

Searle says, is that the canon consists of the "official publications" of the "system of oppression" known as Western civilization. As they see it, this civilization subjugated women and ethnic and cultural minorities, and fostered imperialism and colonialism. These critics won't be satisfied by the addition of a few works by blacks or women to the canon. Many of them believe that the primary purpose of teaching the humanities should be to help transform or revolutionize society.

Unless their underlying assumptions are accepted, Searle says, the cultural leftists' explicit arguments seem weak. "From the point of view of the tradition, the answers to each argument are fairly obvious," he observes. Thus, "it is not the aim of education to provide a representation or sample of everything that has been thought and written, but to give students access to works of high quality. [Education therefore] is by its very nature 'elitist' and 'hierarchical' because it is designed to enable and encourage the student to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, what is intelligent and what is stupid, what is true and what is false." And the fact that the humanities, like everything else, have a political dimension, doesn't mean that ef-

forts to teach the humanities should be assessed primarily by political standards.

Yet the defenders of tradition have their own failings, in Searle's view. Roger Kimball, author of last year's *Tenured Radicals*, for instance, "simply takes it for granted that there is a single, unified, coherent tradition, just as his opponents do, and he differs from them in supposing that all we need to do to rescue higher education is to return to the standards of that tradition." But, Searle says, there never really was a fixed canon, just "a certain set of tentative judgments about what had importance and quality. Such judgments . . . were constantly being revised."

The debate over the canon, Searle observes, is mainly concerned with what is usually just "a single required freshman course in the humanities, together with other courses in literature which the scholars who describe themselves as the 'cultural Left' may seek to control, and which may (or may not) therefore be vehicles for promoting ideologies of 'social transformation.' Most undergraduate education . . . is largely untouched by this discussion. Neither side has much to say about what actually happens in most college classrooms."

## The Rat Race

"The Pace of Life" by Robert V. Levine, in *American Scientist* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), P. O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709.

Everyone knows about Type-A individuals, but are there Type-A cities, too? Apparently so, according to Levine, a California State University psychologist.

Levine and his colleagues examined the "pace of life" in 36 U.S. cities—nine in each of four regions—by taking careful note of: how fast folks walked along a main downtown street on a clear summer day; how long bank clerks took to change two \$20 bills; how long postal clerks took to explain the differences among regular, certified, and insured mail; and what proportion of men and women observed in downtown areas during business hours were wearing a wristwatch.

As expected, the researchers found that

people in the Northeast walk faster, make change faster, talk faster, and are more likely to wear a watch than people in other parts of the country. A little surprisingly, perhaps, New York City did not head the list of fast-paced urbs; Boston held that honor, followed by Buffalo, N.Y. (!), and then Gotham. The slowest urban pace was on the West Coast, with mellow Los Angeles taking slowest city honors. L.A.'s laid-back denizens ranked 24th of the 36 cities in walking speed, next to last in quickness of tongue, and dead last in making change. Their "only concession to the clock was to wear one," Levine observes. (The city was 13th highest in the proportion wearing a timepiece.)

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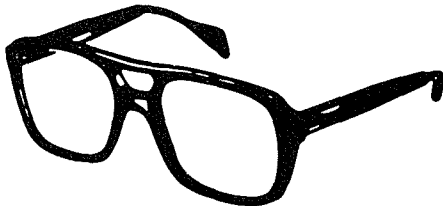


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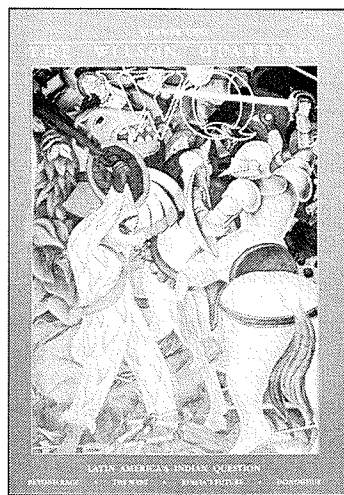


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## *Family Troubles*

### *A Survey of Recent Articles*

It's no secret that Americans have become less attached to the institution of marriage and the traditional family in recent decades. In 1970, families with husband, wife, and children living together under one roof accounted for 40 percent of all U.S. households; now, according to the 1990 census, they account for only 26 percent. It is not so much that there are fewer traditional families than before; it is more that other kinds of households are growing faster.

