



The Psychoanalytic Study of the American Public: Biophilia vs. Necrophilia

by Michael Maccoby

Psychoanalytic theory is a framework for understanding the character of individuals, but it is not immediately clear how it can help us to understand the American public, composed of many individuals. We often ask questions about individuals running for office which could be answered better by understanding their dynamic character traits: Can the politician be trusted to do what he promises? Is he realistic, independent, courageous? To what is he committed, to personal power alone or to a vision of a more just and compassionate society? Is it meaningful to ask similar questions about the American people or any other people, such as: Who are we and what do we care about deeply? Are we concerned about freedom, individual rights, and peace? Or are we a "sick" people, racists who are indifferent to life? What can we expect from ourselves as people?

These questions are not likely to be answered by conventional public opinion polling. One does not learn about social character by asking people what they think. Conscious thoughts may be rationalizations which justify unconscious impulses. In every society, people think that their actions are motivated by moral concerns. Greed and destructiveness are often masked in the ideals of self-expressiveness and responsibility. Often, opinions do not even have the emotional investment that goes into rationalizations. They may be only the parroting of what everyone else thinks, opinions that will change with a changing consensus among one's friends or among those significant others that influence one's views. Today, a majority of Americans oppose our participation in the Vietnam war, but over a year ago



a majority supported our participation in the war. Does the change mean that Americans have become less aggressive, more committed to peace? Opinions on Vietnam have varied from month to month with changes in the progress of the war and the position of leaders. But opinions in themselves give no indication whether or not those holding the opinions can be counted on to defend a position or work for it.

A different kind of polling is needed to discover the emotional attitudes that signify whether or not an individual is destructive or whether he cares deeply about freedom. Such polling distinguishes those ideas that are rooted in character from those that are not, convictions vs. opinions. Polling of emotional attitudes is possible only if there are emotional attitudes or dynamic character orientations which large numbers of individuals share. Both experience and theory indicate that this is the case. Even though each individual is unique, groups of people who share the same formative experience--within the same families, social classes, and nations--often develop common emotional attitudes (social character), and individuals with similar character orientations often gravitate to the same type of work.

It is essential to keep in mind that in referring to deep emotional attitudes--character--we are focusing on something different from the behavior which is generally studied by social scientists. Similar patterns of behavior may be rooted in very different emotional attitudes. For example, in a forthcoming study of Mexican villagers, Erich Fromm and I found that practically all of the campesinos are submissive to authority.*

* See Social Class in a Mexican Village, Englewood, N.J., Prentice-Hall (in preparation). The concept of "Social Character" was developed by Fromm ^{to mean} the way in which a given society or social class moulds human energy so that people "want to act as they have to act" in order that the society continues to function.



However, this behavior is rooted in three different attitudes. Some villagers (about 25 percent) have strong masochistic tendencies. A similar percentage is basically independent, but they act submissive as a political strategy. If this behavior was not profitable, if conditions changed, they would not be submissive. However, the largest group is submissive because they have been ground down by the conditions of life and have lost hope. It should be understood in the analysis that follows that we do not assume that character can be inferred by knowing an individual's attitudes or behavior in a single context.

Furthermore, the study of character does not replace the analysis of institutions in our society. Rather, it adds to such analyses by focusing on the question of why individuals are committed to particular institutions which may in fact limit their freedom.

Do we have the methods and a sufficiently developed theory to discover the character of Americans? One should admit first of all that social scientists have done surprisingly little to study the character of the American people and its relation to what goes on in this country. Beyond ~~the~~ literary and journalistic works, there have been a few analytic studies which draw on empirical material. Fromm's The Sane Society was the first to apply psychoanalytic theory to analyze modern industrial society. The Lonely Crowd by David Riesman and his collaborators drew on literature, children's stories, and popular culture as well as sociological studies to describe the change in the forms of social control in the United States, from "inner direction" to "other direction."

Yet these studies have not sufficiently stimulated social scientists to study American character with the same thoroughness that they study opinions and voting behavior.



A reason for this is that character is more difficult to study. It requires projective methods, questions (or other projective stimuli such as the Rorschach ink blots or the Thematic Apperception test developed by Henry A. Murray) which elicit deep-rooted emotional attitudes rather than merely conventional opinions or ideological statements. If an American states that he believes in defending freedom, the statement by itself does not indicate a great love of freedom, just as a Russian's ideology based on the ultimate triumph of communism does not mean he is a revolutionary.

A second difficulty is deciding which character dimensions are most relevant to understanding the social factors operating in a country at any given time. Speaking of American elections, Robert E. Lane has written, "Each election varies not only in the degree to which it evokes decisions determined by personality, but also with respect to the nature of the personality syndromes which are relevant." This is determined in large part by social and economic rather than psychological considerations. Among the Mexican peasants we studied, the character dimension most important to understanding the peasant's attitudes and behavior is the contrast between the independent-hoarding character orientation and the passive receptive, peon-like character. The difference in character determines not only political attitudes but also the way in which the peasant uses his land. This dimension is the most important because the peasant's economic conditions favor those whose character is best suited to small-scale farming, simple technology, and absence of possibilities for increasing production. As technical possibilities change, the character suited to peasant farming becomes a handicap rather than an advantage. In an industrial society like the United States, the contrast between the receptive



and independent orientations exist, but they are not the essential ones for understanding the key economic and political issues in this society. Although the methods of sampling and data analysis developed for opinion polling serve character polling also, the choice of character dimensions and the formulation of projective questions require both an understanding of the forces operating in society and a knowledge of character such as can be developed in clinical psychoanalytic practice.*

