is that it should be a social group in which in the earliest stages the child can "invest" all of his emotional resources, to which he can become overwhelmingly "committed" or on which he can become fully "dependent." But, at the same time, in the nature of the socialization process, this dependency must be temporary rather than permanent. Therefore, it is very important that the socializing agents should not themselves be too completely immersed in their family ties. It is a condition equally important with facilitating dependency that a family should, in due course, help in emancipating the child from his dependency on the family. Hence the family must be a differentiated subsystem of a society, not itself a "little society" or anything too closely approaching it. More specifically this means that the adult members must have roles other than their familial roles which occupy strategically important places in their own personalities. In our own society, the most important of these other roles, though by no means the only one, is the occupational role of the father. *why just the father?*

(The second primary function of the family) along with socialization of children, concerns regulation of balances in the personalities of the adult members of both sexes. It is clear that this function is concentrated on the marriage relation as such. From this point of view a particularly significant aspect of the isolation of the nuclear family in our society is again the sharp discrimination in status which it emphasizes between family members and nonmembers. In particular, then, spouses are thrown upon each other, and their ties with members of their own families of orientation, notably parents and adult siblings, are correspond-

ingly weakened. In its negative aspect as a source of strain, the consequence of this may be stated as the fact that the family of procreation, and in particular the marriage pair, are in a "structurally unsupported" situation. Neither party has any other adult kin on whom they have a right to "lean for support" in a sense closely comparable to the position of the spouse.

The marriage relation is then placed in a far more strategic position in this respect than is the case in kinship systems where solidarity with "extended" kin categories is more pronounced. But for the functional context we are discussing, the marriage relationship is by no means alone in its importance. Parenthood acquires, it may be said, an enhanced significance for the emotional balance of the parents themselves, as well as for the socialization of their children. The two generations are, by virtue of the isolation of the nuclear family, thrown more closely on each other.

The main basis of the importance of children to their parents derives, we think, from the implications of problems which psychoanalytic theory has immensely illuminated but which also, we think, need to be understood in their relation to the family as a social system, and the conditions of its functional effectiveness and stability. The most general consideration is that the principal stages in the development of personality, particularly on its affective or "emotional" side, leave certain "residua" which constitute a stratification (in the geological sense) of the structure of the personality itself with reference to its own developmental history. Partly these residua of earlier experience can constitute threats to effective functioning on adult levels, the more so the more "abnormal" that history and its consequences for the individual have been. But partly, also, they have important positive functions for the adult personality. To express and in certain ways and contexts "act out," motivational systems and complexes which are primarily "infantile" or "regressive" in their meaning is, in our view, by no means always undesirable, but on the contrary necessary to a healthy balance of the adult personality. At the same time the dangers are very real and regulation of context, manner and occasion of expression is very important.

We shall attempt later to mobilize evidence that a particularly important role in this situation is played by the erotic elements

of the personality constitution, because of the great importance of eroticism in the developmental process.

We suggest then that children are important to adults because it is important to the latter to express what are essentially the "childish" elements of their own personalities. There can be no better way of doing this than living with and interacting on their own level with real children. But at the same time it is essential that this should not be an unregulated acting out, a mere opportunity for regressive indulgence. The fact that it takes place in the parental role, with all its responsibilities, not least of which is the necessity to renounce earlier modes of indulgence as the child grows older, is, as seen in this connection, of the first importance. The circumstantially detailed analysis which alone can substantiate such a set of statements, will be presented in the subsequent chapters. The general thesis, however, is that the family and, in a particularly visible and trenchant way, the modern isolated family, incorporates an intricate set of interactive mechanisms whereby these two essential functions for personality are interlocked and interwoven. By and large a "good" marriage from the point of view of the personality of the participants, is likely to be one with children; the functions as parents reinforce the functions in relation to each other as spouses.

