One of the most striking inadequacies of political analysts in the 1950s was their failure to anticipate the importance which generational conflict and the related student and youth movements would assume in the following decade. None of the theoretical models which have guided research in political sociology adequately incorporate the role of generational conflict and change. Pluralist theory could logically account for political groupings based on age, but nothing in the underlying assumptions of the pluralist model led the pluralists to give much importance to this variable. The concept of the circulation of elites might provide one basis for understanding youth movements, but it has not been systematically used in that way. Although Marxist theory has been widely adopted by contemporary youth movements, Marxism has never attributed a critical role to youth. Instead, Marxism has often led students to minimize their own

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Financial support from the Office of Scholarly and Scientific Research, University of Oregon, is gratefully acknowledged.
importance and to channel their efforts into attempts to form alliances with working-class groups.

This is not to say that there are no theories of generational phenomena, but only that these theories did not lead political analysts to anticipate the events of the 1960s. This was partly due to the inadequacy of the theories, but perhaps more centrally to the adherence of political sociologists to theoretical models which emphasized other things.

There are two basic theories of generational conflict. The first is the structural-functional model, best developed in the work of S. N. Eisenstadt (1956). This model is derived from a functionalist perspective which treats societies as relatively stable and integrated social systems. It focuses on static differences in generational perspectives which are universal in human societies, although they are expressed differently in different cultures. The second model, which focuses on historical change, is best expressed in an article written in the 1920s by Karl Mannheim (1952). This model does not assume that societies are stable, and consequently focuses on the role of youth in social change.

STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL THEORY

The structural-functional theory of generations deals with age differences which result from man’s biological nature and are consequently found in all societies. The central assumption of this theory is that as young people mature and move into adult social positions, their attitudes and behavior must change accordingly. Therefore, the structural-functional theory views youthful unrest as a troublesome but temporary problem resulting from the personal traumas of adolescence.

Functionalist theory has no problem in explaining the role of age groups in primitive societies (Mead, 1970). In some primitive societies, there is no well-developed system of social stratification of families, and age serves (with sex) as an
important basis of social differentiation. Privileges and responsibilities are largely determined by the age set into which an individual is born. Thus, age groups serve to maintain the division of labor which functionalists such as Durkheim have long argued is critical to social order.

The family is the central social institution in these primitive societies, and socialization processes which take place in the family give the young person values and knowledge which are adequate for dealing with his adult environment. Since social change is slow, young people can rely on their elders as models of what their own adult behavior will be.

Age groups are of much less structural importance in modern societies, and their persistence has posed something of a puzzle for functionalist theorists. In modern societies, the family retains an important but not exclusive role in socialization. It plays a very limited role in economic, political, educational, or religious life. Division of labor by age is clearly not a governing principle of modern society.

Functionalist theorists have generally explained the persistence of generational groupings as resulting from temporary or minor maladjustments in the society. Eisenstadt argues that youth groups are needed to help young people make the transition from the personalistic world of the family to the impersonal, bureaucratic world outside. The family necessarily relies on emotional solidarity and affection as rewards for proper behavior. In modern society, however, the adult must learn to cope with relationships which are impersonal, limited in scope, and lacking in deep emotional significance. Youth groups serve as a sort of crutch for the individual who is making this transition by providing an opportunity for him to engage in personally meaningful relationships outside the family.

According to this theory, youth groups function as escapes from the adult world, directing attention away from the demands of parents and teachers and into more personally
meaningful activities such as romance and athletics. At worst, they may delve into petty theft, street fighting, or vandalism.

In a related argument, Parsons (1962) has seen youth groups as resulting from cultural lag, from the failure of the values of American society to adjust to its social patterns. The United States has changed into a bureaucratic industrial society characterized by large-scale formal organizations, but the value system has not yet adjusted to this. The values of the Puritan ethic which stress individual achievement have not yet been completely replaced by the ethic of the organization man. Young people are expected to be creative and concerned, but the necessity for long years of education and the lack of generally accepted social goals block them from a feeling of active participation in society.