The first such study was designed by Fromm in 1930 with the assistance of Paul Lazarsfeld and others at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany. It focused on the political character of workers and employees in Germany before Hitler came to power. Using psychoanalytic theory, a projective questionnaire (published in Autoritaet und Familie, ed. Max Wertheimer, Paris, 1934), and sampling methods, Fromm found that, while most of the respondents had anti-Nazi opinions (also expressed in their votes in elections for political leaders and shop stewards), a small minority (about 10 percent) expressed "the authoritarian character orientation" that would make them become convinced Nazis, once Hitler controlled the country. A somewhat larger number (about 15 percent) expressed a "democratic orientation" which would make them dedicated anti-Nazis even after Hitler's victory. The majority

* Indeed, psychoanalysis which is the best method of understanding the deepest forces that move individuals should be a source that contributes to the study of society. Yet, few psychoanalysts have concerned themselves with questions of social character, and even in their clinical work, there are few who have a scientific interest in developing Freud's discovery of dynamic motivation. Rather, psychoanalysis is in grave danger of becoming no more than an empty technique, a collection of formulas, with little relevance either to science or medicine. Such a result would signify a great cultural loss.



(75 percent) combined authoritarian and democratic tendencies and it was predicted that they would lack the emotionally-rooted conviction to oppose the Nazis once Hitler held power. Although there are no exact figures on how the Germans did respond to Hitler's regime, most observers agree that the results of the study correspond roughly to the real situation among workers and employees after 1933.



The methods of studying the authoritarian personality in large populations were developed further by T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford in a series of intensive studies of the relationship between authoritarianism to prejudice and to political ideology (The Authoritarian Personality, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1950).

These studies could have been first steps to polling the character of the American public, but although literally hundreds of articles and books criticized The Authoritarian Personality or employed its scales in experiments and correlational investigation, this did not happen. The fault lay partly with the methods employed by Adorno et. al., which were open to criticism on both technical-statistical and theoretical grounds.* The main difficulty was that in further studies social scientists took the methodological problems, e.g., problems of reliability and question wording, much more seriously than the theoretical ones.

In Fromm's original study of authoritarianism, the concept referred essentially to the sado-masochistic orientation expressed in the political arena. In Germany at that time, the question of who would be attracted to fascism vs. who would actively oppose Hitler proved to be the crucial

* For a review of these criticisms, see Roger Brown, Social Psychology, New York, The Free Press, 1965.



characterological issue. The concept of authoritarianism as interpreted by Adorno and his collaborators was much less precise, combining questions having to do with traditionalism, religiosity, conventionalism, cognitive rigidity, as well as destructiveness and idealization of power. Today, in the United States, as well as in other parts of the world, the rejection of traditional authority relationships, in the home, the university, between the generations and the races, is at the heart of anguishing and sometimes explosive confrontations. To understand the way different people feel about these issues, it would be necessary to make finer distinctions about the characterological basis of attitudes toward authority. Today, the emotions of Americans have become polarized in terms of whether they support traditional relations of authority vs. the ideal of total participation in making decisions that effect the individual. But on both sides, there are important differences in attitudes. On the side of authority, traditionalists and humanistic conservatives have different feelings from those of mechanized bureaucrats, frightened conformists, or sadistic reactionaries. On the other side, the destructive rebel may try to make common cause with conflicted, dependent and defiant adolescents. And both are different from the communitarian, who is concerned with improving the quality of human relationships rather than overthrowing authority.

Instead of refining the concept of authoritarianism in this way or going on to develop measures of character more relevant to political issues of our time, the tendency of pragmatic American social scientists was to find out how well the gadget "worked", what kind of measurable behavior could be associated with the authoritarianism scale. Political scientists, for



example, showed that it was not very good at predicting voting behavior, compared to factors such as party loyalty, economic interest, and perception of how well the party in power has handled the issues. This finding was taken as evidence for the fact that "cognitive" variables are more important than characterological ones.* What was missed in this analysis is the fact that party loyalty or economic interest are not independent of character orientation. Indeed, placing loyalty to a political party ahead of loyalty to one's economic interest on the one hand or one's loyalty to humanity on the other is not a fact of human nature but expresses a particular way of relating oneself to secular idols. Furthermore, the individual who responds realistically to the way the party in power has handled its stewardship shows greater independence (which is an aspect of character) than those who do not. Given this, voting in presidential elections still remains a narrow test of character since the choice seldom polarizes the electorate, just as the choice between toothpastes is not a crucial test of one's independence or attitude to authority. Even with a better measure of authoritarianism, the authoritarian personality would see both Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey as representatives of power. Which one he chose would depend on other factors, especially party loyalty and social class.

* See A. Campbell, P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller, and D. E. Stokes, The American Voter, New York, Wiley, 1960, which is the most carefully documented of such studies.



The attempts to prove or disprove that authoritarianism explained political behavior resulted in a waning of interest in understanding the character of the public, rather than a development of more precise and more profound measures.* During the past few years, in our study of Mexican peasant character, Fromm and I have developed methods of diagnosing character orientations other than the democratic and authoritarian orientations.

Based on our experience, we set out to determine the dimensions of character most relevant to understanding the character of the American public at the present time. On the basis of preliminary testing and analysis, we decided that the dimension of biophilia vs. necrophilia (love of life vs. what is dead or mechanized) love of / is a key psychological factor in determining the deeply felt attitudes of Americans to the problems of war and peace, conflict between

* One social scientist who has developed measures of other psychological attributes is Robert McCloskey, a political scientist at Berkeley. This is not the place to give McCloskey's work the full analysis it deserves. However, my general criticism of his approach is that he does not distinguish between discontent based on greater realism and radicalism and discontent based on pathology. His tendency is to make adjustment to the predominant values of America one pole and to lump all dissenters into another.