If this be true, it would be surprising if the marital relation itself were, even in the more direct interaction of the spouses with each other, altogether dissociated from those aspects of the personality which benefit from the role of parent. It will be suggested later¹⁶ that genital sexuality, which in a sense may be regarded as the primary "ritual" of marital solidarity, is in its symbolic significance, for both parties in the first instance a reenactment of the preoedipal mother-child relationship, when the love-relationship to the mother was the most important thing in the child's life. Thus it also may be regarded as "regressive" in an important sense. But like the parental relationship, it takes place in a context where its expressive or indulgent aspect is balanced by a regulatory aspect. The most important part of this is the contingency of sexual love on the assumption of fully adult responsibilities in roles other than that of marriage

16. Cf. Chapter III following, pp. 150-151.

such as?

directly. Put very schematically, a mature woman can love, sexually, only a man who takes his full place in the masculine world, above all its occupational aspect, and who takes responsibility for a family; conversely, the mature man can only love a woman who is really an adult, a full wife to him and mother to his children, and an adequate "person" in her extrafamilial roles. It is this "building in" to a more differentiated personality system on both sides, and to a more differentiated role system than the child possesses or could tolerate, which constitutes the essential difference between preoedipal child-mother love and adult heterosexual love.

Sex-Role and Family Structure

It goes without saying that the differentiation of the sex roles within the family constitutes not merely a major axis of its structure, but is deeply involved in both of these two central function-complexes of the family and in their articulation with each other. Indeed we argue that probably the importance of the family and its functions for society constitutes the primary set of reasons why there is a social as distinguished from purely reproductive, differentiation of sex roles.

We will maintain that in its most essential structure the nuclear family consists of four main role-types, which are differentiated from each other by the criteria of generation and sex. Of these two, generation is, in its social role-significance, biologically given, since the helplessness of the small child, particularly of course the infant, precludes anything approaching equality of "power" between the generations in the early stages of socialization. This biological "intrinsicness" does not, however, we feel apply in at all the same way to sex; both parents are adults and children of both sexes are equally powerless. We will argue that the differentiation of sex role in the family is, in its sociological character and significance, primarily an example of a basic qualitative mode of differentiation which tends to appear in all systems of social interaction regardless of their composition. In particular this type of differentiation, that on "instrumental-expressive" lines, is conspicuous in small groups of about the same membership-size as the nuclear fam-

Confused

Description of roles based on sex

ily, as Bales had already shown,¹⁷ and he and Slater develop further in Chapter V.

We suggest that this order of differentiation is generic to the "leadership element" of small groups everywhere and that the problem with respect to the family is not why it appears there, given the fact that families as groups exist, but why the man takes the more instrumental role, the woman the more expressive, and why in detailed ways these roles take particular forms. In our opinion the fundamental explanation of the allocation of the roles between the biological sexes lies in the fact that the bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of mother to the small child and this in turn establishes a presumption that the man, who is exempted from these biological functions, should specialize in the alternative instrumental direction.

However the allocation may have come about in the course of bio-social evolution, there can be little doubt about the ways in which differentiation plays into the structure and functioning of the family as we know it. It is our suggestion that the recent change in the American family itself and in its relation to the rest of the society which we have taken as our point of departure, is far from implying an erasure of the differentiation of sex roles; in many respects it reinforces and clarifies it. In the first place, the articulation between family and occupational system in our society focuses the instrumental responsibility for a family very sharply on its one adult male member, and prevents its diffusion through the ramifications of an extended kinship system. Secondly, the isolation of the nuclear family in a complementary way focuses the responsibility of the mother role more sharply on the one adult woman, to a relatively high degree cutting her off from the help of adult sisters and other kinswomen; furthermore, the fact of the absence of the husband-father from the home premises so much of the time means that she has to take the primary responsibility for the children. This responsibility is partly mitigated by reduction in the number of children and by aids to household management, but by no means to the

what % of mothers of infants breast feed them + for how long in the 40s + 50s?

yes!

2

*

1

2

17. "The Equilibrium Problem in Small Groups," Working Papers, Chap. IV.

point of emancipating the mother from it. Along with this goes, from the child's point of view, a probable intensification of the emotional significance of his parents as individuals, particularly and in the early stages, his mother, which, there is reason to believe, is important for our type of socialization.