Both Parsons and Eisenstadt interpret the youth culture as arising from a situation of anomie, where there is a lack of consistent norms to govern behavior. They see this as an abnormal situation which will correct itself when the society works out some of its inconsistencies. There is little in the functionalist model which would lead one to expect that youth groups would emerge as radical political movements. Indeed, most of the groups which Eisenstadt studied were not politically involved. The German youth movement was perhaps the closest to a critical political stance, but it was essentially reactionary in ideology and quite authoritarian in organization. The other groups which Eisenstadt analyzed, such as the Israeli youth movements and the Komsomol in the Soviet Union, provide social outlets quite in keeping with the dominant political ideologies in their respective societies. They are more similar to the Boy Scouts in the United States than to the radical youth movements of the 1960s.

Writing in 1962, Parsons did not see youth as an essentially radical force in American society. He felt that the American value system was adjusting itself to current realities, that youth were accepting the new value system, and that, consequently, insofar as the mood of youth “is one of
bewilderment, frustration, or whatever, one should look for relatively specific sources of difficulty rather than to a generalized malintegration of the society as a whole” (Parsons, 1962: 107). He recognized that youth were in a state of ferment, but felt that their general orientation was “not a basic alienation, but an eagerness to learn, to accept higher orders of responsibility, and to ‘fit,’ not in the sense of passive conformity, but in the sense of their readiness to work within the system, rather than in basic opposition to it” (Parsons, 1962: 122-123).

Why did the structural-functional theory of Parsons and Eisenstadt not lead them to anticipate the rise of student radicalism in the 1960s? Perhaps the weakest point in their model is the lack of a dynamic component. There was no reason to expect the tension between family life and the other institutions of modern society to increase in the 1960s. Quite the contrary, the functionalists could anticipate that this conflict would lessen as family life adapted itself to the rest of society. Perhaps the most basic domain assumption of the structural-functional approach is that societies tend toward integration, and that contradictions within the social structure tend to adjust themselves (Gouldner, 1970). While one would not expect family life ever to change completely to resemble the impersonal, bureaucratic world of work, one might expect families, especially successful middle-class families, to better prepare their children to make the adjustment.

The structural-functional theory of generations sees youthful unrest as a symptom of adolescence, of the problems which young people face every generation in making the transition from childhood to adulthood. Often this leads to a neo-Freudian approach where youthful unrest is seen as a generalization of the resentment which young people may feel toward the authority exercised by their parents. Indeed, Parsons once went so far as to suggest, perhaps in jest, that there may be significance in the phrase “alma mater,” in that
students may be reenacting the Oedipal conflict in attempting to take the university away from the older male faculty. Now, there is no doubt that adolescence, like every other stage of life, has its problems. But there is no reason to expect these problems to be significantly more severe in one decade than in the next. Nor is there any reason to expect them to be more severe for the upper-middle-class students who populate the better universities than for the often much less radical working-class students who must sometimes make the adjustment to highly impersonal jobs immediately after high school. The structural-functional approach may be useful in explaining the functions of social clubs or gangs among young people, but it is of limited value in explaining the type of radical youth movements which become so significant in the 1960s.

HISTORICAL-CONSCIOUSNESS THEORY

Karl Mannheim’s (1952) classic article on the problem of generations is an attempt to untangle the problems involved in relating the factor of generational differences to other sources of social and political differentiation and change. Mannheim recognized that generational differences are based on the biological facts of the human life cycle, but argued that this does not imply that generational differences in attitudes can be deduced from biological differences. Mannheim was not satisfied with attempts made by the French positivists (Mentré, 1920) to quantify generational differences. These authors argued that social progress had to adjust itself to the generational cycle, with regular changes taking place in intervals of thirty years or so. History does not follow such a timetable, as was shown by the failure of the positivists to agree on the length of the cycle.

An obvious characteristic of human biology is that births and deaths take place continually. Yet most analysts have felt
that there are definite periods of generational similarity, that individuals born in a certain span of years tend to share certain attitudes and behavior patterns. These generational periods correspond to different historical epochs. Mannheim turned to the work of German romantic-historical writers such as Dilthey, who rejected the positivist assumption that society was steadily progressing toward higher forms of social organization (Dilthey, 1957). The romantic-historical thinkers argued that each historical period had its own spirit, or zeitgeist. Generations were important, in their view, because individuals in the same age group grow up in the same historical period and form their views of the world in terms of the zeitgeist of that era.

