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ABSTRACT

This address first briefly reviews what children are expected to know and be able to do when they reach adulthood and considers the critical developmental tasks which they must engage in and go through to meet such expectations. Then, consideration is given to the institutions of social networks in which development occurs as they operated in the pre-1940s period and as they operate today in the post-1940s period. The discussion relies on personal and research experience in the family and work in schools to point out the importance of looking beyond the individual and the family for causes of particular behaviors in young people. Finally, suggestions are offered concerning future directions and needs for research on child development and child behavior. (RH)

"Children and Social Networks"

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Thank you very much, Dr. Love; thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

It's a very great pleasure and honor to be introduced by Dr. Love. I first met her when she was directing the "Right to Read Program", and I have followed her work in Oakland and Chicago, work which is characterized by intelligence, innovation and, I will also add, great common sense and no nonsense. So, again, it is a great honor to be introduced by Dr. Love.

I have been interested in the work at the Erikson Institute for some time, so it is an honor to present the Edith Neisser Lecture for the Institute. I did not know Mrs. Neisser, but I have learned that her work very much parallels my own interest.

Also, it's delightful to be here in Chicago, one, because I have many colleagues and friends here. But also, as you heard, I grew up near the Lake, and it's home. It's also an opportunity to visit with my daughter, who is a freshman at Northwestern.

The theme that you have chosen for this particular conference, "New Directions in Studying Children," is an important one. I have been concerned that social and behavioral scientists have put so much emphasis on the individual at the expense of looking at the individual and his family in the context of community. There has been too little study of the life and development of children in their social networks beyond the family, and the skills and interactions needed to function adequately in those social networks. And so, one of the new directions that I feel is necessary is that we give adequate emphasis to, and begin to try and understand, the impact of these social networks on child development and the behavior of children within them.

My approach this evening will be to review, very briefly, what children are expected to know and be able to do as adults and then consider the critical developmental tasks which they must engage in and go through to be able to achieve those goals or meet those expectations. Then we shall consider the institutions of social networks in which development occurs as they operated yesterday, or in the pre-1940's period, and as they operate today in the post-1940's period. I will use my personal and

research experience in the family and my work in schools as a way of pointing out the importance of looking beyond the individual and the family for the cause of particular behaviors on the part of young people, and to look at the development of young people beyond the family. Finally, I will suggest what we need to do and where we need to move as students of child development and child behavior.

First, let me talk about some of the developmental tasks that are important and some of the things that children should be able to do and are expected to do. We expect young people to be able to work and/or follow careers. We expect them to be able to live successfully in families. As adults, we expect them to be good child-rearers themselves. We expect them to be responsible citizens. And we expect them to be able to express themselves appropriately and find gratification and meaning in life.

Children are not born able to do these things. And the competence that they must acquire to be able to do so does not come by chance. It comes through rearing. Competent rearing will allow children to become competent adults, enabling them to achieve the tasks that we expect of them.

Now, let me talk about the caretaker. Caretaking and the rearing of children is largely the responsibility of parents. We expect parents to be able to move children along developmental pathways. Although there are many pathways, several are critical. First is the social and inter-personal pathway. We expect parents, through interactions with children, to be able to move them from the first social smile through a number of interactions all the way to the point that they have social skills which enable them to operate successfully in today's complex society. Second, we expect them to develop speech and language. As parents and caretakers, we must move babies from the original "dadas" and "mamas" all the way to adult speech patterns. Thirdly, we expect children to move along the cognitive or thinking, intellectual or academic, pathways so that they eventually have the skills which enable them to think and work in the kind of complex society that we have today; to work, think and manage themselves and become good

problem-solvers. Fourth, we exepct the kind of psychological development which will enable them to handle their emotions and feelings appropriately in a variety of situations. We expect the kind of psychological development which enables them to have adequate control of their impulses. Finally, we expect good moral development so that they can perform as responsible citizens in the society.

Now, let me turn to the social networks in which they must live and work. Those networks must operate in a way that will allow as many parents as possible to move their children along those developmental pathways so that they can perform adequately as adults. I feel that there are three major social networks or concentric circles in which children grow. We ought to understand these networks because they have tremendous impact on the behavior of families and children.