See, for example, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy," in Political Behavior in America, ed. Heinz Eulau, New York, Random House, 1966.



the races, and hopes for the future. Another key factor, which will be discussed further, ^{is} the dimension of support for traditional authority vs. the rejection of authority (or support of total participation in decision-making processes).

What is meant by the dimension of biophilia vs. necrophilia? This concept, one of Fromm's most important contributions to psychoanalytic theory, is described in his chapter on "Love of death and love of life" in The Heart of Man (New York, Harper and Row, 1964). We can summarize the two orientations as the extremes of a continuum which represents the deepest pathology or perversion of life on one pole vs. growth and perfection or discipline of productive capabilities on the other. One should add, however, that these tendencies, like all dynamic orientations, are fully understood only when one has felt them in oneself.

Neither extreme of these orientations, neither biophilia nor necrophilia, is often to be found in its pure form. In most of us they are blended; in some of us they are in conflict with each other. What matters is which trend is stronger in determining behavior, and this may be decided by the work we do, the people with whom we associate most intimately, and the crucial decisions we make that determine the course of our lives.

The biophilic is attracted to all that is alive and growing--to those structures which stimulate growth. He wants to mold and to influence by love and reason, by his example rather than by force. He respects all that is alive and feels united to all life. Indeed, like St. Francis, the biophilic feels himself a part of nature. He does not feel attached to things, but neither does he reject things as evil. He enjoys the world more because he



is free from anxious attachment. Similarly, love between the sexes for the biophilic person expresses a joy in fusion and union rather than possessiveness. And creativeness means a full expression of the self rather than egoistic aggrandizement.

The extreme biophilic orientation represents an aim, a goal of all humanistic religions. It is represented in the Jewish rejection of dead idols and worship of the living God who cannot even be named, because a name makes a thing out of "I am." It is represented in the Zen Buddhist goal of unity with all life, and the Christian vow of poverty as interpreted by mystics such as St. John of the Cross. It is a difficult ideal to achieve, since it requires discipline and the ability to let go. However, we can note that those individuals with a stronger biophilic tendency than the average stimulate others to enjoy life more. Their biophilia is expressed in their whole attitude, the glow of their smiles, their gestures, and most of all their responsiveness to what is most alive and creative in others. A biophilic mother or teacher responds more to a child's creative work than to his failures or mischief. A biophilic physician looks for the patient's healthy forces rather than concentrating solely on pathology, and he treats the patient rather than the symptom. The biophilic leader such as Franklin Roosevelt stimulates a climate of hope and promise and dispels gloom. Eisenhower's popularity was probably more a function of his biophilia than his policies. Indeed, biophilic individuals are loved, because they love life.

It is a mistake to assume that biophilic individuals are irresponsible or in favor of licentiousness. To be responsible, to be able to respond to others, one must love life. Furthermore, for life to grow, there must be



structure. Fromm writes that "Living substance has the tendency to integrate and to unite; it tends to fuse with different and opposite entities, and to grow in a structural way. Unification and integrated growth are characteristic of all life processes, not only as far as cells are concerned, but also with regard to feeling and thinking." Where there is no structure, no internal discipline, life loving tendencies may degenerate into regressive expressiveness and biophilic union into infantile symbiosis and dependency,

This appears to have happened to many of the hippies who started out expressing their love of life, but who failed to develop the structures and internal discipline necessary to maintain it. The development of life-loving tendencies requires consciousness and reason as well as structure. However, order based on force and repression is different from the structures supported by biophilic individuals.

The opposite pole of biophilia is necrophilia, the love of what is dead, rigidly ordered, decaying, mechanical and unalive. The extreme necrophilic orientation is found in people who are extremely depressed, and often psychotic and suicidal and attracted to death. Fromm writes that they are people "who are attracted to and fascinated by all that is not alive, all that is dead; corpses, decay, feces, dirt. . . who love to talk about sickness, about burials, about death. . . ."

The less extreme tendency in this direction can be seen in our tendency to be fascinated by newspaper accounts about accidents, by relating to others by telling them our troubles, and in general by thinking that what is troublesome or painful or destructive is most real and important.



In describing the necrophilic person clinically, Fromm writes further that "All that is away from or directed against life attracts him. He wants to return to the darkness of the womb, and to the past of inorganic or animal existence. He is essentially oriented to the past, not to the future which he hates and is afraid of. Related to this is his craving for certainty. But life is never certain, never predictable, never controllable; in order to make life controllable it must be transformed into death; death, indeed, is the only certainty in life.

"The necrophilous tendencies are usually most clearly exhibited in a person's dreams. These deal with murder, blood, corpses, skulls, feces; sometimes also with men transformed into machines or acting like machines. An occasional dream of this type may occur in many people without indicating necrophilia. In the necrophilous person dreams of this type are frequent and sometimes repetitive.

"The highly necrophilous person can often be recognized by his appearance and his gestures. He is cold, his skin looks dead, and often he has an expression on his face as though he were smelling a bad odor. (This expression could be clearly seen in Hitler's face.) He is orderly, obsessive, pedantic. This aspect of the necrophilous person has been demonstrated to the world in the figure of Eichmann. Eichmann was fascinated by bureaucratic order and death. His supreme values were obedience and the proper functioning of the organization. He transported Jews as he would have transported coal. That they were human beings was hardly within the field of his vision, hence even the problem of whether he hated or did not hate his victims is irrelevant.