Generations are not concrete social groups consciously established by their members with regular patterns of activity. At best, a generation could be considered as what the pluralists would call a “potential” group, but only a small proportion of the members of a generation are likely to be participants in pressure groups organized to express the interests of the generation politically. In this sense, a generation is similar to a social class. Generational membership is a social location which determines many of the conditions under which an individual lives and the experiences which he has. An individual is a member of a generation and of a social class whether he realizes it or not. Like class position, generational location creates a potential for political consciousness which may or may not be realized.

Generational location is particularly important because of the openness and sensitivity of individuals in certain age groups to current social trends. Change would be much slower in human societies if individuals were immortal and were not replaced. A person who enters a group for the first time is not committed to the traditions of that group in the way that old members are. Change in human societies is facilitated by the continuous input of new members who add a fresh perspective, just as change in an organization may be
encouraged by the addition of "new blood." This is not to deny the importance of socialization processes whereby established members of a group or society pass on the old values to the novices. But these processes are imperfect, especially in a group which is changing so rapidly that the old values are necessarily being called into question.

According to the historical-consciousness theory of generations, the years in which the individual makes the transition from the family to the adult world tend to be formative in that the adjustment which is made at this time tends to persist once he has settled into adult routines. While social conditions may change in his adult years, he will interpret these changes from the perspective of the values which he gained in his youth. Generational styles, therefore, change as quickly or as slowly as the social and cultural milieu changes. The length of generational periods depends on social rather than biological variables. In stable primitive societies, change may take many lifetimes to occur, while in more dynamic societies, changes may be discernible every few years.

Of course, the fact that members of a generation go through their formative years in the same historical epoch does not mean that all of them react in the same way. Mannheim used the term "generation unit" to refer to members of a generation who develop a common response to the social situation which they face. He argued that the romantic-conservative and liberal-rational youth ideologies of his era were opposite forms of response to the historical situation which they both had in common. In the same way, one could argue that the new left and radical right youth of today are expressing opposite reactions to trends of bureaucratic irrationality which both are experiencing in American society.

Mannheim’s historical-consciousness theory goes beyond structural-functional theory by relating generational change to the broader context of social and cultural change. Writing in Germany in the 1920s, Mannheim saw the society around
him as highly unstable. His focus, therefore, was on the
correspondence of generational differences to social change.
From the vantage point of the 1970s, this approach would
seem more useful in explaining the political role of youth
than the static structural-functional approach which attrib-
utes youthful unrest to the difficulties which adolescents
have in adjusting to adult roles in a stable society.

YOUTH AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The contemporary youth revolt is important to the degree
that it reflects a special sensitivity which young people in
their formative years have to emerging social and cultural
trends. Youthful dissatisfaction with established social pat-
terns is a worldwide phenomenon and must therefore reflect
problems which are universal in modern societies. At the
same time, this dissatisfaction is not universal among the
youth of any one society. The most vocal unrest is often
located among middle-class youth, especially those who are
involved in liberal arts programs in colleges and universities.

There are many generation units within the current youth
movement. Myriads of political groups, each with its particu-
lar ideological emphasis, are matched by less formally
organized groups more concerned with communal living
patterns and innovations in fashion and culture. If the
historical-consciousness model of generational change is
correct, these differences within the youthful generation must
be understood as variations on a common theme. The first
step in an understanding of the significance of the contem-
porary youth movement must be to find the common
elements within its many diverse strands.¹

One of the central problems to which youth are respond-
ing is the growth of large, impersonal, formally rational
organizations as the dominant pattern of social organization
in modern society. Bureaucratic power has emerged as the

¹References are omitted from this version of the text.
key political problem in the socialist countries, while the
growth of large monopolistic firms has transformed the
nature of capitalist political economies. Cultural diffusion
and economic imperialism have spread the same problems to
the third-world countries. The increasing dominance of
bureaucratic social forms is thus a worldwide social trend,
and, if the youth movement is a reaction to current trends, it
must deal in some way with this problem.