The first social network is that of the family, or the institution of the family. The family is also enmeshed in a network of friends and kin, and I consider this the primary social network in which very important attitudes, values and modes of behavior are established which will begin to move children in specific directions. Next is the secondary social network. This network involves the church, school or whatever organization the family is primarily involved in outside the home and sometimes in the workplace. Finally, there is the tertiary social network, the institutions of the larger society: government, primary economic system, television and other institutions where social policies, ideas, attitudes of the larger society are transmitted to children. The policies that affect the quality of schooling and the quality of home life are all developed in the government and primary economic institutions of the larger society. The decisions made there impact very directly on the lives of children. We have paid too little attention to those decisions and how they impact. Finally, the interaction and identification, or the non-interaction and non-identification, with the leaders within these various social networks influence the development of children and can either shape their behavior positively or lead to harmful and destructive development.

Now let me consider the institutions, as they were yesterday and are today, in which children grow and why today we face a much more difficult situation than in the past. Although life was difficult in the past, it was less complex. It was less complex because we were a nation of small towns and rural areas, and even the cities were collections of small towns right up until the mid-nineteen forties. There was relatively low mobility. It was hard to get from one place to another; thus, people didn't come from outside their communities as often as they do now. Nor did young people leave their communities as much as they do now. And also there was a low level of communication and information coming into the communities.

Parents, teachers, administrators, ministers and many other important authority figures interacted with each other in the past in a way that is not possible now. For example: when I went to the A&P store with my parents as a youngster, I would bump into my school principal, my teachers and a variety of other important authority figures. I would observe my parents talking to them and shaking hands with them. The relationship between my parents and the authority figures in those other institutions was a message about the way I had to respond to those people and the way I had to respond in school. When I was in fifth grade, I used to walk hand in hand to school with my teacher. As a result, there wasn't much chance that I was going to act up in her fifth grade class.

Also, in the past, we worked and we played within small distances of where we lived. All of the information we received as children was from important, familiar authority figures -- parents, teachers, administrators, the policeman on the corner, the neighbor down the street. And all of those authority figures spoke with a "common tongue" about what was right, wrong, good, bad. If you asked one, you might as well have asked them all because they all said the same thing. Now it is true that there was abuse of authority and people suffered: minorities suffered, women suffered and poor people suffered.

On the other hand, that kind of social system and social network created clear expectations, a predictable environment. You knew what would happen if you did certain things and it limited the possibility of acting up in unacceptable ways. It was much more difficult to snatch the purse of an elderly lady that you saw walking down the street in that kind of social network because she was much more likely to be related to someone who was important to you or who knew you. And there was greater acceptance of the authority figures because of the kind of security they provided and that that kind of social network provided. There was a greater sense of belonging on the part of everybody, even if it was belonging in your own place or space. As a result a natural sense of community existed in pre-World War II society.

The school was a natural part of that community because of the kinds of interactions that I have just described, and the authority that parents had with their children was transferred very directly to school people who could exercise authority in their classrooms very readily. At the same time, there was a very low level of social and psychological development needed for people to be able to function, to earn a living and to be able to take care of themselves and their families, and to be able to feel good about themselves <u>because</u> they were able to take care of themselves and their family. As a result of that self-esteem and feeling good about themselves, children could identify with the leaders of society and were much more likely to perform as good citizens. They were much less likely to be alienated and distrustful of authority figures. Even then, with that kind of social system, even where resources for fostering child development were marginal or inadequate, children were much more likely to come in contact with people who could support and aid their development without some of the problems that exist today. Even with all of that, if young people failed in school, they could leave school, take a job and still earn a living; they could take care of themselves and feel good because they were able to do so.