Americans are not unique. "The pace and timing of change differ from country to country, but the general direction is the same practically everywhere," reports U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics economist Constance Sorrentino in *Monthly Labor Review* (Mar. 1990). "Families are becoming smaller," and there has been a shift toward "more single-parent households, more persons living alone, and more couples living together out of wedlock."

The Scandinavian countries—where women are overwhelmingly in the work force—have set the pace in out-of-wedlock births (nearly half of all births in Sweden in 1986 versus 23 percent in the United States) and in cohabitation (about one in every five Swedish couples is unmarried). But the United States has been the leader in other important respects: Americans have the highest divorce rate (20.8 per 1,000 married women in 1987) in the industrial world, and also the highest incidence of single-parent households (24 percent of all households with children in 1990).

Tradition-minded Japan has been the major exception to these trends. There, notes Karl Zinsmeister, consulting editor at the *American Enterprise* (Mar.-Apr. 1990), divorce rates are extremely low, as are illegitimate births. "Amazingly," he writes, "95 percent of Japanese children live in married, two-parent households (and in nearly a third of these, there is the additional presence of a grandparent)."

In the United States, by contrast, 24 percent of all children (and 54 percent of black children) lived with only one parent in 1988—double the percentage in 1970. An estimated 60 percent of the children born today will spend at least part of their child-

hood living with only one parent.

That is bad news for children. "There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical, and emotional scars that persist for life," Zinsmeister writes. Children in mother-only families are more likely to do poorly in school, to drop out, and to become single parents themselves. They also are more likely to be living in poverty. Nearly 45 percent of such families were living below the official poverty line in 1988, compared with only about 7 percent of two-parent families.

Contributing to the general rise in single-parent families has been the major change over recent decades in Americans' attitudes about adherence to the traditional ideals of marriage and family. Although most people still value and desire marriage, parenthood, and family life for themselves, writes University of Michigan sociologist Arland Thornton in *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Nov. 1989), they have become more accepting of departures from the norm. For example, whereas 81 percent of the women 30 or older in a 1965 survey said that premarital sex was always or almost always wrong, the figure seven years later fell to 61.8 percent—and stood at 45.4 percent in 1986. Among younger persons, the move away from the traditional viewpoint has been even more pronounced.

Many of the changes in attitudes and behavior took place in the 1960s and '70s. But certain trends, including those toward cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births, grew even stronger in the 1980s. So did the movement into the work force of wives and mothers. More than half of the mothers of very young children now hold jobs outside the home. This trend, which may be one of the main factors behind some of the others, has brought to the fore such matters as parental leave and child care.

Liberals and conservatives generally have taken sharply different views on these issues. Liberals and feminists, observes Sheila B. Kamerman, a professor of social policy and planning at Columbia University School of Social Work, writing in the *American Prospect* (Winter 1991), have favored policies

that accommodate or even facilitate the changing patterns of work and family life. Conservatives, holding to the traditional view that mothers should stay at home, have opposed policies that encourage them to enter the labor force.

When it comes to child care for very young children, particularly infants, research suggests that the conservatives may have the better of the argument. Jay Belsky, of Pennsylvania State University, reviewing the past decade's research, writes in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Nov. 1990) that "a number of studies now indicate that children in any of a variety of child care arrangements, including center care, family day care, and nanny care, for 20 or more hours per week beginning in the first year of life, are at [greater] risk of being classified as insecure in their attachments to their mothers at 12 or 18 months of age and of being more disobedient and aggressive when they are from three to eight years old."

Advocates of day care, preoccupied with the concerns of adults, frequently don't give sufficient consideration to what's best for children's development, maintains J. Craig Peery, a professor of human development at Brigham Young University. "Clearly, a child in day care is a child at risk," he says in the Rockford Institute's *The Family in America* (Feb. 1991).

But for most women, Kamerman argues, "work is not a 'selfish' indulgence, nor is child care a luxury. If some child care is 'third-rate,' the imperative now is to upgrade it, not to pretend that all families—least of all single-parent ones—can make ends meet with mothers at home." In Peery's eyes, however, upgrading day care is not the solution. "Quality day care may be less dangerous than bad day care. But 'real world' day care is usually [even worse than] that provided in financially subsidized university settings where many of the negative findings

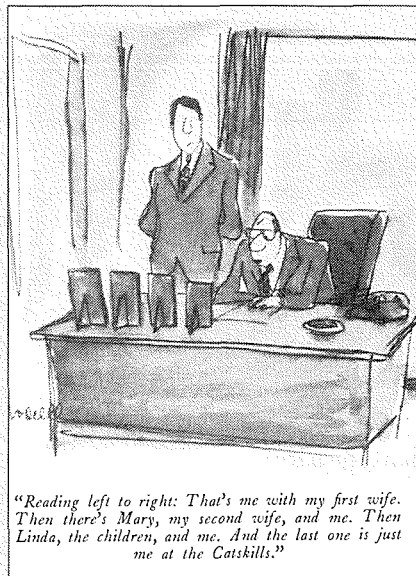
about day care have been found." The problem, he says, is that to get day care that approaches parental care in quality means that someone must be hired to be a "parent"—a contradiction in terms.