The response which youth have made to this trend varies,
but it has generally not followed the pattern outlined by
Parsons and Eisenstadt, who expected youth to concentrate
on making an adjustment to existing institutions. Youth have
generally rejected the managerialist ideology of the tech-
nocracy which preaches that individuals should learn the
virtues of discipline and self-control while adjusting to social
patterns established by powerful authorities. In opposition to
this view, youth have tended to adopt a world-view which
emphasizes spontaneity and individuality and have argued
that established institutions should be changed to meet
human needs rather than requiring people to change to fit the
system.

It is ironic, but not unexpected, that the young people
who are rejecting the demands of technocratic society are
often those who have gained the most from it. Youth from
middle-class families enjoy the benefits of affluence without
making the sacrifices that their parents very likely had to
make to attain them. At first glance, one might expect that
the individuals who sacrifice to attain something would be
the first to question whether or not it was worth the price.
More frequently, however, the opposite pattern seems to
hold. If a person has sacrificed to attain something and then
finds that it is not so desirable after all, he is in a state of
“cognitive dissonance” (Festinger, 1957). He must somehow
rationalize to himself why he devoted so much effort to
attaining, say, financial success if he finds that he has little
time, energy, or desire to enjoy the things that money can
buy. The easiest way to resolve this dissonance is to convince himself that financial success was a worthwhile goal, after all. Under these circumstances, affluence can easily become a symbolic rather than a real goal. Possessions can be valued more as status symbols than for the pleasure or comfort which their use provides.

Of course, these problems have existed for a long time for certain segments of society, as Veblen's (1934) classic critique of "conspicuous consumption" testifies. What is different about the current historical period is that the problems of affluence are reaching larger and larger sectors of the population. In a society where most people have not yet attained a decent standard of living, few are likely to question the merits of technological advances, although there may be conflict about who should pay for them. But, once the needs for food, shelter, medical care, and other necessities are met, there is a diminishing return in further acquisition of wealth.

In a sense, the issues which youth are raising are premature. Not everyone has reached a minimally adequate standard of living even in the wealthy countries, and relatively few of these have yet begun to question the rewards of affluence. It is inherent in the nature of youth that it should be more sensitive to emerging problems than older generations and therefore always ahead of its time. In another sense, however, youth are returning to traditional values which have been lost in modern society. Many cultures in the past have assumed that the needs of an individual are finite, and that once he has achieved them he should devote himself to helping others. Capitalist societies, however, have been unable to prosper without increasing demand for their products and have consequently made continual efforts to artificially stimulate demands for consumption. Young people who question the ethic of modern capitalism which asserts that man must constantly devote himself to meeting the limitless artificial needs created by the advertising arm of
the technocracy are, in a sense, urging a return to precapitalist values.

Social order in contemporary societies has depended largely on the willingness of most people to conform to social norms established by powerful social institutions. These norms are essential to social order precisely because they compel the individual to restrain his natural impulses, to do what is good for "society," rather than what he would like to do. The sanctions which are applied to those who violate the norms are never sufficient to ensure conformity in themselves: they must be reinforced by positive rewards. In modern societies, the chief rewards for working hard and delaying gratification have been financial. As these financial rewards lose their potency, a general atmosphere of questioning the need for conformity develops. As youth come to question the payoffs provided by conformity to the system, they also question the whole body of moral and ethical values propounded by established authority figures.

These changes in the world view of a generation are difficult to document, since comparisons of individuals in different age groups at one period of time cannot show what the attitudes of the older people studied were when they were young or what the attitudes of the young people will be when they are older. Only panel studies which compare the same age group in different historical periods can distinguish changes in historical consciousness from structural-functional differences in attitudes. A recent study compared the moral values of two samples of American college students, one in 1958, the other in 1970-1971. The results showed a weakening of moral inhibitions in the realm of individual obligations to conform to norms established by powerful and authoritative social institutions. At the same time, the current generation of students felt more strongly than those in 1958 that corporations and governments should adhere to high standards of morality. Thus, there has been a weakening in conformity to established norms of personal behavior in
areas which do not directly affect other individuals, and an increased feeling that the powers that be should themselves be controlled.

Of course, college students are a minority of the youthful generation, and even among college students there are important differences in attitudes. While all young people must react to the same historical milieu, they may react in opposite ways. Lipset and Raab (1970), for example, have shown that in the 1968 presidential elections in the United States a significant proportion of young people rejected the candidates of the major parties. But, while college students frequently turned to the left, some young people working in blue-collar jobs turned toward George Wallace.

