A FIVE-LEVEL PARADIGM FOR MODERN CHARACTER

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INTRODUCTION

. There is a rich diversity of concepts and empirical studies on the character structure of people in modern industrial or post-industrial societies (Parsons 1977; Berger et al 1973; Bell 1973; Bendix 1964; Lerner 1958). Our intent is to provide a conceptual canopy under which theory and research can be clarified and synthesized. We are concerned that sociological theory and research are excessively compartmented and fragmented. Since there is no well-established paradigm for the analysis of modern character, we hope to construct one. The core of this idea is orientational scope, defined in terms of the extent, generality, and comprehensiveness of the individual's perspective of 5 concentric zones: 1) The self zone refers to the individual as a real person. 2) The intimate zone refers to that select circle of those to whom the individual is attached by ties of solidarity, attraction, duty, affection, and cooperation. 3) The association zone refers to specific groupings and structures based on occupation, ethnicity, age, sex, religion, life style, and norms and goals. 4) The civil zone refers to the whole society and its embodiment in the nation, and in the whole human world. 5) The cosmic zone refers to the universal and supra-empirical realm. The paradigm of the individual in relation to a series of concentric circles was used by prominent theorists, and was most clearly developed by Simmel in a discussion of group expansion (Simmel 1971; Shils 1975; Berger 1963).

. The 5 concentric zones are overlapping reference areas for individual orientation in industrial societies. Modernity encourages individualism by emphasizing achievement as opposed to ascription. A separate intimacy realm arises from differentiating an industrial economy and public education

functions from kinship (Parsons 1951; Parsons & Bales 1955). Associationism is enhanced by the growth of formal organizations, bureaucracies and occupation roles (Weber 1947). Civility has accompanied the emergence of the nation-state (Durkheim 1964; Marshall 1965). And although modern society does not encourage the cosmic level as an all encompassing reality structure, it does give a basis for individual orientation and legitimation at the cultural level (Berger 1967; Bell 1976; Sennett 1977).

. Social theory has recognized the quinary nature of modern character in the 5 zones. Individuals in modern societies are solitary, intimate, associational, civil, and cosmic beings. In different types of society, some zones are more salient. Pluralist societies like the United States emphasize individualism and associationism. Totalitarian social systems like the Soviet Union emphasize the civil zone.

ZONES OF ORIENTATION

Self zone: This represents the innermost and smallest area and embodies the isolated solitary character of modern existence. The central aspects of the self zone are alienation, egoism, subjectivity, and autonomy. The alienated self refers to the estrangement of the individual from intimate associative, civil, and cosmic entities where any entity outside the self is void and impervious to influence. Modern existence alienates because it is rootless and anomic (Seeman 1969; Riesman 1950). The person is prisoner in mass society which lacks viable solidarist groupings and is dominated by economic and political elites (Kornhauser 1959; Mills 1956; Marcuse 1964; Mannheim 1935; Habermas 1970).

. The individual is egoistic to the extent that personal benefit and gratification is granted greater significance than the benefits

of intimates, associations, society humanity, or the cosmos. The egotist interprets the world through the veil of self-interest and self-fulfillment. Egoism can take the form of a hedonist drive to attain pleasure, and preoccupation with sensibility. Or egoism can come in search of fulfillment and a drive toward personal accomplishment. Subjectivity refers to the spontaneous impulsive side of the human psyche, and the disjunction between personality or subjective identity, and social roles or objective identity (Zidjerveld 1970; Berger & Luckmann 1967; Zurcher 1977).

. Autonomy indicates that the self is in command of personality, and actively accommodates to all other entities (Luckmann 1964; Lifton 1970). In the generative character of autonomy is a voluntarist element. Autonomy is evident when one acts willingly rather than by coercion or externally imposed obligation. Autonomy can occur through modes of choice or internalization (Parsons 1964).

. The intimacy zone is marked by a network of interperson bonds (Blau 1964). An intimate relation is not restricted to emotions, but can also be based on respect, trust, duty, or dislike. Nor is the intimacy zone confined to the individual (Cooley 1962). The next level of intimacy involves secondary relations which are personal and impersonal (Homans 1974). A specific relation is personalized when particularism combines with universalism, as with teacher-student and worker colleague relations. It need not be based on reciprocal acquaintance to be intimate. Intimacy is manifest when other people are seen as endowed with special qualities, as idols, celebrities, and villains (Klapp 1969). The mass media foster such one-sided devotion, respect or distaste for individuals through a star system, which makes politics and the arts increasingly personality-based.

. There are 3 levels of intimacy.
1) The core zone is that of primary group relations. The most vital bastion of intimacy in industrial societies is the nuclear family, with the intense bonds between spouses, parents, children and siblings (Berger & Berger 1972; Shorter 1975; B Luckmann 1970). At the first level of intimacy we find maximal diffuseness, emotional release, expressivity, and intense bonds of duty, loyalty, affection, trust, hatred and sentiment between members.