After World War II, society began to change very, very dramatically. We are still living today with the effects of problems we did not respond to earlier. We moved from a society of small towns in rural areas to a metropolitan society. There was a higher level of communication after World War II, with greater mobility. Television came into everybody's home, and automobiles and suburban sprawl separated people by income and racial groups. People became isolated; and groups became isolated. There was increased distrust and there was increased disrespect between the authority figures at home and at school and in a variety of other social networks. Teachers and authority figures very often came from long distances outside the community into the schools, and they were not, then, members of the primary or the secondary social networks. There was not the same sense of community. Also, authority figures were no longer the holders of all truth, because they had competition from television and a variety of other sources of information. After World War II, children could see, almost immediately, different attitudes, values and modes of behavior from around the world. They could see it every half-hour over television, and often these approaches and ideas were different from those that their parents were trying to teach them. Awareness of differences of opinion undermined the automatic acceptance of authority on the part of many children. The increased distance that children had from authority figures increased distrust. Now the problem remains, as it always has, that children today are no more mature than children ever were. In fact, today's children need much more contact with knowledgeable, trustworthy and meaningful adults than ever before. Children need to be able to trust adults who can help them deal with the increased information they receive, integrate that information, and learn how to respond appropriately to be able to manange their lives adequately. And yet what they have are really fewer and less trusting relationships with adult authority figures than I had when I was growing up only a few years ago. Let me emphasize this point.

The school is no longer a natural part of the community but, rather, often an alien territory. Today children and people work and play many miles from where they live. So people and children today are very often on their own much more than in the past. There is much less sense of community. There is less of a sense of belonging. There is less of a sense of security as a result of that. At the same time, in order to hold a job, and to carry out all those functions that I indicated, children need to be able to develop skills. We need the highest level of development -- perhaps the highest level ever needed before in the history of the world -- across those critical developmental lines that I talked about earlier in order for children to be able to meet their adult responsibilities in an extremely complex and difficult society.

Now let me talk a bit about what social networks could have done, should have done, and still must do. Society should have invested more in the tertiary social network of business and of government; society should have invested much more heavily and carefully in the development of all children, not just poor and minority children, but all children, because there are serious developmental issues for children of all backgrounds. We should have invested more in support of families, preschools, school programs and other institutions that are important in shaping children's development. We should have attended to other social network systems that impact on the lives of families and children. Instead we left development to chance. We left it up to individual parents regardless of their circumstances and regardless of their stresses. And, as we would expect, the most powerless families and the most powerless communities received less in the way of support, and many of those families were overwhelmed. The result is that child-rearing in many families in this country is in trouble at this very moment. The management of many schools in this country -- not only urban schools but suburban and rural schools -- is also floundering and inadequate. The management and child-rearing approaches that worked in 1900, worked even until the mid forties, do not work today and did not work even in the 1950's. So let me turn for a moment to the question of child-

rearing and families and talk about what has been, can be, and should be done, in my opinion.

Before the 1940's, child-rearing was really quite authoritarian and continues, in my opinion, to be too much so even today. We thought of ourselves as the owners of our children. We could tell our children what to do. Using external control, we could make them do things. We did not promote internal control adequately under this approach. I will give you just one little vignette, a story I heard yesterday about a superintendent of schools who used the extreme authoritarian approach. He walked into an inner city school, shook his finger in the face of a youngster who had his hat on and said, "Take that hat off." The youngster used an expletive, telling him were he could go and what he could do with himself. The superintendent was outraged and said, "Do you know who I am?" and the youngster, using another expletive, told him it did not matter. So the superintendent suspended the youngster, and that did not matter either. Thus, all you had in this incident was a challenge and a fight, and no growth on the part of that youngster. That is where the authoritarian approach to child-rearing very often gets today (and I have not touched on other problems with this approach). In the 1950's and right into the 1970's, however, as a reaction to the authoritarian approach, another problem emerged: people became permissive to various degrees and thought of themselves as the servants of their children. Whatever children wanted to do, we facilitated; we understood, we let them do it. "Expression" was supposed to be good for them, or something like that. At any rate, that was an equally harmful approach.