An interesting survey done in 1969 for CBS News (Yankelovich, 1969) sampled both college students and young people in the same age group who were not in college. In addition, the CBS survey interviewed the parents of both groups. There were, of course, significant differences within each of the generations studied. The parents of noncollege youth were more likely to have attitudes typical of the working class: they were more likely to accept traditional values, more hawkish in their foreign policy values and more conservative with regard to race relations, “law and order,” and welfare. The noncollege youth were also more conservative that the college students. Nevertheless, when both samples of young people were compared with their parents, the young people generally had more leftist views.

The differences were less pronounced for the working-class youth, however, and many fewer of them reported any participation in political activities. While most of the college students sympathized with the objectives of the activist groups, noncollege youth were more likely to report that they were not emotionally involved one way or the other.

**GENERATION UNITS AMONG CONTEMPORARY YOUTH**

There are distinct generation units within both the politically involved and the politically withdrawn groups of
youth. Among the politically involved, the most important
criterion of differentiation is ideology: revolutionary, ac-

tivist, and reactionary youth form separate generation units.

Among politically withdrawn youth, ideology is not so

important. The generally largest generation unit, the con-

formist youth, includes individuals of varying ideological

persuasions although the majority adhere to middle-of-the-

road political views. Two other nonpolitical patterns of
generational response include the Bohemians who generally
adhere to leftist ideologies, and the delinquents, who are
generally more conservative and authoritarian in their politi-

cal views (Matza, 1961).

When politically involved and politically withdrawn youth

are divided into leftist, centrist, and rightist ideological
categories, the six ideal-types of generation units shown in

Table 1 result. These ideal-types are useful as bench marks

for analysis, even though many young people cannot be

readily classified into any one category. There are fine points

of gradation along both the liberal-conservative and the

involved-withdrawn dimensions, and young people often

change their views. A conformist student may find his sense

of complacency disrupted by some change in the local or

national scene, ranging from the invasion of a neutral country

to the pollution of his favorite ocean beach. Or he may be

moved into activism through a consciousness of some social

wrong covered in one of his classes. Whatever the mechanism

that moves him out of conformity, once a student has moved

into activism he is fair game for the revolutionaries (Howard,

| TABLE 1 |

| GENERATION UNITS AMONG CONTEMPORARY YOUTH |

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<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
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1969), who offer an explanation for the likely failure of his reformist efforts, or the Bohemians who offer at least an escape.

Revolutionary students are constantly seeking to win the support of other generation units. They may choose a Bohemian life style, mimic the delinquency more typical of working-class high school youth, or adopt a straight appearance more congenial to young workers, depending on their judgment as to which approach will be most effective. Recently, some elements of reactionary youth have adopted the outward manifestations of the Bohemian life style in order to spread the faith, in this case a fundamentalist religious doctrine, to a growing group of sinners.

The apolitical conformist youth frequently adopt ideas and behavior patterns from other generation units. Hair styles and clothing patterns which are at first the domain of the Bohemian fringe come to be the conformist pattern as they are adopted by the majority of college and high school youth. The use of drugs has similarly become a part of the mainstream of youthful behavior. Political ideas, as well, filter from the politically involved groups to the larger group of nonactivist youth. The fact that only a minority of young people is likely to be politically involved at any one time should not be interpreted as minimizing the importance of the activist and revolutionary groups. Not only do ideas from these groups tend to become diffused throughout the younger generation, but there is a high turnover in these groups as young people become involved for a time and then turn to other things. Therefore, the influence of these groups on the larger body of youth in their formative years is much larger than numbers alone would indicate.

