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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Youth and the Social Order. by F. Musgrove; Society and the Adolescent Self-Image. by Morris Rosenberg

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Youth and the Social Order.* By F. MUSGROVE. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965. Pp. xix+168. \$5.00.

*Society and the Adolescent Self-Image.* By MORRIS ROSENBERG. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965. Pp. xi+326. \$6.50.

Lewis A. Coser, in his *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View*, claims that intellectuals are distinguished by their determination to view conflicts of interest in terms of conflicts of values and ideas, their judgmental attitude toward society, and their taste for play with ideas for its own sake. In discussing Coser's work, Robert A. Nisbet has suggested, in addition, that an important distinction between the intellectual and the scientist is the former's preference, if he must choose, for being brilliant rather than right.

The typology is of interest here because, although their subject matters are basically the same, it is obvious that the two authors under review aspire in different directions—one mainly to brilliance, the other to truth.

Musgrove is the intellectual. Technological limitations rank low among the considerations that dictate his choice of problem. There is a tendency in the profession to see something heroic in this particular kind of disregard. How heroic it is is sometimes revealed by how well the intellectual handles problems that are well within the scope of existing methodology. Given his opportunity, Musgrove turns out to be better than we expected, but not as good as we would like.

Musgrove's book raises a number of interesting, perhaps even important, questions concerning the social status of adolescents. He attempts to show that their status has fluctuated in the last two centuries and that this is linked to changes in the industrial demand for child labor, to changes in the abundance of children, and to the decreased dependence of old people upon their children brought about by the introduction of insurance. Currently, he holds, the young enjoy high status.

However, this status is high only in the objective sense of financial independence and early marriage. In terms of the subjective opinion of their elders, the current status of the young is low. Expanding the Oedipal drama to the societal level, Musgrove claims that the older generations hate and fear the young and protect themselves from the full force of youthful competition by a variety of puerilizing stratagems advanced in the ostensible best interests of young people. The conception of adolescent status is itself a recent invention, he argues, that tends to create the immaturity it supposedly merely describes.

All of this is presented in so lively a manner that it is difficult to tell whether Musgrove is seriously advancing a conspiracy theory of the dominance of elders or merely employing a rhetorical device. The resultant ambiguity enables him to exploit the advantages of both possibilities—to charge boldly forward without exposing his flank to accusations of irresponsibility. Clearly, if one is striving for brilliance, one should avoid soft, mushy words like "ambivalence" and favor hard, glittering ones like "hatred."

Unfortunately, Musgrove so thoroughly overlooks obvious alternative interpretations of the items upon which he bases his argument of wilful exclusion of adolescents from adult life that the reader is embarrassed for him. For some inexplicable reason, he never came right out and asked adults directly what their feelings were concerning this issue. The validity of his closely related finding that adults are hostile and critical toward adolescents depends heavily on the representativeness of the 35 per cent that returned his mailed questionnaires. It is not unreasonable to suspect that those who were most negative toward young people were also more motivated to respond. The paucity of respondents in the 20–29 age category, and their overrepresentation in the over-45 age category, is consistent with this surmise.

In another chapter, Musgrove presents evidence for greater role conflict among students in the more prestigious English grammar

schools than among students in the so-called modern schools. Since Musgrove makes so much out of the fact that grammar school students see themselves, their peers, and adults as assigning different priorities to the same set of expected behaviors, it would have been helpful had he included some measure to show that this discord was also accompanied by greater psychic distress. Again, the most straightforward question was not asked. Perhaps the grammar school students are simply better at discriminating fine differences in social expectations.

Musgrove's chapter relating social change to the status of the young is certainly one of the most interesting. Employing the comparative method, he argues that change is most stimulated when the young are excluded from the rewards of the society.

That there is a ring of truth in all of Musgrove's assertions is beyond question. Assessment of the extent of this truth calls for fine tuning; Musgrove, however, has devoted himself mainly to turning up the volume. For example, much of the excessive sheltering of young people is clearly motivated by a desire to prevent them from having sexual experience. The primary agents in furthering this aim are parents and not other unrelated adults worried by the threat of youthful competition. Although Musgrove does advocate greater sexual permissiveness, he nowhere confronts squarely the issue posed by sexuality and the conservative influence of parents on social institutions dealing with youth. In his desire to portray young people as being more mature than society is willing to admit, he seems at times to be wilfully naïve. Furthermore, his evidence for youthful responsibility depends largely upon measures of attitudes, when it has been shown that even extreme behavioral deviants, such as hard-core delinquents, have attitudes in many ways similar to those of the rest of society.

For Rosenberg, the scientist, issues begin where they leave off for Musgrove. A co-winner of an American Association for the Advancement of Science Socio-Psychological Prize, his survey study of adolescents' self-images is a model of scientific endeavor. Because of its thoroughness and its validation efforts, this book should lend strong support to many of the major findings in self-concept research that have been subject to controversy because of occasional conflicting evidence.