"But examples of the necrophilous character are by no means to be



found only among the inquisitors, the Hitlers, and the Eichmanns. There are any number of individuals who do not have the opportunity and the power to kill, yet whose necrophilia expresses itself in other and, superficially seen, more harmless ways. An example is the mother who will always be interested in her child's sicknesses, in his failures, in dark prognoses for the future; at the same time she will not be impressed by a favorable change; she will not respond to the child's joy; she will not notice anything new that is growing within him. We might find that her dreams deal with sickness, death, corpses, blood. She does not harm the child in any obvious way, yet she may slowly strangle his joy of life, his faith in growth, and eventually she will infect him with her own necrophilous orientation." (The Heart of Man, pp. 42-43.)*

Our findings indicate that no more than 10 percent of the populations we have studied express an extreme necrophilic orientation. However, few of us lack necrophilic tendencies, which are generally not conscious. Particularly, when the necrophilic tendency is strong, one usually remains unconscious of this attitude because of its irrationality, even though the tendency often plays a tragic role in our lives because it means we can neither be touched nor can we touch others deeply, no matter how much we

*The formulation of the necrophilic tendency or anti-life orientation is not the same as the theory of a death-instinct proposed by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. According to Freud, there is an inborn instinct to destroy which can either be directed toward the self or others. In contrast, Fromm's theory of necrophilia in The Heart of Man describes a pathological tendency which varies in different individuals according to factors such as constitution, social forces, and upbringing in childhood. In terms of Freud's theory, the impulse to destroy can be sublimated or repressed but the instinct remains. In terms of Fromm's theory, necrophilia can be diminished and dissolved by confronting the impulse and by strengthening the life forces.



would wish to do so. However, we remain unaware of the source of our isolation and rationalize necrophilic tendencies in terms of our concern for smooth functioning for "law and order," or in terms of a belief that it is too dangerous or a sign of weakness to be too biophilic. Even those with particularly strong necrophilic tendencies would be indignant at the idea that they love life less than anyone else; they consider that their love of possessions, of institutions, of abstract principles, even of their thrills signify a deep love of life.

Some individuals with strong necrophilic tendencies try to overcome the deadness inside them by seeking mechanical excitement, such as in risking their lives by driving fast, or the vicarious excitement of films full of gun play and violence. But such thrills have a different quality to the joy felt by the life-loving individual in experiencing his power to love, to understand, and to express his feelings in a disciplined way. Indeed, the concept of discipline itself has different meanings for the two types of people. For the necrophilic, discipline means control over himself and others, in effect, hardening his heart. For the biophilic, discipline means the perfection of his powers through education and practice, so that even if he is powerless in the face of overwhelming force, he will never be powerless to see clearly or to express his convictions and feelings.



An analysis of the dimension of "biophilia" vs. "necrophilia" in relation to the decisions confronting the nation has been made by Fromm in his new book, The Revolution of Hope (New York, Harper, 1968). He shows how tendencies in the two directions affect the emotional support in the nation for different policies, and he suggests the economic and political factors which reinforce these opposing tendencies.

For example, the person with strong biophilic tendencies will fight to preserve life, but he is not attracted to violence. Furthermore, since he dislikes sterile and rigid order, repressive control that destroys spontaneity, he rejects being mechanized, standardized, becoming a lifeless part in a machine-like organization. He favors structures which favor growth and which stimulate one's powers of creative expression.

In contrast, where necrophilic tendencies are stronger, individuals do not like anyone to be "uncontrolled." They feel people must be regulated within well-oiled machines. They are "driven" by their desires to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. For the highly trained, technology tends to become a secular idol which is expected to solve all human problems.*

* In the novel Why Are We in Vietnam? Norman Mailer shows a profound intuitive grasp of the relation between the passionate attraction to death and decay and the necrophilic's love of destructive mechanized technology, as they relate to political attitudes. One can also observe how the connection between the passion for advanced technical gadgets and necrophilia is expressed in such popular spy novels as the James Bond series and in many TV programs such as "Mission Impossible." In these programs and in movies which influence many Americans, complicated electronic gadgets are handled by dead-faced people who kill their enemies in the "national interest." In contrast, CBS which shows "Mission Impossible" has cancelled "The Smothers Brothers," one of the few biophilic programs on TV.



There is a strong tendency for such people to prefer property to life, and since they relate intimately to people or objects only by possession, a threat to possessions becomes a threat to themselves. They are not only attracted to what they can control, they are also threatened by lack of order even when it does not directly endanger them.

In order to move from theory and examples to study the prevalence of biophilic and necrophilic attitudes in the public, Fromm and I devised a series of objective questions which were based both on theoretical expectations and our clinical experience as psychoanalysts. We pretested the questions from 1965 to 1968 to determine which ones worked in eliciting the love of life vs. anti-life orientations. Since a set of simple questions can only approximate accuracy in eliciting deep-rooted, often unconscious attitudes which are expressed most vividly in dreams or responses to the Rorschach ink blots, one must devise questions which have no "right answer," which allow individuals with different orientations to answer honestly without their feeling they are giving themselves away or saying something that would label them as queer or immoral.

It must be emphasized that many projective questions are useful only within a given culture and period of time. A certain question will at one point in history reflect an underlying emotional attitude, but a few years later it will express no more than a conventional point of view^{one} that has been accepted in the national consensus. One example of this is a question used in earlier testing. "Suppose a man whose family is poor and starving is caught stealing food. What do you think the judge should do? (Let him go; sentence him; reprimand him; help him get food and a job.)" In 1965, only 50 percent of the people queried thought the judge should "help him get food and a job."



In 1968, this number had risen to 90 percent for both black and white samples. The reason for the change may be that publicity for the poverty program and statements by political leaders have changed the social consensus concerning the responsibility of the community to provide work for all who want it and need it.