The factors which lead some young people to become political activists, while others do not, have been extensively studied in the literature on the social bases of the student movement. Studies of the personality characteristics of radical students have refuted certain popular and scholarly
(Feuer, 1969) believes that radical students are motivated by personality disorders. Radicals have been shown to be quite healthy psychologically, not suffering from deep emotional conflicts or problems of adjustment (Keniston, 1968; Watts and Whittaker, 1966; Trent and Craite, 1967). Radicals have been shown to have higher scores on measures of healthy personality traits such as flexibility, autonomy, impulse expressivity, tolerance of ambiguity, estheticsm, and thinking extroversion. These studies, coupled with research such as that of McClosky (1958), which shows that conservatives generally have less-healthy personalities, have led some writers to conclude that healthy human beings are inherently liberal and that people become conservative when their natural impulses are corrupted by authority, creating needs for ego defensiveness and social acceptance (Bay, 1967).

More recent research, however, has not always confirmed the psychological superiority of radical students (Kerpelman, 1969; Miller and Everson, 1970). Most studies of the personality patterns of activists were conducted in the mid 1960s, when opposition to the war in Vietnam was a minority position among American university students. Research on the family backgrounds of student radicals at that time showed that they were largely the offspring of white, upper-middle-class, well-educated professional families (Flacks, 1967; Westby and Braungart, 1966; Lubell, 1968). Right-wing politically involved students, by contrast, were more likely to come from lower-middle or working-class homes (Westby and Braungart, 1966). They, too, generally supported the values of their parents, who were concerned with threats to their status from minority groups and the liberal establishment.

Since the mid 1960s, student radicalism has become more widespread. Larger numbers of white students have become active in leftist movements, significant numbers of black and other third-world students have entered colleges and often become involved in radical politics, and the number of
students adopting a "hip" life style has increased, together with an increase in the use of drugs. As larger numbers of students become involved in radical politics, radical students are likely to differ less from the rest of the student body (Mankoff and Flacks, 1971; Dunlap, 1970). As a higher and higher proportion of students have become alienated from American society, larger numbers of them have turned to radicalism or to the drug culture. Recent studies of drug users in college communities show that they tend to come from families which are typical of those of the rest of the student body in socioeconomic characteristics (Watts et al., 1969) although often characterized by distant family relationships and interpersonal crises (Blum et al., 1970: 366).

One of the most obvious differences between young people and older people is that young people are very often students, while older people usually are not. The effect of educational environments on young people cannot be ignored as an influence on student politics. Educational theorists have long differed about the purposes and methods of education, and these differences parallel differences in social and political philosophies. Educational environments which follow a progressive philosophy, emphasizing individual differences and social criticism, should be more likely to produce radical students than those which reflect a more traditional concern with conformity to established doctrines and institutions (Goertzel, 1971). Higher education, by its nature, is likely to have an overall liberalizing effect. While rote memorization and drill may be effective in teaching the basic skills often emphasized in primary, and to some extent secondary, schools, education on a more sophisticated level inherently involves critical thought, since students are required to evaluate different arguments and perspectives and reach some conclusion of their own. To the extent that education involves original thought, and this is more likely to be so in the better schools and in fields of study where the body of factual knowledge to be memorized does not
dominate the curriculum, it should contribute to the development of a libertarian personality and of critical political and social views.

Even in the 1950s, when American college students were noted for their apathy, Jacob (1957: 39-40) found that college seniors, when compared with freshmen, were freer from compulsiveness, more critical of their families, more politically rebellious, more religiously liberal, and more tolerant of unconventional or deviant behavior. A massive review by Feldman and Newcomb (1965: vol. 2, 2-90) of four decades of research on the impact of college on students confirms that colleges, at least in the United States, do have a consistent liberalizing influence on students. When measures of political liberalism-conservatism are administered to samples of college freshmen and seniors, the seniors almost universally are shown to have more liberal views, regardless of the type of educational institution. The liberalizing effect of college is also shown by studies which use more specific indices such as measures of support for minority rights, support for labor, pacifist attitudes, or support for civil liberties. The results are even more impressive when measures of authoritarian, prejudiced, or dogmatic attitudes are administered to freshmen and to seniors, as Feldman and Newcomb (1965: 31) report: “nearly without exception, the studies show seniors to be less authoritarian, less dogmatic, less ethnocentric, and less prejudiced than freshmen.” It is especially reassuring to note that college seniors score lower on Rokeach’s (1960) scale of dogmatism, since this scale was developed specifically to measure a supposed form of leftist authoritarianism.