. 2) The second level of intimacy comprises specific and formal relations which in time take on a particularist flavor. It may be called pseudo-intimacy. Impersonal relations such as that between buyer & seller are made to seem personal through the mechanics of the personality market, and intimacy can be institutionalized in such mechanisms as group therapy (Back 1975; Slater 1966).

. 3) The third level of intimacy pertains to ties based on idolatry or personification. These three levels are responses to a human need for concrete relatedness to others. The intimacy zone involves a constant search for a personal circle of significants.

The associational zone is a realm of growing inclusiveness and generality. Focus shifts from interpersonal bonds to impersonal goals, character, purpose, interest, and task. This zone is distinguished from the civic and cosmic zones by its basis in specific social criteria. The associational zone is analyzed in terms of the membership basis, which involves the nature of the differentiating criteria, and the membership structure, concerning the form which expresses the shared membership.

. In modern societies, there are many association criteria which share the properties of reality and distinction. The associational zone can be defined as the mosaic of subcultures, subsystems, and subgroupings, each of which may be described by a distinct set of beliefs, norms, values, goals, functions, resources, and qualities. Such criteria produce groupings based on common objective qualities rather than crystallized

subcultures. The youth, feminist, and senior citizen movements of the 1970's demonstrate the solidaristic nature of such ascriptive associational memberships.

. Occupational groups are an important associational factor, concretized in specific role obligations and in more formal structures such as labor unions and professional associations. The shift to a post-industrial economy has entailed professionalization (Galbraith 1967; Dahrendorf 1959). Such a process of technical upgrading makes more probable the immersion of the person in occupational goals, recapturing the pre-industrial spirit of craftsmanship. The employing organization, is a force, since occupational category is a component of a bureaucratic division of labor. Bureaucracy of service, knowledge, and production can attenuate occupational attachment, given its qualities of anonymity, impersonality, hierarchy, and specialization. These qualities also characterize occupational organization. The individual can be committed to both organizational and occupational goals, or to one or to neither of them. We must distinguish between consummative commitment and instrumental commitment to organization goals and occupation norms. (Maccoby 1975; Etzioni 1961; Blauner 1964). Regardless of the level of goal embracement, members of modern societies must orient and conform to bureaucratic and occupational requisites. Economic pay-offs demand conformity.

. Persons engage in many limited purpose interactions, transactions, and organizations as employees, clients, patrons, consumers, volunteers, and residents. There are identifiable taste, aesthetic and life-style subcultures, based on shared leisure and consumption patterns. Persons are also linked by territorial ties in units as small as a neighborhood, or as broad as a continent.

.The civil zone is associated with 1) citizenship in the nation, and 2) membership in the international human community. These could be called the civic and the global components of civility. Global civility is a problematic empirical form of orientation. Civic civility, although problematic in pluralist societies, is a more viable orientation, due to greater awareness and immediacy of the nation-state, compared with the more abstract awareness of humanity and world-society, marked by the one--world concept.

. Civic civility is marked by the status of citizen. The civil zone is marked by generality, universality, and interdependence. The civic zone is defined in terms of the societal collectivity. The civil zone seeks societal interdependence, and consensus, and tries to resolve conflict among associational subgroups. It regulates the lesser zones of self, intimacy, and association, with respect to rights and obligations, and it implements collective goals. The civil zone presupposes collective interest and the need to recognize society-wide integration (Hardin 1968; Coleman 1966).

. Does civic civility entail a shared national character? Does it entail value or normative consensus? To what extent does the nation-state embody civic civility? By national character we mean the core of dominant values peculiar to a given society (Bellah 1967). The values of democracy, equality, centralization, freedom, property and the market are ranked differently by national cultures. There is a critical question whether shared values mean orientation to the collectivity or to instrumental values which serve mainly to further private gain and associational interests. Is the distinctive feature of the civic zone collective values or genuine public purpose? (Arendt 1958) Commitment may only be at the general value level, and not at the concrete normative level. Civic civility is heightened to the extent that people support action to implement collective goals.

. The functions of the nation-state are 1) to get consensus on collective goals, and 2) establish

policy for goal attainment. It may use force, and its legal authority is universally applicable in the system. An important aspect of the shared social status of citizen involves the person's relation to the state (Almond & Verba 1963). But that relation does not exhaust the rights and obligations of the citizen. Citizenship, nationalism, and patriotism refer to commitment to fellow citizens and society.

. The nation-state embodies the civil zone as it represents and implements collective goals which are superior to associational interests. Civility is enhanced as the political process marks substantive consensus over goals rather than procedural consensus on the rules of the game. The state is the determining entity in the civic zone. It mediates and coordinates associational conflict, and supports equality and justice through a legal system which embodies the collective conscience.

. Global civility refers to interdependence among peoples, and it is now more widely recognized with scarcity of fuel and food, problems of overpopulation, high potency military weapons, and mass communication and transport. These factors undermine the presumption of self-sufficiency and national autonomy (Bredemeier & Getis 1973).