It seems to me that a notion and way of rearing children is emerging -- even, perhaps, had always existed to some extent. In this approach we think of ourselves as the "developers" of our children. The central idea is that children are born dependent with a few skills. We have to carry them and to help them develop across developmental pathways that I described earlier. Now I am not going to give an academic or theoretical discussion to describe what I mean. Instead I am going to offer by way of illustration the

way that I work with my own children. These examples might suggest ways we can help children to develop: inner control and self-direction; motivation for achievement; a sense of personal responsibility needed to be effective; and the skills necessary to function well in today's complex world. (I have already talked with my daughter about whether she would allow me to do this. She assists me in my work, so she has permitted me to give these examples.) When my daughter was about two years of age and it was bedtime, she didn't want to go to bed. She walked over to the stairs and popped down on the third stair, crossed her arms and said, "If you make me go to bed, I will jump down and break my arm." She looked at me with that little smug smile that said 'I've got you now.' I thought for a while and then I said: "Well, you know, if you do that Dad will be very upset. But I will take you to the doctor and I will take care of you. But you know what," and I pointed to her arm, "it will be your pain." She looked down at the arm, and she looked down at the hard slate floor and she got up and went to bed. She thought of the consequences of the behavior and she took personal control of the situation. She weighed a few pounds at that time and it would have been very easy to take her up, put her in the bed and make her go to sleep. But then she would fight back as children fight back: she would call for milk; then she would call for water; then she would call to go to the toilet. By that time I would be furious. We would have a fight, there would be a struggle, and nothing would have been accomplished. By pointing out the consequences of her behavior, however, I allowed her to take charge. In my opinion, this is an example of starting from the very beginning, to help children see the consequences of their behavior, and to encourage personal control, self-direction and motivation. Again when my daughter was about two years of age, my wife and I left the room and there was a chocolate cake on the counter. Nobody else was in the house. When we came back the icing had been licked off the chocolate cake. We asked the question that Bill Cosby calls the "dumb" question. We said, "Who licked the icing off the cake?" She thought for a bit and answered, "I don't know." We continued to present the evidence as if it were an FBI

inquiry. Knowing she was bad, she said, "Somebody came in from outdoors, and they licked it off and went back out." Well, the point is that we knew she had licked the icing off the cake. She knew she had licked the icing off the cake. We really should have pointed out to her that she had licked the icing off the cake but next time we wanted her to ask us for a piece of cake instead. This vignette illustrates two points: the desire of children is greater than their control; and children are not born knowing the rules of the game. By providing information rather than trying to accuse and punish we would have helped her grow and develop personal control, and the skills necessary to handle a variety of situations.

When our son was eight years of age, he had the same problem with bedtime. As a matter of fact, he was staying up very late, watching television shows. It is ironic that he just started his first job Monday with 20th Century Fox in cinema. But at that time his interest in television and film was a problem causing him to stay up late watching television. Because he was missing the school bus and was tired the next day, we said to him, "What time do you have to go to bed in order to get up and make the school bus and be fresh in school tomorrow?" So as not to leave the question wide open, lest he say one o'clock or three o'clock, we added, "Is it seven-thirty, eight or eight-thirty?" Very often when children are brought into decision-making and given an option, they will make a reasonable decision. And he did. Had he said "one o'clock in the morning," we would have said "You're not being responsible, and therefore we will make the decision, but we expect you to be more responsible next time." In this process he was being asked to think about the consequences of staying up late. He learned to plan his schedule and activities so that he could meet his responsibilities. A variety of other things such as self-direction, motivation and self-responsibility were also gained in that interaction. These are important in terms of becoming a person who can control himself.

Another time when my son was eight years of age he asked me, "What will you give me if I make all A's?" I thought for a minute and I said, "Wait a minute, you're not going

to school for me. You're going to school for yourself. If you do not do well in school, your teachers will not wonder about me, they will wonder about you. Your friends will not wonder about me, they will wonder about you. And you will not wonder about me, you will wonder about yourself." From that day to this day, with both of my children, and not just for the reasons I have described alone, I have never had to talk to them about motivation for achievement. As a matter of fact I have to talk to them about not working so hard sometimes, because achieving and control and developing self-control, direction and motivation is from within. My belief is that in this day and age, where we cannot follow children, and where there are not people all over town in a variety of places who can help support the development of our children, we have to develop children who have greater internal control of themselves. Yet what we have is a society where the majority of people, even middle and upper income people, still rear their children with an authoritarian approach. The results are extreme amounts of rebellion, acting out and acting up behavior. Because we pay too little attention to interactions within a family, we have many children who do not function well in the home and beyond.

