

CULTURE, VALUES, AND THE FAMILY

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The mission of the “Culture Matters” project is to celebrate the values of political democracy, social justice, and economic prosperity. Although these are societal features, rather than characteristics of individuals, the robustness of a society’s values can be enhanced by the ethical attitudes parents promote with their children. It follows, therefore, that democracy, social justice, and prosperity can be aided, or retarded, by the practices of families in a particular community.

FACTORS INFLUENCING VALUE HIERARCHIES

Many factors contribute to each person's hierarchy of ethical values. The most important include family values and practices, the values held by the child's role models, the social class, religion, and ethnicity of the child's family, and always the unique 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 refers to an ethical obligation toward appropriate role assignments. Herrera notes that Costa Rican children are socialized to avoid responsibility for assigned tasks. Costa Rican parents tell children complaining of a headache or stomachache that they do not have to go to school that day. There is also an acceptance of children who avoid accountability for their mistakes. A child confronted with something he broke usually resists confessing his error and parents are often permissive. In addition, workers call in sick (for example, teachers in Costa Rica have a very large number of paid sick days, and the

abuse of disability payments by public employees is four-fold larger than expected).

Further, Costa Ricans, like many Latin Americans, are prone to ignore the requirements of the law and treat laws as nonbinding. Although children are told to abide by rules, they are also told that if they fail to do so they should try to get away with it for the ability to avoid being caught is a sign that one is clever and cunning. Finally, Herrera notes that many mothers are overprotective and lead their child to feel entitled. Many parents accede to their children's wishes as long as parental goals are not in serious conflict with the child's desires. This behavior is consonant with the Costa Rican dislike for a delay in immediate gratification. Costa Ricans are notorious for conspicuous consumption and, as a result, many citizens have large debts that must be serviced.

Identification Young children are biologically prepared to seek and to 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 5-year-old girls believe that they share more features with their mothers than with their fathers. Therefore, a 5-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 the 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 mind of both child and adult with concepts that superficially seem unrelated to gender. By 8 years of age, the concept

"female" is linked, unconsciously, to the concept "natural" because all cultures regard giving birth to and caring for young 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 an empirical study of 7-year-old American children. The Pythagoreans regarded the number two as female and the number three as male because more natural events occur 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 stronger the identification of the former with the latter. A father who is tall, thin, and has 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 has no freckles. Members of minority groups in a society are more strongly identified with that group than those who belong to a majority group. The distinctive facial features, food prohibitions, and religious rituals held by Jews in Central Europe during the Middle Ages contributed to a strong identification with that social category.

Children learn the properties of the categories to which they belong and wish to retain consistency between the category and their behavior. A Vietnamese child whose family has immigrated to Montana believes she should behave in ways that are in accord with her understanding of the stereotype for Vietnamese, not Montana, children. Failure to do so is to violate the principle of consistency and, as a result, become vulnerable to 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 can, on occasion, generate guilt because 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 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 of the sad consequences of this belief is an unwillingness to work diligently at school because middle-class whites, who are "the enemy," want them to master academic tasks, attend college, and become professionals. The strong ethnic identification thwarts actions likely to benefit them.

The increasing ethnic diversity in the United States has made the category "American" more fuzzy than it was a century ago and an identification with a national category more difficult. Many Mexican immigrants who have lived in America for a decade believe that they are here temporarily and eventually will 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 because of the belief that the features that define class are malleable rather than fixed. The signs children use for class include the quality of residence, neighborhood, and material possessions. Most 7- year-olds can distinguish the drawings of homes belonging to poor and wealthy families, even though most parents do not 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 6 or 7 years of age.

Marx wanted to make class a more important psychological category than ethnicity or religion, but the non-violent collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, compared with the civil unrest in Bosnia, Ireland, and the Middle East, proves how difficult it is to reverse these priorities. Because many Americans believe that hard work and intelligence are all that are needed to gain the wealth that has become, in this century, a primary feature of personal worth, class has a greater potential for shame in America than it is in many 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 a readiness for shame that is hard to rationalize by those who remain poor.

Of course, identification with a less advantaged social class can provide some protection from shame or guilt over a family's class position. These protective beliefs include the notion that the rich are corrupt and morally flawed, secure jobs in a competitive society are scarce, employers are prejudiced against the poor, or 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 the psychological protection is torn away, adolescents from poor families confront their status without a

healing rationalization. It is possible that, 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 socialization practices with 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 a restrictive, compared with a permissive, strategy of socialization. Each parent was told that they would have to remember as much of the essay as possible as soon as it was completed. American working class mothers recalled more of the essay stating that excessive restrictiveness was bad for children because it made them excessively fearful. Middle-class mothers remembered more sentences stating that permissiveness would place their child at risk for delinquency and poor school grades (Kagan, 1984). 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 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. 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.

Peers and School 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, might be exposed to a different set of values. They can either resist, or change their childhood beliefs. Chinese adolescents, who had been born in the early 1930s, had to suppress the values they had been taught by their mothers and grandmothers in order to fit into Mao's society.