There will be cases, of course, in which the answers to a particular question have a special meaning. An example is the question, "How many times a year should one visit the cemetery where loved ones are buried?" (see below). In general, while the necrophilic is attracted to cemeteries, in Harlem some life-loving people liked to go out to the cemetery in order to get away from concrete and visit a place with trees and flowers. Thus, this question was one of the few which did not indicate necrophilic tendencies in Blacks, while it did so for White adults and students. Given the possibility that any one question may be interpreted in a special way, one needs to ask enough questions so that a trend can be established, one which can be measured by the general consistency of responses to a number of items.



This example illustrates the fact that the concept of projective questions differs from the way in which most social scientists use questionnaires. The behaviorist considers answers to his questions as identical to the point being measured. We, on the other hand, consider the questions as a means for eliciting expressions of an underlying dynamic tendency which cannot be measured directly, even by behavior in most experimental situations, since a dynamic tendency may be blocked by conflicting forces, or too weak to be expressed. Projective stimuli are a means, and not the best possible means, of approximating a diagnosis. A still more accurate diagnosis could be made on the basis of more intimate knowledge of an individual, including access to his dreams. This, however, would limit our ability to study large populations.

Some further examples from the fifteen questions used will illustrate the process of discovering this attitude.

"Assume you saw a burglar running away from your house with some of your valuables. Would you shoot to wound him or kill him if you could? Would you shoot to scare him? Would you let him go and call the police? Would you do nothing?" The anti-life individuals would be more likely to shoot to wound or kill, since for them personal property is more important than life. One sees this attitude in some responses to student protests on campuses and to looters during riots, where the emotional response to property damage overrides consideration of underlying issues and blocks the possibility for rational discourse.



"How important do you feel it is for those who break laws to pay for their crimes? (very important, somewhat important, not important)." Even if he considers deterrence as effective in limiting crime, the life loving individuals may explain that criminals should be rehabilitated and that no one gains by vindictiveness, by revenge. The necrophilic tends to believe that only deterrence, the threat of having to "pay" keeps people (possibly including himself) "honest," and he feels pleasure rather than sorrow in seeing retributive justice carried out.

"Which is a better quality for a wife to have, to cook well or to be able to keep a house neat?" Although all who prefer neatness are not on the anti-life side, in general the attraction to dead order as a greater pleasure than good food is a symptom of this orientation.

"How many times a year should one visit the cemetery where loved ones are buried?" The extreme anti-life orientation is expressed in attraction to what is dead which may be rationalized in terms of respect or devotion. I know one such case of a person who visited his mother's grave more frequently and devotedly than he visited his living mother. He also collects guns. As the statistical analysis of the responses demonstrates, attraction to what is dead also implies indifference to what is alive.

The scoring of answers to these questions together with a number of others in terms of indicating biophilia or necrophilia (see Appendix for questions and scoring) were significantly correlated with the same factor, which emerged from a Principal Components Factor Analysis. This result provides evidence in support of the theory. Furthermore, the same factor emerged in studies of both Black and White populations, and again in a



further study of students.* This result provides statistical support for the conclusion that the questions are in fact eliciting the biophilia-necrophilia dimension.

We used those questions which had proved reliable in earlier testing to study biophilic vs. necrophilic orientations in three populations last summer, samples of Whites in Santa Cruz, California, and the upper East Side in New York City, and Blacks in Harlem. The scores were also correlated with views on political issues and preferences for presidential candidates. In both White and Black groups, we discovered a similar distribution of life loving and anti-life tendencies, although on many items the Blacks showed more love of life. While there were some important differences in Blacks and Whites in terms of which issues are most important, psychologically, both whites and blacks with dominant biophilic tendencies are more alike in terms of this orientation than they are similar to others of their own races with dominant necrophilic attitudes.

Our data indicated that in both groups, and we think this is true for the country as a whole, the dichotomy between the life-loving and the anti-life personality was the basis of disagreement on some of the most crucial issues of our time.

* However, there are some items which are expressive of necrophilia for the White population, but not for the Black population.



The two types of emotional attitudes determined different reactions to the war in Vietnam. The life lovers opposed the war in terms of its destructiveness. While some people with the anti-life attitude opposed the war on the grounds that we are failing to win it, this attitude supports the use of force to quickly end and win the war.

On the basis of statistical analysis, we can list some issues that have become polarized in terms of "love of life." On the life-loving side, both Blacks and Whites are in favor of: stopping the killing in Vietnam, securing a guaranteed income for all Americans, and greater participation of Blacks in decision-making roles. These positions are rooted in the attitude that all people have the right to live and to determine their own destiny.

In the White study, we found the love of life attitude also related to favoring aid to underdeveloped countries, concern for conservation and laws against pollution, especially for those individuals who were both life loving and highly educated. One must keep in mind that a characterological attitude implies a readiness to support a political issue which is consistent with it, but an issue may have salience for people depending on their social class and experience. For the life loving poor, issues of conservation and pollution are secondary to issues having to do with survival and dignity. While opinion polling shows what people are thinking about, polls of emotional attitudes provide us with information concerning what people would support, providing they were free enough and informed enough.

In May, when the White sample was tested, the love of life attitude was significantly correlated with support for Senator Eugene McCarthy for



president. Individuals with the love of life attitude from all social classes and educational levels supported McCarthy.* This was not the case for the blacks tested. In Harlem, after Robert Kennedy's death, there was a tendency for those with a strong love of life either to support Nelson Rockefeller or more commonly "nobody," meaning no white man. There are three possible interpretations of this finding. One is that the blacks felt that McCarthy was not sufficiently concerned with them. A second is that some of those who love life the most felt it dangerous to put their hopes in any leader, after the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Senator Kennedy. As some said to us, "anyone we support is in danger." But the most likely explanation is that some life-loving blacks felt that none of the candidates represented them, that presidential politics was irrelevant to their ghetto world. However, all of these factors might explain the support of life-loving blacks for "nobody."