Hence, it is suggested that, if anything, in certain respects the differentiation between the roles of the parents becomes more rather than less significant for the socialization process under modern American conditions. It may also be suggested that in subtle ways the same is true of the roles of spouses vis-à-vis each other. The enhanced significance of the marriage relationship, both for the structure of the family itself and for the personalities of the spouses, means that the complementarity of roles within it tends to be accentuated. The romantic love complex and our current strong preoccupation with the emotional importance of the "significant person" of opposite sex strongly suggests this. Indeed there has been, we think, a greatly increased emphasis on the importance of good heterosexual relations, which overwhelmingly means within marriage. Such disorganization within this field as there is, apart from premarital experimenting, takes primarily the form of difficulties with the current marriage relationship and, if its dissolution is sought, the establishment of a new one. It does not mainly take the form of centering erotic interests outside the marriage relation.

All of this seems to us to indicate that the increased emphasis, manifested in all sorts of ways, (on overt) specifically feminine attractiveness, with strong erotic overtones, is related to this situation within the family. The content of the conceptions of masculinity and femininity has undoubtedly changed. But it seems clear that the accent of their differentiation has not lessened.

It seems to us legitimate to interpret the recent and, to what extent we do not know, continuing, high level of the divorce rate in this light. It is not an index that the nuclear family and the marriage relationship are rapidly disintegrating and losing their importance. The truth is rather that, on the one hand, the two roles have been changing their character; on the other, their specific importance, particularly that of marriage, has actually been increasing. Both these aspects

Def. to give emphasis

Def. the beauty of a bond

Δ in content

Def. not concealed or secret or overt

Def. content: satisfied as with modern is or has

Def. accent Pitch or stress

of the process of change impose additional strain on family and marriage as systems, and on their members as personalities. We suggest that the high rates of divorce are primarily indices of this additional strain. When the difficulty of a task is increased it is not unreasonable to expect that a larger proportion of failures should result until the necessary adjustments have been better worked out. In this case we feel that the adjustments are extremely complex and far-reaching.

In this context two other conspicuous and related features of our modern society, which are closely related to marriage and the family, may be called to mind. The first of these is the enormous vogue of treating "human" problems from the point of view of "mental health" and in various respects of psychology. There has been and there is much faddism in these fields, but in the perspective of a couple of generations there can be no doubt of the magnitude of this movement. The United States is a society in which technological-organizational developments closely related to science have taken hold over a very wide front. It is, one might suggest, the "American method," to attempt to solve problems in foci of strain by calling in scientifically expert aid. In industry we take this for granted. In human relations it is just coming to the fore. The immense vogue of psychiatry, of clinical psychology and such phenomena are, we suggest, an index of the importance of strain in the area of the personality and the human relations in which persons are placed. In the nature of our society much of this strain relates to family and marriage relations.¹⁸

The second, and related, phenomenon, is what is sometimes called, with reference to child training, the "professionalization" of the mother role. It is, starting with the elementary matters of early feeding and other aspects of physical care, the attempt to rationalize, on the basis of scientific—though often pseudo-scientific—authority, the technical aspects

18. It has been suggested in other connections that illness should in certain respects be treated as a form of "deviant behavior" and medical practice, even if not explicitly psychotherapy, as a "mechanism of social control." This viewpoint will be very important in the subsequent analysis in this volume. See Parsons, "Illness and the Role of the Physician" in Kluckhohn, Murray and Schneider, eds., *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953. For certain relations to the family, see T. Parsons and Renée Fox, "Illness, Therapy and the Modern American Urban Family," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 8, pp. 31-44.

Def. conspicuous

easily seen or noticed
Def. fact is a person who follows a lead

Def. Phenomenon something that is apparent

Def. differentiation to form or mark differently

Def. lessened to reduce

of the care of children. The breakdown of traditionalism which has long since been taken for granted in many other areas, has now penetrated far into this one. It is not surprising in these circumstances that psychology plays a prominent part.

This involvement of applied science in so many aspects of the intimate life of personalities, as in the mother's care of her children and in the marriage relationship, suggests an important aspect of the developing American feminine role which should not be overlooked. This is that, though the tendency in certain respects is probably increasing, to specialize in the expressive direction, the American woman is not thereby sacrificing the values of rationality. On the contrary, she is heavily involved in the attempt to rationalize these areas of human relations themselves. Women do not act only in the role of patient of the psychiatrist, but often the psychiatrist also is a woman. The mother not only "loves" her children, but she attempts to understand rationally the nature, conditions and limitations of that love, and the ways in which its deviant forms can injure rather than benefit her child. In this, as in other respects, the development we have been outlining is an integral part of the more general development of American society.