Local Historical and Cultural Context 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 she believes add virtue to self, while simultaneously trying to avoid acquiring features that challenge that judgment. Most, but obviously not all, individuals are risk averse. That is, most individuals 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, favor a latter, avoidant strategy.

Childhood experiences usually generate one, or perhaps two, serious sources of doubt, or uncertainty, that exert a strong influence on life choices. The doubts usually center on one or more of 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 profile was dominant 300 years ago in Puritan New England. Eighteenth century Chinese society placed a higher value on talent and relative status than did the People's Republic of China in the middle of the last century; contemporary Chinese resemble modern Americans.

ARE DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND PROSPERITY 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 generate 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. Early humans were neither democratic nor egalitarian during the first 80-90 millennia of human existence. This fact suggests that the three values promoted by the Culture Matters project do not have an obvious priority in human biology.

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 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 Ph.D.s 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, nurturant, just, and affectionate, children assume that an authoritarian arrangement does not violate natural law. Remember that Socrates's peers found him guilty of criticizing the power wielded by the majority in the democratic polis of Athens.

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 20-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 and had assumed, incorrectly, that she could handle those challenges wisely and with ease.

The first human foraging groups, consisting of 30-50 individuals, were not

democratic. Nor were the ancient civilizations that matured after agriculture was invented about 10,000 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 long 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 the ethic of democracy, the family must encourage a sense of personal agency in their children by providing experiences that allow sons and daughters to feel they have some power to affect the family. 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 families, many of whom feel less agency themselves, to believe that children should have a deep faith in their 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 of the psychological consequences 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 as much political influence as good ones. This victory, which is attainable, 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 bussing of African-American and Caucasian children to schools miles from their homes, and why the American Civil Liberties Union defended the right of neo-Nazi’s to march in an Illinois city.

Unlike a sense of agency, which can emerge before age 7, 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 occasion, have priority over the desires of the individual. Promotion of this goal requires

conversation and discussion between parents and children and is accomplished less easily through parental rewards and punishments. Parents have to be clever and detect when a context 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 of family, clan, ethnicity, and religion, to which the child belongs, and explaining why the requirements of these groups deserve priority, parents prepare youth to award this privilege to the State.

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 awarded all children, save a very small proportion with a special biology, 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, represents a significant foundation on which the teaching of social justice rests.

If children are reminded regularly of the deprivation experienced by disenfranchised citizens, they should, by adolescence, create a concern for strangers in need. It helps, of course, if the 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 acknowledging the vitality of the community. A comparison of European with East Asian cultures in the eighteenth century, before the West's influence on 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 their own. Community praise for success and blame for failure were placed on the individual, and not on his family or the actions of others. By contrast, the imperative for East Asian youth and adults 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 awhile 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 to women over the last few centuries. Most husbands in contemporary Western nations give women greater autonomy than Islamic or Asian societies. Nikolas Gvosdev 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 have relevance for economic development because, for most of

human history, but less so today, women attained virtue 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 the accumulation of wealth, improvement of talent, and a subsequent gain in the family's social status.

Economic Prosperity

The attainment of economic prosperity requires an ethic that celebrates the intrinsic value of personal accomplishment; that is, a work ethic in which individual accomplishment brings virtue. Many have noted that this view, inherent in Luther's sermons, is one basis for the economic prosperity of Protestant societies. This standard, common in North America and parts of Europe, requires suppressing worry over "being better than another".

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 community taking precedence over the individual, parents have to explain to youth that some citizens are unable to improve their position because of structural conditions in the society rather than because of their moral failure.

CHANGING VALUE HIERARCHIES

This essay has argued that the values communicated to the child in the home during the first decade of a child's life can have a powerful effect on the moral standards the adult will defend later and, therefore, on 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 some degree of implementation of this goal has been achieved through more than 50,000 parent education programs in America serving millions of parents. 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 and Thomas Lickona believe that the schools can affect the value system of youth. Lickona argues that contemporary American society condones arranging school environments to promote the values of hard work, perseverance, honesty, respect for authority, compassion for others, and humility. Lickona believes that these goals can be attained if the principals and teachers can control the entire school environment. However, Niemi reminds 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?

The promotion of one value over another requires an analysis of the different interests of three distinct constituencies: the community, the family, and the individual embedded in these social groups. 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 for 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 sensory feelings in the form of sensory delight and the feelings that accompany freedom from pain, fear, and intimidation. But each agent also wants symbolic affirmation that self is good, meaning a judgment that self's features are in accord with, and not seriously discrepant from, the symbolic concept of the ideal acquired during childhood and adolescence. This judgment defines a sense of virtue. When self's features fail to match the ideal, the opposite judgment occurs leading to dissatisfaction and anxiety, shame, guilt, or sadness.

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, receive sensory delights and a feeling of virtue. Unfortunately, this smooth meshing of interests is uncommon because there is insufficient agreement within many communities regarding the features that define virtue. Finding a balance among the three constituencies is like walking on top of a picket fence, for one is always off balance.