Kamerman acknowledges that there is "cause for concern" about the effects on infants of out-of-home care. But these findings, she says, also "strengthen the case for a generous extension of the second prong of liberal child care policy: the option of [paid] parental leave, extending until children reach their first birthday. In this regard, the United States is almost unique among Western countries in its negligence, not even ensuring a mother opportunity for physical recovery after childbirth,

much less providing parent and child some minimum period of time to get started together."

Yet for many people concerned about the condition of the family in America, parental leave and child care are really secondary matters. After talking with about 100 middle-class parents, single and married, most of whom work outside the home, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, an associate at the Institute for American Values, concluded that the debate over the family is being conducted in

two languages: the official language and the grassroots one. "The prime subject of the official debate," she writes in the institute's *Family Affairs* (Spring-Summer 1990), "is policies to help parents take care of children and hold down jobs at the same time. The prime subject of the grassroots conversation is how parents can do a decent job of raising their kids in a culture that is unfriendly to parents and children." These parents, she reports, are worried "that their children are adopting the values of an aggressively materialistic, individualistic, and consumerist culture." They are worried, in short, about the moral education of their children. And if they are worried, perhaps American society should be, too.



In the 1959 study in which Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman introduced the Type-A man to the world, they reported that men who have a sense of urgency about time and who are inclined to be competitive and hostile, are twice as likely to have a heart attack. Following up on that, Levine and his colleagues examined the rates of death from ischemic heart disease (a decreased flow of blood to the heart) for their 36 cities. After adjusting for the median age of each city's population, they found "a significant correlation" between the rates and the cities' pace-of-life scores. New York, for instance, ap-

pears to be "heart-attack city." Indeed, the correlation was greater than that usually found between heart disease and measures of Type-A behavior in individuals.

It may be, Levine speculates, that fast-paced cities attract Type-A individuals, who then sustain and promote their preferred way of life. Many of the slower, Type-B people probably recoil from the rat race and move to more congenial settings. But the Type-B's who remain in the fast-paced cities are compelled to act more like Type-A's. And the real Type-A's, meanwhile, keep striving "to accelerate the pace still more."

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**PRESS & TELEVISION**

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*Watching the White House*

"Inside the White House: Pecking Orders, Pack Journalism, and Other Stories of the People Who Cover the President" by Owen Ullmann, in *The Washingtonian* (Jan. 1991), Ste. 200, 1828 L St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The White House is still among the most prestigious beats in journalism. But for reporters intent upon ferreting out the "inside" story, it now can also be among the most frustrating. Ullmann, after six years at the White House for Knight-Ridder Newspapers, says that in recent decades it has become very hard for reporters there to find out "what's really going on and what makes the president tick."

Part of the new difficulty is a result of the increased size of the White House press corps. When there is a major news event involving the president, several hundred reporters and photographers cram themselves into a press room built for 50. The correspondents all have access to daily briefings, written announcements, and presidential press conferences and speeches, but reporters in search of the inside story need to be able to talk more intimately with the president or his key aides. "There are so many more reporters clamoring for the attention of [the] relatively few staffers who know anything that it is a constant battle for meaningful access," *Newsweek's* White House correspondent,

Tom DeFrank, told Ullmann.

Heightened security measures also keep the press away from "what's really going on." Once White House reporters were free to roam the halls of the Old Executive Office Building, in which many presidential assistants have their offices; now journalists can enter the building only after making an appointment, and then they are escorted to their source's office.

"Because White House reporters are forced to work in a pack, they tend to produce pack-mentality journalism," Ullmann says. "Peer influence and second-guessing by editors, who can decide a story line by watching TV or reading the wire services, [encourage] conformity."

After "a small group of influential columnists and reporters" decides what to think about a political figure, everyone else pretty much falls into line. "Going against the consensus can be dangerous," Ullmann says, "because editors and colleagues begin to question your judgment." For instance, the orthodox (albeit not necessarily truly informed) opinion among White House reporters about Vice Presi-