Some Theoretical Problems

In conclusion of this introductory discussion we may call the attention of the reader to two major theoretical themes which we hope he will be able to follow through the different subject-matters discussed in the chapters which follow. In the concluding chapter we shall then attempt to evaluate the evidence we have presented for the question of their more general significance.

The first of these concerns the nature of the processes of differentiation in systems of action. In the sense of process, as distinguished from structural type, this is explicitly a major theme at three main points in the book. It has already been introduced with reference to the problem of assessing the significance of recent changes in the American family. It has been suggested earlier in the present chapter that these changes are to be regarded as largely consequences of a major process

Def. Consequences

the effect, result or outcome of something occurring earlier.

of structural differentiation in American society generally, through which the family has become distinctly a more specialized agency in the society as a whole than it had been. This process has not only entailed shifts of function from one agency to another, as well as structural changes, but also the kinds of emotional disturbance which we associate with processes of differentiation and reintegration.

The theme will next be brought up on the level of analysis of the personality as a system. In Chapter II, the thesis will be put forward that the main outline of the process of personality development, so far as it is legitimate to regard it as a process of socialization, can be regarded as a process of structural differentiation. We will maintain that first there occurs the establishment of a very simple personality structure through the internalization of a *single* social object, the mother on the relevant level. Then there occurs the differentiation of this system through a series of stages, into a progressively more complex system. Throughout, this process occurs in direct relation to a series of systems of social interaction, also of a progressively increasing order of structural complexity. In this chapter the main concern will be with the grosser pattern of the process from infancy to beyond adolescence.

In Chapter IV, however, Parsons and Olds will take up the same theme again with reference to personality, but this time on a much more detailed and intensive level, attempting to trace in detail the mechanisms involved in a single step of differentiation and their articulation with the more detailed structure of the situation.

Then in Chapter V, Bales and Slater will return to the same theme, of differentiation, but this time in relation to the small group as a social system. They will show that functional differentiation, as evaluated from the point of view of the system, can be shown to appear at the most microscopic level of analysis of the processes of interaction, in the differences between the distributions of "proactive" and "reactive" acts. It is then followed to the level of the differentiation of the stabler roles of the members of the small group. The process is analyzed over time, and different types of outcome of the process of differentiation are studied.

Finally, though Zelditch's material in Chapter VI does not

follow out a process of differentiation over time, it does show that structural patterns which are cognate with a fundamental pattern of such differentiation, can be identified as relatively uniform in nuclear families when these are studied cross-culturally. He shows that the nuclear family has operated, within his sample, under a considerable range of different conditions with respect to its articulation with other elements of the social structure, kinship and otherwise without altering this fundamental pattern.

We should like to suggest to the reader two main respects in which we think there is an essential uniformity in the process of differentiation in systems of action, whether they be social systems or personality systems, and whether the level be macroscopic or microscopic. The first of these concerns the relation of differentiation to the concept commonly paired with it, that of integration. The by no means original observation that differentiating processes always go hand in hand with integrating processes¹⁹ seems to us to be strongly confirmed by our material. We incline to interpret this as a consequence of the organization of action in systems. A process of differentiation is a process of reorganization of the system which disturbs whatever approximation to a stable state may have existed before it began. This disturbance sets up repercussions, not only at the foci of differentiation, but throughout the other parts of the system. Thus what we mean by integration is, from one perspective, the set of adjustments in the rest of the system which are necessitated by fulfilling the conditions necessary to maintain the newly differentiated state and at the same time those necessary to the continuance of the whole as an ongoing system.

We feel that these circumstances underlie two conspicuous features of the differentiating process as we will portray it in the chapters which follow. The first is the fact that it takes place in some kind of a pattern of phases which is related to that of task-oriented groups, as Bales was the first to demonstrate, but with reference to which the task group presents only one type of case. In any case differentiation is not a "linear" process of continuous increase in the value of a variable which

19. Suggested by G. W. Allport: *Personality, A Psychological Interpretation* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1937).

might be called "differentiatedness." The second is the fact that the process seems to occur by relatively discontinuous stages, which again we interpret provisionally to mean that the "integrative" processes must have a chance to "catch up" with the consequences of a given step in differentiation before the latter process can go farther without destroying the system.