Feldman and Newcomb’s survey of the literature also shows that college seniors, as contrasted with freshmen, are more inclined toward reflective and independent thought, including consideration of their own motives, and are more creative, critical, and analytic. Seniors are also less concerned with religion and more inclined toward liberal, as opposed to
fundamentalist, religious beliefs. In the realm of educational values, by the senior year, a higher proportion of students value general education over vocational training. Most students, even in their freshman years, rank the intrinsic satisfaction of work as more important than external rewards of status or income, and the proportion increases by the senior year.

These findings on the impact of college are based on a very large number of studies; twenty or thirty separate samples are reported on to substantiate most of the research findings. This is one area in which the cumulative nature of social science has been demonstrated, and it is possible to be as confident of these results as of any in social science. With regard to student politics, the essential conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that the overall effect of college is to develop liberal or leftist values in students. The studies of radical students show that they differ from the average student in the same ways that seniors, on the average, differ from freshmen. Student political activism, then, must be regarded as an inherent result of the educational process, not as an aberration or as the result of some failure of the university. Since higher education is an increasingly central part of modern society, with larger proportions of the youthful population going on to college, the universities must be regarded as an increasingly important, perhaps the most important, agency of social change.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The structural-functional theory of generations has not proved useful in the study of the political role of youth, whatever its value in the study of adolescent social cliques or delinquent groups. This is not to say that psychological problems of adjustment to adolescence do not exist or that young people do not often feel hostile toward their parents.
The fairly substantial number of empirical studies of student radicals, however, show that these familial hostilities are not the basis of student political rebelliousness, although they may account for some young people who turn to drugs and other aspects of Bohemian living.

The historical-consciousness theory does provide a framework for isolating the significance of generational differences for social change. These are the differences which result from the inherent resistance of young people to cultural lags. The long-run implications of generational differences can be specified from this perspective, even though it is difficult to say what role generational conflict will play in political affairs in the immediate future. Students and other young people in modern society differ from their elders in that they have been socialized in a period of relative affluence brought about by science, technology, and bureaucracy. Just as Marx predicted, this affluence, which was generated by modern society, has also planted the seeds of the destruction of that society, or at least of a radical transformation of it. The leading agency of that transformation, however, is not likely to be the industrial proletariat, which has been coopted to a degree just sufficient to maintain its loyalty without satiating its desire for material goods. The more likely agencies of change are the young people and the middle-class professional people, for whom material rewards have lost their potency as rewards for conformity.

As material goods lose their effectiveness, other rewards will become critical in motivating people to assume positions of social and political responsibility. Already, businessmen who assume powerful government positions take a substantial cut in salary. As social consciousness grows, the myth that it is necessary to pay someone close to one million dollars a year to assume the presidency of a major corporation will become more difficult to sustain. A corporation president who believed in what he was doing could work for the modest salary of a university president or Cabinet officer.
The inevitable consequence of affluence is a decline in the importance of economic interests as determinants of political behavior. The revolt of youth must be understood as the contemporary vanguard of the movement begun in the last century for a society based on the collective satisfaction of human needs rather than on a competitive struggle for individual wealth.

The educational demands of modern society are one of the most critical sources of change within that society. This is the reason why university students have been the most active in the movement for social change. This is true even though the universities are formally controlled by representatives of the upper class or power elite, and even though much of what is taught is directed more at sustaining old patterns than at encouraging new ones. Despite the controls placed on it, education makes an individual less accepting of the ideologies which elites use in justifying their positions and more willing to consider alternatives. A society which is largely dependent on educated labor must rely on mechanisms of control which can pass the scrutiny of an intellectually sophisticated populace.

The short-run mechanisms which will bring about these changes are too varied and flexible to make precise predictions possible. One of the most plenteous alternatives is that presented by Charles Reich (1970), who argues that the old order will simply melt away as the new consciousness wins the loyalty of wider and wider segments of the population. Reich has resurrected the Marxist-Leninist theory of the "withering away" of the state. His optimism is based on an extremely questionable premise, that there is no one in control of the reins of power in American society. This is clearly false; there are quite identifiable people in control. A somewhat more plausible premise is that a new social consciousness will spread to this ruling group, and that the elite will consequently recognize the need for change and create a revolution from above. The liberal establishment in
the United States has in the past shown a considerable ability to recognize social trends and adapt to them. In doing so, however, it has retained the tremendously unequal wealth distribution and the economic system which makes it possible. The prediction that the upper class will perceive the basic irrationality of a system which rewards it so well, in comparison to others, is optimistic indeed. Even an avowedly revolutionary ruling elite such as that in China has shown itself vulnerable to the temptations of power, and Mao himself found it necessary to rely on a youth movement for support in his struggle to maintain a more egalitarian society. Of course, in the United States, it would be possible to maintain egalitarianism on a much higher level, but even so the support of the upper class for this has not been overwhelming.