Now, this situation at home creates a problem for school, the social network just beyond the home and friends and kin. School is a very important social network because it is the link between the home and family and the mainstream of society. One of the problems of the school is very much like the problem of the home for many families. The school is still organized and still carries out a management approach that is authoritarian. Principals control the teachers, or attempt to, and often not successfully. Teachers attempt to control the children, again often not successfully, and very often parents are unwanted within the schools and school programs. That approach worked yesterday for all the reasons I have mentioned. It does not work today for many of the same reasons. Consequently, we work very differently in the school program that I am going to describe to you very briefly.

In 1968, our Yale Child Study Center team of five professionals, with me as director of the team, went into two inner city schools. These schools were 99% black, and more than 50% of the children were receiving Aid-for-Dependent-Families. In achievement level, these schools ranked thirty-second and thirty-third our of the thirty-three schools in the city. Children in these schools were nineteen and eighteen months behind in reading and math by the fourth grade. The attendance level and incidence of behavior problems were among the worst in the city. Today, in the school where we remained, the children are at or around grade level, and have been since 1978. In a follow-up study we found that children in the seventh grade last year who went through five years of our program, were two years ahead of their classmates in language arts, and one year ahead in mathematics. Their classmates were from the same commuity and matched for socio-economic level. This same trend is developing in the test school we have gone into. The attendance has been among the best in the city over the last seven years. Three times in the last five years these schools have been first in attendance, ahead of all the schools in the city with students of a higher socio-economic level, and among the top five in the last seven years. We have not had a serious behavior problem in these schools in over ten years now. We are beginning to move this model to other schools in clusters, throughout the city. What the study demonstrates is that low-income children can perform at grade level and can perform adequately both academically and socially.

In our approach, we start by recognizing that there have been tremendous changes in society. Without equal changes in the organization and management of the school, everyone in the system feels powerless. The principal could not affect the teachers, and the teachers were dissatisfied with the principal. The teachers were dissatisfied with the children; the parents were dissatisfied with the children; teachers, principals and everyone felt powerless. Everyone was in conflict with everyone else. We created a mechanism within the school program that was designed to restore in a very systematic

way the sense of community that existed in a natural way in the pre-nineteen-forties school. What we did was to create a governance and management body directed by the principal, but composed of teachers selected by the teacher group, parents selected by the parents' group, and aides selected by the aides' group. Our mental health team was represented on it as well. The governance and management body meet regularly to identify problems and opportunities in the school, in the areas of psychological climate, academic program, and staff development. As members identified problems and opportunities, they were able to develop resources and implement programs. They monitored those programs, changing and modifying them according to assessments, and gradually over time the school began to turn around.

Our parent program was also extremely important. We operated three different levels of parent programs. The parents worked with the teachers, the administrators, the principal and with our mental health team. Working together, all participants began to develop a sense of ownership of the program. There was consensus again about what was right, wrong, good and bad, how things should be done, and so on. The distrust and alienation between home and school, between people of different income groups, races, education and so on, were decreased because all were working together for a common cause. They developed mutual respect and admiration for each other. The parents were changed from being people who were often antagonistic and angry, alienated from the school, to people who did things in support of the school program. To give one example, we asked parents to assist teachers in the classroom. We started with one parent, and that parent only had to ask two friends to come out and they had a parent group. Having a parent group, they could then begin to do things together in support of the school program. Again, because they felt ownership and a commitment to the school, they would urge parents at a choir rehearsal and in a variety of other community situations to join their parent group. As a result parents turned out for Christmas and other programs. Whereas only fifteeen to thirty parents used to attend these programs, on one

occasion we had four hundred parents turn out at a school that only had three hundred and fifty kids. So, neighbors, friends, and everyone was there.