The second broad common feature of processes of differentiation in the system we are studying, concerns the role of the pattern which we will variously call "binary choice" and "fission" in the process of differentiation. This is first introduced in Chapter II in the conception that, after the first internalized social object has been established, the process of differentiation of the personality system proceeds by the "splitting" of each of these internalized objects into two. The situational focus of the process then is the exposure of the child to a system of social interaction in which there are double the number of crucially significant roles from that significant at the previous stage. Essentially the same theme is followed out in Chapter IV at the more microscopic level in the conception that, in a given specific cycle of the socialization process, the process of differentiation involving both cognitive discrimination and "relative deprivation," serves essentially to establish, by learning processes, the difference between *two* situational objects or object-categories; and that this differentiation is the focus of internalization of the new object-system.

On the small-group level, then, Bales and Slater in Chapter V introduce the same theme by their discussion of the most elementary beginnings of the qualitative differentiation of action types in the process of interaction. Essentially the pattern seems to be that when a choice or a discrimination must be made, its most primitive form is always, "either A or not-A," then if not-A is B, for the next choice the alternative is either B or not-B. It may be suggested that in the role-structure of the small group, a particularly crucial choice of this character is that between "either task-leader or not task-leader."

What we interpret to be an important cultural aspect of the process of system-differentiation, opens up on both the personality-socialization and the small-group levels. It becomes particularly clear in Chapter IV, though foreshadowed in Chapter II, that the differentiation of the child's system of

def. Integration instance of combining into an integral whole.

cognitive orientation involves a logical elaboration which includes the establishment of hierarchically ordered categories of lesser and greater orders of generality. Thus, in first differentiating self from mother, the child must discriminate "I" from "you." But in so far as both self and mother, and the system they constitute, do not exhaust the whole world (and it is hard to see how they can constitute objects if they do—there can be no "figure" without a "ground"), then there must, on a higher order of generality, also be a discrimination between "we" who comprise the "I-you" system, and a residual "they"—the rest of the world. Thus, there is a hierarchy of at least three levels of generality—"I" and "you" as "specific" social objects; "we" as a category comprising both; and a "world" or "universe" comprising both "we" and "they" who at first are residually simply "non-we."

In the process of "culture-building" in the course of interaction, Bales has shown that a cognate structure of categories of increasing inclusiveness is progressively built up.²⁰ A given item of information fed into the system, must be subsumed under at least one more general category before it can be given "significance," i.e., evaluated. Then if another item of information is to be evaluated, in the simplest case it must be classified relative to the first, as belonging to the same class, or not. But, in turn, in order for this to be possible there must be at least two potential *classes*—not merely items—each capable of comprising more than one item. Finally, there must be a category comprising both of these classes, if it is only that of "things that happen."

We shall attempt to show in the final chapter that this hierarchical aspect of the cultural organization of systems of action is not only essential to them in the general sense, but is particularly crucial to the process of differentiation. On the cognitive side the discrimination of the non-A from the A is essential, if higher-order categories which comprise them both are to be defined in the culture or internalized in the personality.

The reader familiar with our previous theoretical work will not fail to observe that this binary pattern is in one sense

20. See Robert F. Bales, "How People Interact in Conferences," *Scientific American*, March, 1955.

implicit in the whole conceptual scheme with which we start. Thus Bales's discussion of his scoring procedure for interaction and its relation to the categories of interaction process shows that a pattern of successive dichotomous choices is implicit in it.²¹ Similarly Parsons' "pattern variables" obviously have a dichotomous structure which has been the subject of considerable comment and a good deal of objection.

All this is quite true. But whether or not the pattern is implicit in previous conceptual schemes is not the point. The point is whether, when confronted with the facts of the relevant area of actual action and interaction, the scheme works. This is the problem we wish to call to the reader's attention. We shall return to it in the concluding chapter.