On the anti-life side, there was significant support from both whites and blacks for the following issues: tighter control of rioters, tighter enforcement of anti-drug laws; winning the war in Vietnam; strengthening the police; fighting communism throughout the world; and stamping out radicals.

* It is not likely that this was the case for some whites in other parts of the country, since 24 percent of the McCarthy supporters voted for George Wallace. During the summer, I travelled with Senator McCarthy to Corning, Iowa, where he addressed the National Farmers' Organization. There I spoke with farmers who said they would vote either for McCarthy or Wallace because they admired both men for opposing the powers in the East. In the white sample tested, biophilia was significantly correlated with support for McCarthy ($r = .42, p < .01$). Even when education and age were partialled out, this correlation remained the same. It is notable that we reported last summer (in The New York Times) that on the basis of our sample 75 percent of McCarthy supporters were biophilic and that only 25 percent--the same percentage if not the same people who voted for Wallace--were necrophilic. Eighty percent of the Wallace supporters in the sample were diagnosed as necrophilic.



An issue not associated with either orientation ^{was} ~~is~~ "protecting free enterprise in the United States". Life lovers and anti-life individuals may support these issues for different reasons. The life lover thinks of free enterprise in terms of independence and individual freedom, doing his own thing. For the anti-life orientation the concern is about losing one's material possessions. Here is a good example of an ideological position that has different meanings for different people according to their character. It suggests what was confirmed in some interviews: that there are conservative humanists who have a deep love of life. These are the modern Burkeans who believe all progress must be based on preserving what is best in the existing institutions, rather than breaking radically with the past. On the other hand, there are people with a liberal ideology that rationalizes anti-life tendencies. They see human betterment in terms of material prosperity alone. They favor bureaucratic standardization in the name of meritocratic fairness. Their idea of progress is technical innovation rather than greater consciousness, freedom, and friendliness. These same "liberals" are the ones likely to support military intervention abroad in order to "help" suffering people.

Knowledge of the distribution of dynamic tendencies in the population can lead to a new understanding of the public. It allows us to penetrate beneath the opinions and conventional slogans to the attitudes that determine convictions. It is a basis for understanding how people will be willing to commit their energies, what they will support and what they find threatening. It uncovers one of the major conflicts in the country which is not an ideological one of "liberals" vs. "conservatives" but between those who are



essentially in favor of peace, tolerance, and reason against those in the grip of racism who lean to the use of force and repression as the best solution to all conflicts, and who emotionally support a police state.

How does our analysis help to illuminate the conflicts in the universities? Rolando Weissman, a graduate student in psychology at the University of Chicago who assisted in carrying out the earlier studies, administered the questionnaire to 167 undergraduates at Chicago and correlated the responses with the students' statements of their political positions. On the average, the students are more biophilic than the general population, but as we have noted, the same factor of biophilia-necrophilia emerges from the statistical analyses of responses in all the populations tested. Weissman found that the students who call themselves "conservatives" (11 percent) are significantly less biophilic than those who term themselves on the "left" (19 percent).

Why are those on the left today more biophilic? We should emphasize first of all that the projective questionnaire did not ask for opinions on the Vietnam war, the military-industrial complex, the economic system of the United States, or the quality of education in the universities. However, those who love life deeply are opposed to the war, the increasing militarization of the economy, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, indifference to poverty, and to dehumanizing aspects of bureaucratization in education and work. They are the ones most concerned about the quality of American life and who feel most urgently that there must be far-reaching change, before it is too late.

the Chicago

Another group of students (20 percent) who called themselves "radicals" were split into two segments, one type dominantly biophilic and another type dominantly necrophilic. The finding indicates what can be noted on many



campuses, that some students use the ideology of revolution to rationalize their inner deadness and their impulse to destroy rather than create. These individuals are contemptuous of anyone who enjoys life. It is remarkable that many of these nihilists are women. In contrast, there are many students whose protest and "unrest" are rooted in their love of life and their opposition to dehumanization.*

Those who oppose the students' demands which question the rightness of the system are likely to lump both types together as destructive and nihilistic. On the other hand, those adults who love life state, like George Wald, that the only cure for student unrest is greater adult unrest about the war; nuclear armaments, militarization, population growth, and the destruction of our natural environment.

It is also notable that those students who call themselves "liberals" (26 percent) and independents (11 percent) are neither strongly biophilic nor necrophilic; rather the two tendencies are blended in them. Perhaps one can say that those individuals who adapt most easily to the society are psychologically most malleable, because they lack strong, clear-cut orientations. Psychodynamically they are neither extremely healthy nor extremely sick.

A more complex analysis of the emotionally-rooted attitudes that underlie basic socio-political positions in the United States would have to take more specific account of differences in attitudes toward authority. It is on

* For example, many of the Stanford students who "sat-in" against the weapons research done at the University wore buttons reading "Research for life --not death." That sit-in, at the Applied Electronics Laboratory, was non-violent, with an atmosphere that encouraged open debate of the issue.

