

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions*

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### **"The Most Significant Minority: One-Parent Children in the Schools."**

National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1810 North Monroe St.,  
Arlington, Va. 22209. 26 pp.

At current rates, 1 million more American children each year end up living in one-parent families, usually with the mother. This is a trend whose effects sociologists and feminists have long debated. [See "The American Family," *WQ*, Summer 1980.]

In this survey, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) reports that these "children of divorce" are far more likely to run into academic and disciplinary trouble than are their classmates who live with two parents.

The NAESP and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation gathered data on an unusually large sampling of more than 18,000 elementary and secondary school students in 14 states, including California, Nebraska, and New Jersey, during the 1979-80 school year. Their findings paint a gloomy picture of the nation's 12 million one-parent children—who represent 19 percent of all Americans under the age of 18 and more than half of all black children. (The survey itself contained no statistical breakdown by race or family income.)

In elementary schools, 40 percent of one-parent children, but only 24 percent of two-parent children, were classified as low achievers (having "D" or "F" averages). Only 17 percent of single-parent grade schoolers and 21 percent of secondary students earned "A" or "B" averages. But 30 percent of two-parent students in elementary school and 33 percent enrolled in junior high and high school qualified

as "high achievers."

One-parent students were three times as likely as two-parent students to be suspended from elementary school. In junior high and high school, they were three times as likely to be expelled. Only 1.4 percent of two-parent secondary students "dropped out"; the figure for one-parent classmates was 3.5 percent. The association attributes these problems to the emotional stress that parents' separation imposes on children and to inadequate supervision at home. (Most single parents work.)

In junior high and high school, one-parent students also had more health problems than other students. They averaged 12.17 days of excused absences (not including suspensions or expulsions), while two-parent students missed 8.15 days. One-parent secondary students also made slightly more visits to their school's health clinic.

As expected, one-parent students were, disproportionately, recipients of government aid. Fifty percent of one-parent elementary students received subsidized school lunches, for example, compared to 17 percent of their counterparts with two parents. The figures for secondary students were 26 and 9 percent, respectively.

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that 45 percent of children born in the United States today will spend at least one year living with only one parent. Accordingly, the NAESP recommends that schools—a potential source of

needed stability—offer special help to one-parent children. Records should be regularly updated to keep track of each student's family status. Teachers should watch for such signs of stress as

sudden weight gain or loss, fatigue, and lack of concentration. Special counseling should be available for one-parent students, and parent-teacher conferences may be needed.

### **“Myths and Realities: A Study of Attitudes Toward Vietnam Era Veterans.”**

The Veterans Administration, 810 Vermont Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420. 489 pp.

Most American veterans of the Vietnam War look back on their military service with pride. Though many are unhappy over the reception they got when they returned home, especially from their peers, most would join the armed forces again if asked to do so.

Between November 1979 and March 1980, Louis Harris and Associates surveyed 2,464 Vietnam Era Veterans (VEVs), including 1,176 men and women who actually served in Indochina.

Ninety-one percent of the VEVs who went to Vietnam said they were glad they served their country, and 74 percent enjoyed their time in the armed forces. By contrast, only 24 percent expressed much agreement with the statement, “the United States took unfair advantage of me.” Only 30 percent said they would “refuse” to rejoin the military if “asked to serve again.”

Fifty-nine percent of VEVs and 65 percent of the 2,563 members of the general public also polled by Harris agreed that Vietnam was a war “we could never win.” But, more significantly, 89 percent of VEVs and 73 percent of the public also thought that “our political leaders in Washington would not let [American troops] win.” Fifty-seven percent of the public and 49 percent of the VEVs felt the U.S. should never have entered the war.

Aggregate figures conceal major variations, however. Forty percent of

white veterans thought that the United States was right in going into Vietnam, compared with 23 percent of black vets. One-third of the soldiers who saw heavy combat said that America owed them “a great deal more” for their service than they had received; 21 percent of veterans with only light combat experience agreed.

VEVs and the public overwhelmingly believed (by 63 and 78 percent majorities, respectively) that soldiers who returned home from Vietnam received a poorer reception than did veterans of previous wars. Seventy-three percent of veterans of World War II and Korea thought that civilians their own age gave them a “very friendly” welcome, compared with only 47 percent of VEVs. Fifty-six percent thought that while they were in the military, their peers were “getting ahead” of them.

The public—and the veterans—perceived important character differences between Vietnam era soldiers and their civilian peers. Veterans were thought more likely to have drinking problems, to have attempted suicide, or to have used drugs. Nonveterans between 25 and 34 years old were regarded as spoiled, unpatriotic, and morally “loose.” More positively, as the public saw it, young nonveterans had clearer goals for their lives, while veterans enjoyed a reputation for discipline and a willingness to “work to

get ahead" — especially among employers.

Ninety-three percent of non-VEVs surveyed favored greater educational benefits for veterans, and 72 percent supported giving veterans preference in federal hiring. One surprise: Eighty-one percent of former antiwar activists polled thought that Washing-

ton should do more to aid VEVs, compared with 66 percent of the overall public.