Consider the three goals of democracy, social justice, and economic prosperity. Many 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”.

I do not believe that the facts of human biology can help very much as we try to decide which beneficiary is in closer accord 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 self. Humans want to be a member of groups that award 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 would like to believe that humans can arrange more ideal conditions, the controlling mistress, hiding behind a curtain, is historical change that 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, which is imaginable, 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. However, neither ethic is in closer accord with our biology than their opposites.

Most Americans and Europeans answer, “To be happy” when asked what they want in life for themselves and their children. However, humans decide that they are happy, a judgment that is not equivalent in meaning to the temporary feeling that accompanies being free of pain or having a mouthful of chocolate, when their life conditions and personal features 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 and features will frame that judgment.

It is not obvious that an American 30-year-old who commutes 40 miles each way on a crowded highway to a factory assembly line, insurance office, or a hotel kitchen experiences more sensory delight and feels more virtuous throughout the year than a laborer who worked on one of Pharaoh's pyramids, a monk or nun in a Medieval village, or George Bernard Shaw's 19th century London flower girl heroine of *Pygmalion*.

At the moment, personal freedom to perfect self, free of restraint from the community or family, is a central feature of that judgment. For that reason, 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 enjoy the combination of political democracy, a 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 totalitarian. 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.

However, the values of the community are necessary for permanent change. 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 their economic and social position through education and the conscientious application of individual talents. Many in less developed societies hold a fatalistic belief that they are passive victims of social forces they are unable to 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 and, therefore, 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 a majority, because of their historical origins or presumed biology, is a formidable obstacle to the goals being sought. That is why, in part, Rwanda, Guatemala, Nigeria, and Russia are less prosperous than Botswana, Costa Rica, Chile, and China.

Further, identification with the nation must be stronger than the identification with tribe, clan, or region. America's advantage, as de Tocqueville appreciated almost 200 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 its children and to chastise the avoidance of responsibility, school failure, excessive dependence, and passivity. Further, the parents, who are role models for their children, must display these desirable behaviors in their daily activities.

The school has a similar imperative but, 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 peers have not.

The media's responsibility is to celebrate the values of education, talent, perseverance, and to praise heroes and heroines who conquer childhood disadvantages. The Abraham Lincoln story 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 better their position. Australians use the phrase, "lop off the tall poppies", implying that anyone who tries to attain a status higher than neighbor is a legitimate target of criticism. Many

youth in less-developed nations defend against this source of uncertainty by persuading themselves that the few who are well educated and/or wealthy are morally compromised because they exploit others. George Comstock, the anti-hero in 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 is 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, the moral power of the message is diluted.

Citizens within regions in America and Europe with a great deal of ethnic diversity are less certain than earlier generations regarding the qualities that are sins and those that are sacraments as well as the rituals that define the latter. One benevolent consequence of this doubt is greater tolerance of minority values. But humans want to believe in sins and sacraments in order to make a host of daily decisions after hunger and shelter have been assured.

Each person is acutely aware of his or her relative rank vis a vis others with respect to the features that define virtue. Egalitarian societies that wish to avoid prejudice try to pick traits that seem to be attainable by the largest number of citizens while accommodating to the economic and political structures of the society. That is why accumulation of wealth is a primary goal in American society. But gaining wealth requires competition with others and places self's interests above the desires of others.

As a result, restraint on self-interest, which exists in many societies, is much weaker in Europe and North America. Scientists who believe in the application of Darwinian principles to human behavior write that a self-interested strategy is in accord with human biology, even though geographically separate human groups that are reproductively most fit are not always those with a strong sense of virtue. Even Adam Smith, who believed that a society would prosper if each citizen put self's interests first, was certain that the human need for social approbation would modulate this urge. Smith could not have imagined some large urban areas in America in which most citizens care little about the opinions of their neighbors.

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 1000 years because each individual pursued a philosophy of self-interest. But the products of these advances have created a community in which millions living in remote areas know about, and compare themselves with, affluent citizens in North America and Europe. This comparison, which was impossible just 200 years ago, engenders a combination of envy, anger, and shame, rather than awe or respect.

This unique historical state of affairs, which might lead to continued unrest and attacks on the West, makes it reasonable to consider the wisdom of the advantaged societies sharing 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, to avoid the "Tragedy of the Commons", while not insisting, at least initially, that these societies mimic all the features of the democratic structures of the West. The hope is that as the

citizens of these nations become educated, and their lives improve, they will eventually 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 who believe in the potential success of all children; media who celebrate those who develop special talents and have compassion for those with a compromised status; and political institutions that legislate a concern for those with educational and material shortfalls along with enforcing laws without prejudice. The state's critical responsibility is to guarantee a just judicial system so that a majority believe that violation of the law will be punished in a fair manner. 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.

However, this assumption might have flaws. The People's Republic of China, which is not democratic, has enjoyed greater economic growth than more democratic India over the past 30 years. Although democracy and personal liberty did contribute to the West's economic and political gains over the past centuries, 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 the values, political structures, and forms of economic activity are always changing.