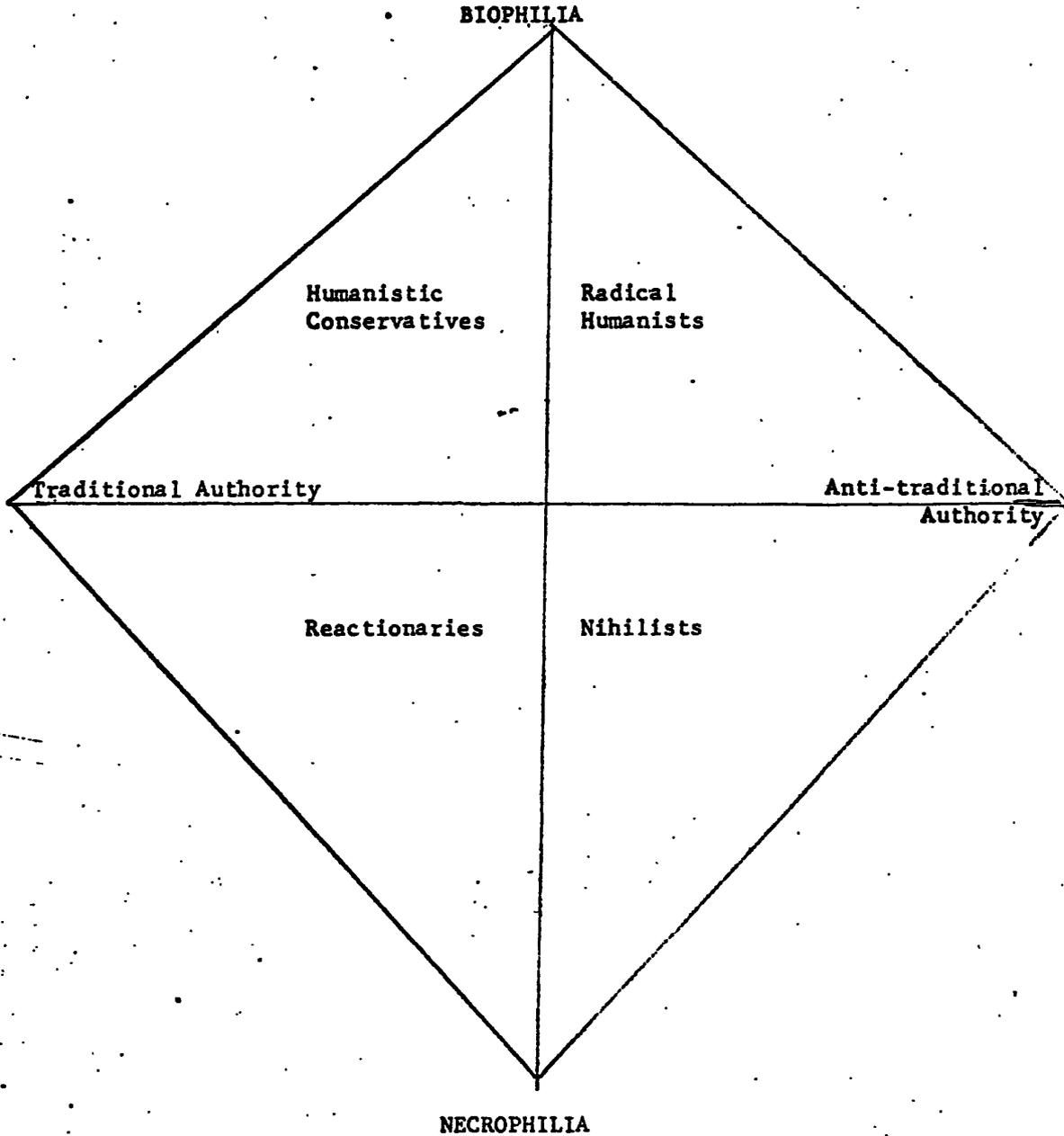


this dimension--support for traditional authority relationships vs. opposition to traditional authority which is partly but not totally related to age--that many Americans have become polarized today especially in the universities.

If we consider the interrelation between biophilia-necrophilia on the one hand and attitudes to authority on the other, we can construct the following

theoretical
A diagram: *

* We are now in the process of testing this hypothesis using a new set of questions on attitudes toward authority combined with the biophilia - necrophilia scale.



Of course, most Americans who are middle-of-the-road in their views would also be found in the middle of this chart. Indeed, the opinion polls indicate that the large majority of Americans (let us say at least the 70



percent that Gallup found on the side of Mayor Daley after the Democratic Convention in Chicago) are on the side of traditional authority.* However, those opposed to traditional authority have demonstrated power greater than their numbers, and on many issues their fervor and conviction attracts others to them.

I would suggest that the dimension of authority, while it has polarized individuals in universities and within the Catholic Church, is not the most important dimension in terms of the deepest differences in character, and that if biophilic individuals could overcome their rhetoric and their group narcissism, they would be able to discover more in common than there is reason for division or conflict.

On the biophilic side of politics in this country, both radical humanists (such as the biophilic students, social democrats in the spirit of Norman Thomas, and life-loving Quakers and other religious or secular intentional communitarianists) and humanistic conservatives (such as Senators Aiken, Cooper, Fulbright, and McCarthy, traditional Catholic humanists, Burkeans and life-loving conservationists) wish to develop the structures that stimulate growth, reason, and individual expression. Both groups respect the environment; both have an ecological view of change, seeing that any essential change requires modifying a total system. However, they disagree on the means to their ends, and their life-styles and rhetoric are miles apart. What is so dangerous for our society is that these two groups may fail to understand their common interest and opposition to dehumanization and that each will end up in opposing alliances based on the authority dimension alone. On the necrophilic side, both types of individuals--reac-

* According to a recent Harris poll, 38 percent of Americans call themselves conservative, 32 percent middle of the road, and 17 percent liberal.



tionaries and destructive rebels and nihilists -- are attracted to violence as the means of solving conflicts and feel that order will be gained by destroying those who do not think the way they do.*

We found that in both White and Black groups differences in terms of the love of life help to explain the conflict between generations. More of the younger people in both groups -- and the difference is significant only for men -- are life loving. Furthermore, anti-life attitudes are more frequently encountered in the lower-middle and working classes than among professionals and the more well-to-do.