The Harris pollsters conclude: "While it is clear that the American people believe our involvement in Southeast Asia to have been a mistake, they have not rejected the men who fought that war in their name."

### "U.S. Banks' Loss of Global Standing."

Administrator of National Banks, Comptroller of the Currency, U.S. Treasury Department, 15th and Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20220. 52 pp. Authors: C. Stewart Goddin and Steven J. Weiss.

Are U.S. banks losing their competitive edge in world money markets? Enough U.S. Congressmen think so to have approved a moratorium last March on foreign acquisitions of domestic banks.

Indeed, the number of U.S. banks ranked among the world's top 100 in assets has fallen from 44 in 1956 to 15 in 1978. Similarly, the world's top 10 banks included 5 American banks in 1956 but only 3 in 1978. [They were Bank of America, with \$86 billion in assets, the largest bank in the world; Citibank; and Chase Manhattan. In 1979, Chase fell to 14th place.] Three British and 2 Canadian banks fell out of the top 10 between 1956 and 1978.

By contrast, neither Japan, West Germany, nor France boasted a single bank in the top 10 in 1956; in 1978, they were represented by 7 banks—4 of them French. Japanese banks in the top 100 rose from 9 to 24 during this period, and German banks from 3 to 15.

The authors note that the decline in U.S. bank rankings has simply paralleled the relative decline in America's economic strength from a position of unprecedented worldwide dominance following World War II. In 1962, for example, the United States accounted for more than half the goods and ser-

vices produced by the industrialized democracies. By 1977, this figure had dropped to 38 percent. Between 1956 and 1977, America's real gross national product virtually doubled, but this increase lagged behind the 481 percent leap recorded by Japan and the 143 percent rise achieved by West Germany.

Changes in bank rankings also reflect different national savings habits. Household savings in the United States, for example, fell from 7.6 to 4.9 percent of national output between 1962 and 1977. Japanese and West German savings rates dipped, too, but still stood at 18 and 11.4 percent, respectively, in 1977.

Moreover, U.S. law tends to thwart bank consolidation. The Glass-Steagall Act (1932) prevents commercial banks from conducting investment banking operations. The McFadden Act of 1927 and the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 ban nationwide banks. Most statewide banking is prohibited by state law. Consequently, the three largest banks in the United States hold only 18 percent of the country's total commercial banking assets. Few such laws inhibit foreign bank mergers, and nationwide banking is common throughout Western Europe and Japan. Countries such as

France *encourage* consolidation—the 3 largest French banks hold 55 percent of the nation's commercial banking assets.

The authors see no cause for alarm. No strong U.S. bank will see its access to interbank financing curbed, or suffer any other ill effects, due to changes in its relative world position. In fact, they note, from 1956 to 1978, the total deposits of the top 10 U.S. banks rose

from \$40 billion to more than \$345 billion, while total assets of American banks' overseas branches have mushroomed from \$2 billion to more than \$305 billion.

As the Federal Reserve Board assured Congress in 1979, "so long as U.S. banks are soundly managed and adequately capitalized they will be able to compete effectively, domestically and internationally."

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### "Entering the Twenty-First Century."

The Global 2000 Report to the President, U.S. Department of State and the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Vol. 1 (Summary Report): 45 pp. \$3.50. Vol. 2 (Technical Report): 766 pp. \$13.00

"If present trends continue, the world in 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, less stable ecologically, and more vulnerable to disruption than the world we live in now."

So concludes this study by the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of State, the first U.S. government report to analyze in detail the interaction between world population growth, resource availability, and environmental quality.

The key factor is the number of human beings on this planet. It will increase by 50 percent, from 4.1 billion in 1975 to around 6.35 billion in the year 2000, according to the study.

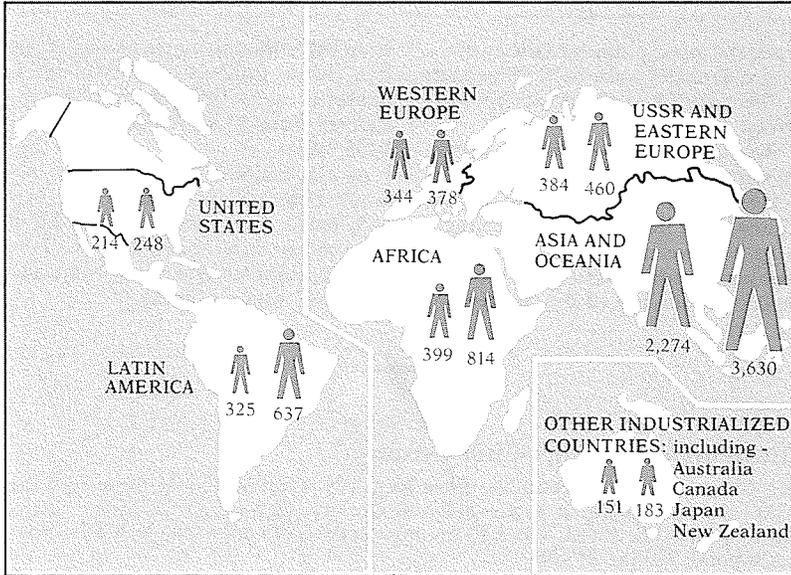
The rate of population growth will slow down, as recent UN reports predict. But the *Global 2000* study emphasizes that the rate of increase will still be a dangerously high 2 percent in the Third World (particularly in South Asia, black Africa, and Latin America). By the end of the century, four-fifths of mankind will live in these nations.