Our mental health team was involved in trying to change the psychological climate, but we also helped educators and parents understand and think about child development. We helped them think about relationship issues as the program developed in the school. Because there was a good climate and because school became a good place, many behavior problems were reduced. Children were interacting with people from their neighborhood. They saw them in the school, interacting with teachers in a positive way, resulting in reduced behavioral and acting-up problems in the school. The improved climate allowed staff to spend more time on tasks, such as staff development and tailoring to objectives and goals developed by earlier consensus. Therefore, it was a more effective school program in the long run.

In addition to viewing the simple raising of academic scores as the school mission, we included the further mission of making school a place which prepared people to function successfully in life. After things got better and the teachers began to believe in the children and believe in themselves, they asked "Why are our children, who appear to be as bright as everyone else, not achieving as well, or as successfully in the long run as children from middle income families?" We decided that growing up in an affluent or educated family enabled children to develop management and problem-solving skills, simply by being with their parents. What we had to do was to bring into the school the kind of experiences that would allow low income children to develop these same skills. Therefore, we developed a social skills curriculum for inner city children to institute social skills very much like the kind that existed in the pre-1940's society. Let me give you an example of what I mean. A young boy from the South was enrolled in our school by an aunt who wanted him to have a better education up North, and I put "better" in quotes. She pulled him out of that warm environment and brought him up to New Haven. On the way to work Monday morning, she dropped him off in school and kept

going. The principal took the youngster into the classroom. The teacher had had three transfers the week before, which is fairly common in inner city schools, and she managed, just through the toss of head, to say, "I do not need you, kid." The kid read the expression, looked at the class of strangers, kicked the teacher in the leg, and ran out. Now, we thought that this was a fairly healthy response, but of course the teacher did not agree. This was the typical kind of situation, under the old system, where a child would have been sent to the principal, scolded or punished, sent back to class and teased by his classmates. In response he would fight, be sent back to the principal, and go round in circles until he was labeled "disturbed." Once labelled "disturbed," he would be sent off to the psychiatrist to be fixed. Instead, we had a meeting and said "What do you think it would be like to be eight years of age and to have all of your support systems removed?" Well, immediately all of the teachers began to figure out what had to be done within the present system to make it possible for that child to make it: "Welcome Johnny" signs; assignment to the most successful youngster in the class; a whole variety of things. Then we did not stop with the child. We asked: "What is wrong with our system?" "What is wrong with the way we manage school?" "What is wrong with our transfer procedure?" Children should not be dumped into a strange school in a strange environment. So we developed an orientation program that enabled that child and other transferring students to make it. We now have a variety of similar programs all over the school. Many of the children had reasonable support from their families, despite the fact that they were poor or under stress. We changed the system so that it supported the development of these youngsters, allowed them to be successful. We are now beginning to get the evidence that many of the youngsters who were succesful in elementary school are successful in middle school as well. If we can get the money from the federal government, we will try to figure out whether they are successful in high school and in life. My point is that, by modifying the system, by understanding the impact of systems on youngsters, we can modify those systems so that children can develop well.

I feel that we can do the same in other developmental institutions that impact on the lives of children: the church, recreational institutions, television. Television is an institution in this society. There are many, many things that can be done if we recognize and understand the impact of social networks and institutions and make those social networks more sensitive to children. If we succeed, we can assist many more children and many more families in aiding their children, moving those children across the developmental pathways so that they can be successful as adults.

Let me turn, finally, to research. In my opinion, much of the research from academic institutions about what we need to do in the study of children is inappropriate and basically useless. This research was designed to meet our academic standards and needs rather than to assist the children and families that are in communities. Very often experimental and quantitative, it picks up little pieces of the system and measures them, as we might measure the hair on the tail of an elephant during a stampede. While this research might assist us in writing academic papers and advancing careers, it is basically useless in changing the experience of young people. I think that we need much more research that looks at intervention and participation beyond the individual person. We need participant-observer kinds of research, and even an ecological perspective, so that we begin to look at the interaction of all the systems that impact on families, to see how these in turn impact directly on the development of children within their families, in institutions, systems and social networks.

With that I will stop. I thank you very much.