The remaining alternative is for the youth movement to make a revolution from below. This would require a coalition with other groups, the specific nature of this coalition depending on the social composition of the society in question. In developing countries, where the students represent a small modern elite, the classic Marxist-Leninist pattern of revolution is still a possibility. The ruling elites in many of these countries have been too far corrupted by Western economic and military penetration to permit much possibility of a revolution from above. A coalition of workers, peasants, and revolutionary intellectuals might succeed in gaining power, although even after such a revolution, economic inequality would probably have to be used as a motivation for economic growth.

The prospects of an alliance with the industrial proletariat in the developed countries would seem bleak, despite the events of May 1968 in France. This class is no longer as central to the economy as it was, although it is by no means insignificant. And the techniques of encapsulation have too effectively sapped its revolutionary vigor.

As purely economic inequality is losing its force as a source of conflict, conflict on status grounds is increasing.
The movements of black people and other racial and ethnic minorities have been in large part aimed at correcting economic inequalities, but often these economic goals are considered as partly symbolic of a struggle for status, respect, and social equality. The women’s liberation movement, as well, has been concerned with economic inequities, but also with the inferior social position of women. These groups can serve as allies of the youth movement in the struggle for a more humane and egalitarian society.

Another obvious ally of the youth movement is the new middle class of college-educated technical and professional workers. This class is increasingly populated by relatively young people who have been radicalized by their experiences in college in the 1960s. Members of many professional fields are already expected by society to adhere to the new nonpecuniary ethic. Social workers, teachers, health workers, poverty lawyers, and the like are expected to work for relatively low pay because of the inherent satisfaction of their work. Indeed, the norm seems to be that if work provides the satisfaction of being helpful to other people, it should not provide the same rewards as the more exploitive positions in business administration, advertising, or corporate law.

The greatest risk for the youth movement may be its tendency to slide into escapism and personal gratification. This applies most obviously to the drug culture, but it also be said of some of the most dramatic forms of confrontation politics which often seem to be motivated more by a desire to prove the ideological purity and courage of the participant than by a dedication to serious political struggle. Symbolically violent tactics may provide considerable psychological support to the ruling groups, at relatively little material cost which can easily be passed on to the workers and taxpayers. As the “cultural freaks” and the most extreme radicals drop out of the system, they may isolate themselves from real political support, and the positions
which they would otherwise have occupied may well be filled by less rebellious, upwardly mobile arrivals from the lower-middle class. Little can be accomplished by maintaining ideological purity if this requires avoiding involvement in real struggles for more humane social conditions within existing and necessary social institutions.

The youth movement is, by nature, likely to be ahead of other social and political movements. Since this is so, it must necessarily ally itself with groups which do not share its complete vision of the needs for social change. Failure to do this leads to sectarianism and isolation from real possibilities to play a political role. Too great an identification with other groups, however, may result in the youth movement’s losing sight of its overall goals and settling for reforms which lessen, rather than increase, the pressures for a broader and more lasting adaptation to emerging social conditions. The real challenge for the leadership of youth movements is to choose the course between these two extremes which is most effective at each stage in history.

NOTES

1. Two of the most interesting recent books on the youth culture are Roszak (1968) and Reich (1970).
3. There have been several comprehensive reviews of this literature; including: Flacks (1970); Lipset (1971, 1969); Emmerson (1968); Altbach and Laufer (1971).

REFERENCES

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ERRATUM

In the December 1971 issue of Youth & Society, an inadvertent error was made on page 142 of the article by Paul Hollander. In line 5, the phrase should read: “numerous best-of-all-possible-world approaches . . .”