Rural folk will continue to flock to Third World cities and to the squalid shantytowns expanding around them,

generating severe public health and administrative problems. By 2000, Mexico City's population will reach 30 million, and at least 10 cities in the developing nations will pass the 10 million mark.

The gap between the world's wealthiest and poorest nations will widen. For every \$1 increase in per capita gross national product in the Third World, the wealthier nations of the industrialized West and the Soviet bloc will raise their per capita GNP by \$20.

Food output in the poor countries is expected to expand by only 10.8 percent (to 197 kilograms per capita) from 1970 to 2000, compared with a 184 percent rise projected in the industrialized world (to 769.8 kilograms per capita). Though this rise will keep pace with *overall* Third World population growth, per capita food consumption in black Africa will actually decline. Throughout South Asia, North Africa, the Mideast, and Central Africa, food supplies will often be too low to permit children to reach normal body weight and intelligence levels.



World populations, in millions: 1975 (left) and the year 2000 (right).

By 2020, virtually all of the accessible forests in the developing nations will have been cut down, mostly for fuel. This will allow rainfall to leach nutrients from the soil and cut agricultural production. Deforestation will also threaten water supplies, even as population growth doubles the demand for water in half the world's countries by the end of the century.

For developed countries, the scenario will be different. The one-

fifth of mankind living in the industrialized world will, for instance, continue to use three-fourths of the planet's mineral output.

Yet, environmental deterioration will not spare the richer nations. Acid rains from the increased burning of fossil fuels (mainly coal) will threaten lakes, soils, and crops. Higher concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide could significantly warm the world's climate.

**“Soviet Perceptions of the U.S.:  
Results of a Surrogate Interview Project.”**

Office of Research, International Communication Agency, 1776 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

Author: Gregory Guroff

Familiarity with the United States has bred confusion among Soviet officials, according to this pioneering study of Soviet elite perceptions of America.

Since superpower relations began a 10-year thaw during the mid-1960s, Soviet professionals and middle-level bureaucrats have enjoyed growing ac-

cess to their American counterparts, and to information about the United States. Moreover, the Kremlin has created major academic "American studies" programs in the USSR.

But interviews with 70 American officials, businessmen, academics, and journalists who deal frequently with the Soviets indicate that the more facts many Soviets learn about the United States, the more trouble they have comprehending "how it works." There is an extraordinary culture gap.

Living in a closed society where political and economic life is tightly controlled by the Communist Party, mid-level Soviets—many of whom advise the Kremlin's most powerful figures—cannot appreciate how many diverse centers of political and economic power exist in the United States. Focusing on Washington and Wall Street, they deride the notion that voters have power over their legislators. And neither academic "Americanists" nor Politburo members understand why Presidents cannot simply force congressional approval of measures such as the SALT treaty.

Soviets find the American economy even more baffling. They realize that living standards in the United States exceed their own and assume the average American to be wealthy. (They blame the Soviet economic lag on the devastation suffered during World War II.) At the same time, they believe that high unemployment, roaring inflation, and ruthless exploitation are characteristic of the U.S. market economy.

Prominent Soviets also maintain that communism provides economic security unknown to Americans. Many are unaware that unemployment compensation, medical insurance, and Social Security pensions have been

grafted onto American capitalism.

Nor can the Soviets fathom the existence of a private economic sector governed largely by market forces. Even specialists on American industry have long searched for the central planning mechanism responsible for U.S. economic success—which is thought to be a top state secret. Learning that industrial quota systems and price-fixing are illegal in America dumbfounds Soviet economists. They were taught that an economy lacking such controls should "collapse of its own weight or fly apart."

Most Soviets respect U.S. military strength and marvel at American technology. They fear that a new arms race triggered by the United States could wipe out hard-earned Soviet economic gains of recent years. On the other hand, Soviets question American resolve and willingness to sacrifice. Their prime fear is that the United States will react to its perceived decline as a world power with a resurgence of militarism.

The Americans interviewed believe that after collecting mountains of data on the United States during the mid-1960s, Soviet "Americanists" constructed a fairly realistic portrait of the United States that repudiated their Marxist models. Unable to revise the official orthodoxy, they prudently retreated to the stereotypes and clichés of earlier years. The recent frosting of Soviet-American relations has re-enforced this trend.

Yet today's Soviet "experts" believe that greater factual knowledge of the United States makes their stereotyped analyses more accurate than their predecessors'. This fundamental misconception, Guroff concludes, invites dangerous Soviet miscalculations of U.S. behavior and interests in the years ahead.