The second major theoretical theme which should be followed through our substantive analysis is that of certain structural relations between culture, personality and social systems as systems. This will be treated primarily in terms of the interrelations of the latter two perspectives, though that of culture is by no means absent. In Chapters II-IV the major theme will be the ways in which the developing structure of personality systems can only be understood in terms of their involvement in a successive series of systems of social interaction. Only by internalizing the culture of each of these systems in turn can its own internal structure take shape. But Bales and Slater then show in Chapter V some of the ways in which preëxistent personality structures and their cultural values play into the interaction process and thus to some extent determine the role structure of the group after it has had time to "settle down."

Thus our position is that from one point of view this is a typical "chicken and egg" problem. But to say this is clearly only in one rather crude way to state the problem of their relations, not to solve it. We do not feel that in any definitive sense we have "solved" it, but we do feel that we have made considerable progress.

The most important starting point of our approach lies in the conception that both personality systems and social systems are systems of action and culture is a generalized aspect of the organization of such systems. So long as the personality system is,

21. Cf. *Working Papers*, Chap. V. Sec. iv.

Def. Dichotomous
dividing into two parts

as is the case in so much current psychological thinking, conceived simply as a set of properties of the organism, and not as an analytically independent system, we feel that the way to a solution is blocked. Then even social systems tend to lose their distinctiveness and be treated as "properties of aggregates of personalities which are properties or organisms."

Underlying the contention that it is fruitful to treat personality as a system of action, is the view that all systems of action, including both personality systems and social systems, consist as structures, of the "crystallization" of symbolically generalized meaningful orientations of actors to objects in their situations and the organization of the systems in these terms. Furthermore the interactive reference to the cases where the same entity is both actor and object is fundamental. The level of generalization of orientation which can legitimately be called "cultural" is, we feel, bound to the phenomenon of interaction and could not arise or be long sustained without it.

If this is the case, then personalities as systems of action and social systems on the cultural level are empirically inseparable from each other and from their culture. As we so often put it, they are not only interdependent, they interpenetrate. Specifically, personalities and social systems interpenetrate with respect to cultural pattern-content which again, as we have stated often, comes to be internalized in the personality system and institutionalized in the social system. But this common culture is in fact constitutive of the structural framework of both orders of system, particularly in the form of patterns of value-orientation.

Does this then mean that there is no difference, that social systems are simply resultants of a plurality of personalities, or a society is simply the "personality writ large" as has so often been contended ever since Plato? Or is the personality simply a "microcosm" of the society? We think not, quite definitely not. Such views overlook some very fundamental considerations. To us the most important is that both orders of system are products of processes of differentiation. But the starting points, the points at which the "trunk" of a differentiated system articulates with the "roots" and the "soil," are not and cannot be the same for the two processes of differentiation. We hope to contribute further evidence to the common view that the human

personality must undergo its early development in a social system something like the human family. But looked at as part of the society, the family is, even in primitive societies, a specialized, i.e., differentiated, part of the larger system; it is quite erroneous to regard it as a "microcosm" of the whole. We will maintain that at one stage the evolving personality is a kind of "mirror-image" microcosm of the nuclear family, but it is crucial that it cannot be such an image of the whole society, since this is inevitably a more complex system than any family, and the family is specialized in relation to it. It is a corollary of the proposition that a society is a highly differentiated system, further, that it must comprise not one but at least several types of personality.

On the other hand, the points of reference for the differentiation of a social system are not specialized parts of the relevant system but historical antecedents, i.e., other social systems which were simpler, i.e., less differentiated than their successors. These always involve not only many personalities but a plurality of types of personalities.

We shall, in the following pages, probably go farther than almost any previous contributors to the literature in developing the thesis that neither personalities nor social systems can be adequately understood without reference to culture, to each other and to the relations of these three to each other. Or, if you will, sociology presupposes psychology but equally, psychology presupposes sociology, and both presuppose knowledge and analytical understanding of culture.

But strongly as we will adhere to this position, it must not be understood as leading to the erasure of the distinctions between social systems, personalities and culture. Quite the contrary, the farther we go in the exploration of their interpenetration, the more essential and the more clearly defined the distinctions become. These reference points constitute in our opinion, one of the major axes of the theory of action. As in the case of differentiation, we shall return to this theme in the final chapter.