

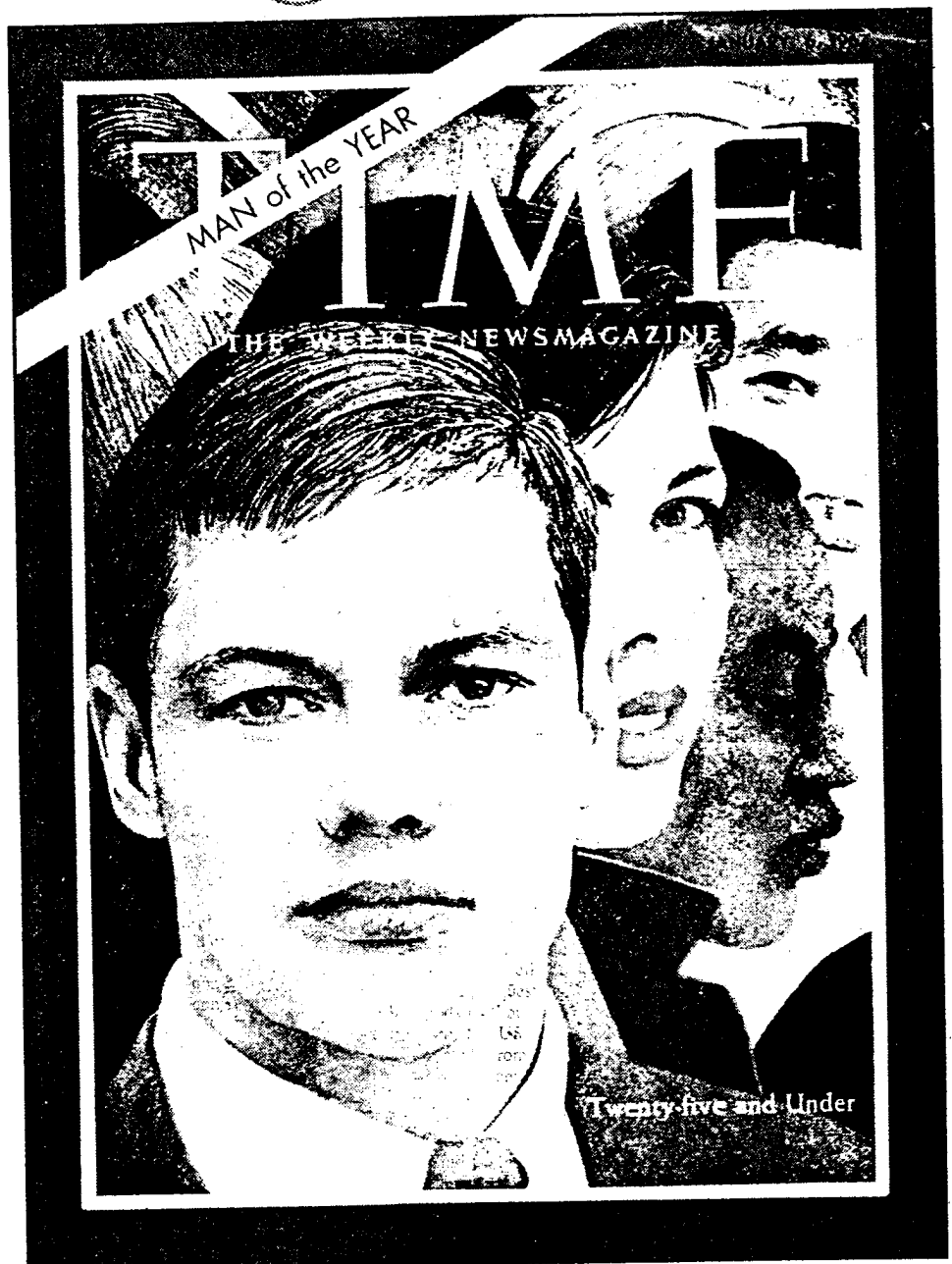
# Opology Newsletter

## Values That Matter



By Thomas S Weisner (U of California, Los Angeles)

At the end of each year, *Time* magazine publishes an annual issue in which the editors select the significant news figure(s) who had the most impact on the nation and the world that year. President Clinton and Ken Starr shared the cover for 1998. In contrast, the "Youth of America" were given that honor in 1967. The youth of America were presented in the magazine as the hope of the future. They were depicted as an eager, exploring, energetic, valued generation. Some were serving their country in Vietnam; some were vigorously protesting that war. They were going to colleges in unprecedented numbers and doing well. They were bringing new political ideas, new forms of intimacy and sexuality, new music and aesthetics, and a concern for racial justice and tolerance to the country. The youth of the Sixties and early Seventies had then—and still have—an enduring generational identity crystallized in political, cultural and personal life experiences. But what happened when they themselves became parents and had children? Our longitudinal research suggests that these youth diffused many of their new values and practices into middle class life; that their children often did carry on many of their parents' values; and that the parents by and large also continued middle class models emphasizing child stimulation and independence.