.The cosmic zone includes the other-worldly, supernatural, superempirical, sacred and absolute elements of human experience. It includes substantive religious systems, metamorphic experience, and philosophical ideational systems.

. A substantive religious system posits the existence of a sacred cosmos (Otto 1958; Eliade 1969). The sacred element consists of forces, events, entities, or beings perceived as supernatural. The notion of the sacred has been central to all religions, whether primitive or ecclesiastic. Religion consists of systems of ultimate meaning, including existentialism, science, Marxism and humanism. These are the functional equivalents of traditional religious systems in the modern world. The

cosmic zone requires a substantive rather than a functional definition of religion.

. Two theories relate to the role of substantive religion in modern society. According to secularization theory (Berger 1967) substantive relation no longer constitutes ultimate reality which legitimates all human action. Substantive religious commitment has become privatized and differentiated from other institutional realms such as the economy, politics, education, and family. Religion has become one of many potential sources of voluntary association in the private sphere. Religion has lost its monopoly status and competes with other ideological concerns. The transition was from institutional to personal religion.

. Diffusionist theory points to the theological foundation of the United States (Parsons 1960; Bellah 1967). It argues that Christian values legitimate such secular value systems as individualism and democracy. Religious values influence our legal system, political institutions, and our daily existence. Religious diffusion has dissolved the boundaries of denominational pluralism and the boundary between believers and non-believers.

. A metaphoric experience is a dramatic breech in one's routine existence (Schutz 1962). The individual has a cosmic experience in being transported to a different identity or circumstance. These experiences occur in dreams, fantasy, meditation, and aesthetic and creative activity.

. The third element of the cosmic zone is the philosophical ideational system (Ackoff & Emory 1972). These intellectual systems are rooted in the absolute rather than in the sacred. These systems distinguish appearance, convention, and sensation from essence, nature and the ideal.

DIMENSIONS OF ORIENTATION
. These five zones are analyzed on three levels: personality, action, and the socio ultural. Personality in a sociolo al sense

refers to the individual's subjective definitions of social roles and memberships. The action level is the situational component of social activity. The socio-cultural level refers to objective definitions of institutions, interactive systems, and social activity. The sociologist can study individualism, intimacy, association, civility, and the cosmic components as subjective, situational, or objective realities. We are concerned with the individual's orientation to these zones at the three levels of analysis. Modern character is defined as the totality of personality, action, and socio-cultural orientations versus the self, intimates, and associational, the civil and the cosmic zones (Haynor & Varacalli 1979).

. Personality orientation refers to motivation, evaluation, and sense of efficacy. Motivational orientation concerns perceived beneficiary action. One is self-motivated if action is undertaken for egoistic reasons. Intimacy motives appear when an action is undertaken for significant others. If an action is taken due to identification with the goals, interests, and values of a social subgroup, the motive is associational. Civil motives arise from the intent to benefit society or humanity. And cosmic motivation appears in actions undertaken for sacred for absolute standards. Such motivation requires a sense of external duty, obligation, and self-discipline. There is self-motivation only if these memberships are associated solely with intrinsic rewards. If there is perceived coercion, motivation is absent.

. Evaluation is one of the hierarchies of significance for the individual. Evaluation includes identity and sacrifice. Identity is the degree of centrality of the zone in the person's self-concept. Sacrifice means the willingess to give up the lower level of zonal attachment for a higher zone. The extent of obligation to each zone could be found by constructing a sacrifice matrix of 10 pairs of choices. Efficacy concerns one's

power and control in shaping one's own life, and the lives of intimates and associates, and the goals & interests of associations, society, and cosmic entities.

. Action orientation refers to one's interpretation of attributes, behavioral expectations, and bases of authority. Socio-cultural orientation involves effects of actions and role performance in each zone. This taps the subjective assessment of objective functions, outcomes, and meaning of action. Legitimation at the socio-cultural level means that action is justified by personal standards the expectations of significant others, and normative and value systems of association groupings, the value systems of the total society, or supernatural and absolute standards.

. A paradigm for modern character analysis must recognize that a person is oriented toward the five zones in multiple ways. The idea of an orientational system permits one to see the interpenetrating relations among the phenomenal zones. Using a multidimension approach, one is not tempted to isolate the person's orientation exclusively in one zone. The multi-dimensional approach provides a structure for understanding individuality, and the idiosyncratic patterning of personality, action, and socio-cultural orientations. It is important not to equate zones of orientation with specific contexts, institutions, structures or entities. Each zone serves as a relevant object of orientation in memberships and actions. Conversely, in a given membership or action, each zone might be operating. Our goal is to relate states of human consciousness to specific socio-historical contexts. Character is viewed as a creative adaptation to real socio-historical processes. The five zones of orientation are deducible from the social structure and culture of modern societies.

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