Given the preference in sociology for causal hypotheses sufficiently removed from individ-

ual psychology to qualify as being structural, the most important finding is that the self-images of adolescents appear unaffected by the broader social status of their ethnic or religious group in society at large. Such differences as do exist seem traceable instead to actual interpersonal relations within the family and the neighborhood. Status as an abstract idea does not seem to matter.

There are rich chapters on the effects of the broken family and birth order; on parental interest, supportiveness, and punitiveness; on participation and leadership in high schools; and on concern with public affairs. Especially fascinating is the chapter on differences in interpersonal behavior between those with high and low self-esteem. The value of this last chapter is greatly enhanced as a result of Rosenberg's decision to do some intensive interviewing of extreme types.

The self-concept is itself a difficult concept. In their eagerness to avoid Freud, many researchers inflate it to the point of incorporating all of personality; others regard it as an epiphenomenal triviality. Rosenberg has a nice sense of its relevance, but we would disagree when he suggests that it is causally antecedent to anxiety. Anxiety is the deeper phenomenon, we feel certain, and probably most clinicians would agree. By employing an expanded definition of the self-concept one could make a case for his causal ordering, but it would amount to an essentially Freudian view of personality stripped of its dynamic explanatory advantages. By introducing control variables into the relationship between self-esteem and anxiety, Rosenberg gives the impression of presenting evidence in favor of his causal sequence, although he freely concedes that the data are equally consistent with the opposite sequence. There is a problem in exposition here, for many readers will overlook this frank but insufficiently emphasized admission. There is also something grotesque about an argument built around evidence that is completely equivocal.

Much evidence, including Rosenberg's own, indicates that low self-esteem is a good indicator of neurosis. According to psychoanalytic theory, neurotics have their libido tied up in internal conflicts and therefore unavailable for external commitments; consequently one would naturally expect healthier persons, with high self-esteem, to have their libido free for outside investment. Acceptance of self and accept-

ance of others have in fact been found to be positively correlated again and again. Yet Rosenberg somehow attributes exactly the opposite hypothesis to Freud, that those with high self-esteem have so focused their libido on themselves that they are less able to love others. Of course, this straw Freud comes out looking bad, because those with high self-esteem are, as might be expected, more positive toward others.

Rosenberg's book is so good, however, that it is easy to admire it greatly despite these disagreements. Those who have trouble placing themselves as either intellectuals or scientists in the discipline have only to note which of these two books they would rather have written—the test is guaranteed to be valid.

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*Britain's Married Women Workers.* By VIOLA KLEIN. New York: Humanities Press, 1965. Pp. xiv+166. \$5.00.

This small volume is a welcome addition to the growing literature on married women and especially of mothers in the role of provider. It is composed of just four chapters: (1) an Introduction which places today's employed married woman in historical perspective; (2) a description of the characteristics of employed married women and the meaning of work to them and to their husbands; (3) a description of employers' perspective on women as employees, both full-time and part-time; (4) an attempt to assess the future of employment of married women.

If the reader already has some familiarity with the literature on employed married women, he probably will be especially interested in the first chapter. The American studies have focused on employed mothers at a given point in time. Viola Klein places hers in the history of the employment of women and is especially helpful in pointing out that lower-class women were a major part of the labor force during the Industrial Revolution. Only the middle and upper classes were limited to the home. The exclusion of married women from the labor force is thus seen as only an

occasional and partial historical phenomenon, rather than a near universal one.

Klein's analysis of the employed married woman and her family is based primarily on a large survey she conducted of a representative sample of 1,068 women and 962 men, although she also draws from American and European research and from official sources. She provides a clear picture of who the employed women are and how they and their husbands feel about her employment and its effects on the family. The report is made by social class throughout and is often reported in the words of the respondent, which gives a feeling of intimacy and immediacy to the findings. However, the general findings are also adequately provided in tables and statistical analysis.

Unfortunately, she was unable to obtain a representative sample of employers. This is partially compensated for by a careful description of the discrepancies between her sample and the population of employers. This description is presented separately for full-time and part-time employees. This is especially useful in that American studies are weak on information on part-time employed married women.

I would, however, take issue with her (and most other researchers on employed married women) in that she still sees the interest or willingness of women to take employment as the controlling element in the proportion of them who will be employed. Most of the facts seem to support the generalization that it is the need of business and other employers for employees and for certain types of employees that has more bearing on the proportion of married women who will be employed.

This book constitutes a continuation of a long-term involvement of the author in new role definitions for women which goes back at least to her important volume *Women's Two Roles* (with Alva Myrdal) published in 1956. It will be welcomed by American readers, not only because it provides a specific picture of employment of married women in Britain, but perhaps even more in that it helps in setting the employed married woman in the relevant cultural perspective. One better "sees the forest, not just the trees" as he reads this book.

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