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## Nonconventional and conventional families alike did better with basic economic resources and relative stability of family life and caregivers over time.

Parents' values in the nonconventional family sample more often differed from the comparison sample in other ways—usually selectively supporting, challenging or offering modifications to some of these other middle class American developmental goals and practices. Nonconventional families were more likely to differ from our comparison sample in their family arrangements, values orientations (nonconventional families emphasized more progressive, tolerant values, less materialistic, more gender egalitarian, more questioning of conventional authority), and in other specific cultural practices (spirituality, political activities, diet and nutrition, and others).

### Experience, Behavior and Ambivalence

Countercultural families experienced what they tried out in their lifestyle experiments as very different because it varied from the unmarked middle class norms of the time, and their innovations were perceived that way by the larger society—even as dangerous and revolutionary at times. But parents' experience as they talked to us about them did not necessarily match their actual behavioral practices as we observed them. In cross-cultural perspective, these innovations, however important to parents and difficult to do, often were relatively modest in magnitude. For example, parents with pronatal goals breastfed their infants past 12 months—a long time for middle class parents in 1975, whereas many parents around the world begin weaning gradually only after 18 months.

Furthermore, new values and practices, like more normative middle class child rearing and cultural models of parenting are experienced and expressed in practice with conflict and ambivalence. Beatrice Whiting, for example, has called the middle class push for autonomy and self-expression the "dependency hang-up," in which middle class parents emphasize the values of independence and self reliance, while at the same time worrying and feeling anxious about their own need for and fears of the loss of close and dependent relationships with their children, as well as the loss of control and dominance over children.

### Real Middle Class Concerns

There are many circumstances responsible for the generally more troubled, less optimistic view of the children and youth of the US today, compared to the very hopeful, excited view of youth of 1967. Concerns about middle class families and their children are to a significant extent due to concerns about stagnating incomes, and work pressures facing dual-earning families and single parent households, but often these are presented as concerns exclusively about values or lifestyles. Katharine Newman has richly documented the personal experiences and struggles of families facing downward mobility in income, insecure jobs and work pressures, in *Declining Fortunes* (1993) and *Falling From Grace* (1988).

The point is that time use pressures, providing child care, decent schools, children born out of wedlock, alternative family forms, drugs and alcohol and sexual experimentation have become middle class concerns, no longer problems ostensibly only of the poor, minorities or marginal. In our study, nonconventional and conventional families alike—both parents and children—did better with sufficient basic economic resources and relative stability of family life and caregivers over time.

### Successful Hybrids

Those who point to "family values" (the goals, meanings and purposes of family life and human development) as important in parenting and children's development are right. Of course, values and goals do matter. They can positively affect the well being of children along with basic levels of family stability and the adequate resources that all families need. Our work with both conventional and more nonconventional families in the broad middle class suggests, however, that more than one kind of values orientation can provide that kind of positive developmental environment for children, and that more than one kind of family lifestyle (single parents, unmarried couples, changing family situations) can provide the context for relatively successful development and well-being by the standards of American society. Nonconventional families who selectively blended alternative choices, with more "middle class" values and practices, seemed to have teens who were doing well by both middle class standards and according to their own parental goals.

[Thomas S Weisner is Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Department of Anthropology at UCLA. His interests are in culture, human development and family. He also has done fieldwork in Kenya, among California families with children with developmental disabilities, and with economically poor families during welfare reform. FLS has been generously supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation, NIH and W T Grant Foundation. The Center for Culture & Health, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA provided important support. Weisner especially thanks Helen Garnier for innovative statistical analyses and project direction. Maurine Bernstein, Chembra Raghavan, Rebecca Stein, Jennifer Jacobs, Jennifer Furin and Anne Staunton undertook interviews and fieldwork with the adolescents and parents. Most of all, we thank the 200 families who participate in the FLS. Some of the work reported was completed while Weisner was at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, with support provided by NSF and the William T Grant Foundation. A recent FLS reference is in T S Weisner & L Bernheimer (1998), "Children of the 1960s at Midlife: Generational Identity and the Family Adaptive Project," *Welcome to Middle Age! and Other Cultural Fictions*, Richard Sweder, Ed.] ■

## Chicago

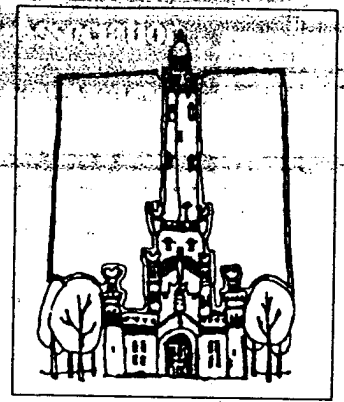
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cal Theory to Legislative Action and Enforcement," organized by June Nash and Judith Boruchoff, will consist of a dialogue between anthropological researchers and public policy makers.