If further investigation confirms these findings, many questions will need to be answered. What factors in our society form these orientations? How do they relate to the way in which people live and work? Are those with anti-life orientations "sick" in terms of symptoms and suffering? We find love of life correlated with education and social class. Do life lovers seek more education and become more mobile, or does education and prosperity both stimulate the love of life and help provide individuals with the internal discipline to maintain this orientation?

The goal of understanding the character orientations held by large seg-

*An important distinction must be made between the use of force or violence as a response to the threat to one's life and liberty vs. the emotional attraction to violence and its glorification. Although those with the most intense life-loving orientation reject all violence and prefer martyrdom to killing, it does not follow that life-loving people in general are pacifists. Indeed, the majority of people on the life-loving side would probably defend themselves against attacks on their lives and their liberty. The distinction is illustrated in the Biblical legend that has been passed on concerning the Exodus from Egypt. According to the legend, after God had caused the Red Sea to close over the Egyptians, the angels rejoiced. But God admonished them, saying there was no reason to be glad at the destruction of this people, that to the contrary, it was reason for deep sorrow. A similar feeling is expressed in the story of Jonah who complains that God refused to destroy the people of Ninevah, after they have repented their evil.



ments of the American public should not be to make moral condemnations. Many people with strong anti-life orientations are honest, hard-working, and keep to themselves; they may suffer more than anyone else because of their character. Furthermore, people defend an orientation because they feel they cannot live without it. It is their way of responding to necessities of existence, of surviving and remaining sane. It allows them to function in their work and social setting. A threat to a deep-rooted emotional attitude becomes a threat to existence. On the other hand, one cannot be neutral about the anti-life orientation. Those with this orientation threaten the quality of life in America by their support of repressive measure and their indifference to suffering. By lending their support to militarism and to pyramidal structures based on force, they attack the very existence of life.

In our clinical experience, we have also learned that the anti-life orientation manifests itself in a feeling of deadness and depression, and in loneliness and boredom. By means of national studies, we can find out whether necrophilia is generally correlated with these symptoms and with suicidal tendencies. One goal of such investigation would be to increase the public's consciousness of the meaning of a "sick" society.

The next question would be to explore possibilities of changing the anti-life orientation, not only by a different type of schooling, but also by a concern for life in the mass media and in patterns of work. Which TV programs and movies reinforce the anti-life orientation by glamorizing destructiveness and presenting a model of competence based on skill in destroying? Does the individual's work call for spontaneity and individualism



or is it so standardized and dehumanized that only those attracted to rigid order can function successfully at it? One cannot force people to love life more or move them in this direction by means of propaganda. The only ways to stimulate the love of life are to change the environment in which we live and at the same time increase consciousness of the human cost of necrophilia.



Fromm-Maccoby

Biophilia vs. Necrophilia Scale

1. Would you, in general, agree or disagree with the statement: cleanliness is next to Godliness?
2. What are the three worst evils? (Murder for gain, murder out of passion, robbery, homosexuality, rape, treason, adultery, drunkenness, dirtiness, greediness, dope-selling, cruelty to children, betrayal of a friend.)
3. Have you given thought to how you wish to be buried? (Much, some, none.)
- id est* 4. What are the three greatest virtues? (Discipline, love, obedience, defense of honor, patriotism, joy of life, cleanliness, punctuality, charity, consideration of others, honesty, sincerity.)
5. Which is a better quality for a wife to have, to cook well or be able to keep a house neat?
- id est* 6. How many times a year should one visit the cemetery where loved ones are buried? (Note: this question is not correlated with the scale for black respondents.)
- id est* 7. Are you in favor of capital punishment? (Death penalty for crimes.)
8. What annoys you most, a person who is too messy, or one who is too neat?
- id est* 9. How important do you feel it is for those who break laws to pay for their crimes? (Very important, somewhat important, not important.)
10. Assume you saw a burglar running away from your house with some of your valuables. Would you shoot him to wound him or kill him if you could? Would you shoot to scare him? Would you let him go and call the police? Would you do nothing?
11. If you were to buy a new car and soon after found a scratch on the door, how upset would you be? (Very upset for quite a while, somewhat upset but not for long, little upset, not upset.)
- id est* 12. Is it irresponsible for a person to spend most of his income on food, pleasure, and travel and not save any money except for life insurance?



Biophilia vs. Necrophilia Scale

Scoring Code.

1. Yes = 1 point
2. 1 point if adultery, robbery, drunkenness, dirtiness, homosexuality, dope-selling are chosen. Add points.
3. 2 points for much, 1 point for some, 0 for none.
4. 1 point for each if obedience, defense of honor, cleanliness are chosen.
5. "Keep a house neat" = 1 point.
6. 0 = 0, 1-4 = 1, 4+ = 2.
7. Yes = 1 point
8. "Too messy" = 1 point.
9. Very important = 2 points, somewhat important = 1 point, not important = 0.
10. Shoot to wound or kill = 3 points, shoot to scare = 2 points, call police = 1 point, nothing = 0.
11. 2 points for "very upset", 1 point for "little upset" or "somewhat upset", 0 for "not upset".
12. Yes = 1 point.

Add points for the total score. A low score indicates biophilia. A high score indicates necrophilia.