CHOICE OF THE TERM "LIFE STYLE" BY ONE RESEARCH GROUP

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In response to a request by the editor, I am setting out below the background of the use of the term "life style" by the Conservation of Human Resources Project, Columbia University, which has been carrying on interdisciplinary research in the field of human resources and manpower during the past three decades.

The director of the Project, trained as an economist, had as his first associate Sol W. Ginsburg, M.D., a Freudian psychoanalyst with a broad concern with the interaction between intra-psychic functioning and the social and economic environment in which people work and live (1). Shortly after World War II, John L. Herma, Ph.D., joined the staff. He was a Viennese trained psychologist and psychoanalyst who also had a Freudian orientation, and a special interest in ego psychology.[1] Later, the Conservation staff was joined by others whose training had been in Hullian psychology and in social psychology.

The following successive publications of the Project bear on the question of "life style."

The concept was first treated implicitly in "Sex and Class Behavior" (2) in which, in an effort to explain certain data presented by Kinsey on the differences in the pre-marital sexual behavior of individuals from middle-income backgrounds and those from low-income families, emphasis was put on differences in the value orientations and consequently the different stances toward the future. Differences in sexual behavior were explained by the differences in the values men live by.

A few years later, we presented an analysis of "Sex and the Female Character" (3) which sought to establish linkages between a woman's basic values and orientations toward work and life, and her pattern of sexual behavior, before and after marriage. While the term life style was not employed, the approach was implicitly grounded in such a concept.

In our large-scale study of *The Ineffective Soldier* we devoted

[1]Dr. Herma died suddenly on September 19, 1966.

in the third volume (5) a chapter to an analysis of "Life Patterns of Performance." We evaluated a man's pre-military, military, and post-military level of performance and classified him in one of four life patterns: adjusted, vulnerable, broken, poor. In the following chapter, we sought to differentiate between those with a successful and those with an unsuccessful pattern, taking into account differences in the educational level, marital pattern, military experience and the degree of post-military disability. Again, we did not use the term life style, but again we were edging close to it.

Occupational Choice: An Approach to a General Theory (4) made extensive use of dynamic psychology, particularly approaches of Charlotte Bühler and Jean Piaget with whom John Herma had worked. In Chapter 14 where the interplay between emotional factors and the choice process is schematically delineated, a distinction is made between people with an active stance toward their occupational choice and those with a passive stance. Here too, the Project's staff came close to, although it did not employ, the term life style.

About a decade later, in *The Optimistic Tradition and American Youth* (7), the staff devoted a chapter to "Life Plans," in which the process involved in three basic choices—occupational, military, marital—are assessed. The thrust of this analysis is to point up the factors in the environment which bring about major changes in the ways in which young people plan for their future and in the actions that they take along the way.

It was not until 1964 in *Talent and Performance* (8) that the Conservation staff explicitly made use of the concept "life styles." Chapter 10 explores the relationships between the occupational development of a sample group and three basic dimensions of their lives: their families, their activities off the job, and their retirement plans. Our analytical framework was extended to incorporate these additional dimensions of a person's life when we found that exclusive focus on career aspects was not adequate to differentiate among the members of the group.

In our most recent investigation, a study of educated women, we found the term life style so apposite that we employed it in the title (6). In that volume, we define the term for the first time: "By 'life style' we refer to that orientation to self, others and society, that each individual develops and follows, that is, his value orien-

tation" (6, p. 145). And then we define for our purposes, the concept of values.

> We see an individual's values as the reflection of his basic inclinations and generalized orientations. They are the elements that shape the preference systems he develops to guide him in the formulation of goals and in the exercise of choice. The sequential decisions that an individual makes are not random but are meaningfully related to each other, since his preference system rests upon a limited number of distinct values which give meaning and direction to his life and influence his choices among the alternatives he confronts (6, p. 144).

We were able to delineate four distinctive life styles: individualistic, influential, supportive, and communal, each of which is described and illustrated through case materials.

We deliberated for a long time before we decided on the title *Life Styles of Educated Women*. Selective inquiry convinced us that while many sophisticated individuals did not respond positively to the term and advised against its use, a large number believed that it was admirably suited to our needs. Many particularly approved our using the plural form to emphasize differences among women.

This natural history of how one research group slowly came to employ the term "life style" may be summarized as follows. Firstly, it has been a hallmark of this particular group that it avoids borrowing specialized terminology from any of the disciplines represented on its staff. It has tried to avoid an alliance with any particular school while borrowing from many.

Secondly, the principal psychologist on the staff had his intellectual roots deep in Vienna and was intimately acquainted with all of the dominant schools of psychology in that great capital. However, as the bibliographies to our many publications in the realm of social psychology make clear, our primary indebtedness is to Charlotte Bühler whose methodological approaches were most closely related to those which we developed.

Thirdly, we have been primarily concerned in our several investigations with the interplay between the individual and the environment in which he was brought up, and lives. Preoccupied with the development of potential and with its effective utilization, we have concentrated on ego development and on performance. In this connection—following Allport—we have conceived of values as a major independent determinant of behavior.

In light of our orientations and interests it is hardly surprising that the Conservation of Human Resources Project moves slowly but ineluctably from partial typologies based on sexual behavior,

career decisions, and performance patterns to a more inclusive approach of "life styles." Nor is it surprising that we finally employed the concept of life style in connection with our study of women where no effective separation could be made, as in the case of men, between careers and the other aspects of life.[2]

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[2]For parallels in the development of the concept of life style between this group and Alfred Adler see the preceding paper (Ansbacher, H. L. Life style: a historical and systematic review. *J. Indiv. Psychol.*, 1967, 23, 191-212). —Ed. note.