On Saturday evening, President Hill will provide an overview of future directions for anthropology in her closing Presidential address.

More than 300 paper sessions and symposia will be offered at the 4½ day meeting. The deadline for submitting proposed presentations was April 1. Notices of acceptance will be mailed by the end of August. Additional information about the meeting, including the preliminary program and registra-

tion forms, will be available by September on AAA's Web page, <http://www.aaanet.org>. Contact Jan Meier or Lucille Horn for answers to specific questions about the meeting (703/528-1902 ext 2). ■



## COOPERATION COLUMN

The Cooperation Column is intended as a forum for sharing information of interest to AAA members and subscribers to AN. It is not a publicity vehicle for commercial ventures: information for advertisers may be obtained by writing to the editorial office. Items submitted to the Cooperation Column should be 100 words or less, typed double-spaced. Items will be published on a space-available basis.

Call for Papers. International Cultural Encounter in Cuba: History, Culture and Society in the African Diaspora, Association of Black Anthropologists sponsored conference, July 22-29, 2000. Havana-Matanzas and Santiago, Cuba. Deadline for submissions: December 15, 1999. Multidisciplinary conference and field visits will provide opportunity for scholarly exchange concerning the African Diaspora. The conference welcomes submissions that address these and other themes. Papers should be 15 minutes in length and organized sessions are limited to 2 hours. Contact Janis Faye Hutchinson, President, ABA, Dept of Anthropology, U of Houston, 4800 Calhoun St, Houston, TX 77204-5882; 713/743-3785, fax 713/743-4287, [jhutchinson@uh.edu](mailto:jhutchinson@uh.edu).

The newly reformatted WJM (formerly *Western Journal of Medicine*), a peer reviewed medical journal, is soliciting both articles and reviewers for its new section on culture and medicine. Articles should be geared toward clinicians, have a practical application and avoid the use of jargon. Content can focus on health care within particular ethnic groups or on the cultures of medicine and nursing. Potential reviewers should include information about their specific areas of expertise. Contact section editor, Geri-Ann Galanti at [ggalanti@pacbell.net](mailto:ggalanti@pacbell.net) for further information.

William S Pollitzer has about 200 books he wishes to share wherever they can do the most good. The subjects are chiefly anthropology (mostly physical), genetics and anatomy. Please advise: Dept of Cell Biology, School of Medicine, U of North Carolina, B

#7090, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7090; 919/942-2568, fax 919/942-7625, [pollitze@med.unc.edu](mailto:pollitze@med.unc.edu).

For a retrospection and statusing of the Action Anthropology concept (Sol Tax, U of Chicago), I'd like to hear from those who were influenced by or practiced action anthropology. I'm especially interested in references, copies of papers, personal reminiscences and reflections. Darby Stapp; 278 Adair Dr, Richland, WA 99352; 509/373-2894, fax 373/2958; [dcstapp@aol.com](mailto:dcstapp@aol.com).

The scholarly journal *Food and Foodways* plans to edit a special issue on "Food and Education." We seek original papers based on empirical research which examine how food serves as a means of education or how education influences the ways one eats. The maximum preferred length is 30 double-spaced pages with one inch margins. No minimum length. Submission deadline: October 1, 1999. Expected date of publication: July 2000. Send inquiries or submissions to Martin Bruegel (Martin.Bruegel@ivry.inra.fr) or Séverine Gojard ([gojard@ivry.inra.fr](mailto:gojard@ivry.inra.fr)). Food and Foodways, INRA-CORELA, 65 Bd de Brandebourg, 94205 Ivry sur Seine Cedex // France.

Once again, US researchers have been detained and expelled from Mexico by Immigration Officials. These detentions were carried out in San Cristobal de las Casas in relation to observation from afar of an event by two individuals on a tourist visa. While watching and photographing is not a violation of tourist visas, any pretext apparently is suitable for expulsions. It is critical that researchers and students know of the risks, strategies and possible outcomes of conducting research on a tourist visa and how to get an FM-3 visa should they so choose. It appears that Chiapas is becoming very restricted for researchers with anything but extremely conventional projects and even these can be risky. If you are going to Chiapas or have students going please consult the Society for Latin American Anthropology human rights <http://www.ucr.edu/anthro/slaa/Slaa9.htm>. ■