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ABSTRACT

The 10 precepts offered in this paper in a spirit of tentativeness respond to the questions, "What ought society do when families crumble?" and "What ought government do when children are endangered?" The following ideas are discussed: (1) public policies and government programs should be differentiated according to the social capital accumulation in the lives of individual children and families; (2) a well-functioning society should speak the truth in public places about social norms that are known to be good for children and about the malignant consequences of deviating from those norms; (3) as a corollary, society members should understand and teach their fellow citizens that once the "normal" arrangements for child-rearing are ruptured, all alternatives are going to be worse; (4) antisocial behavior, not poverty, is the chief cause of the disintegrating family structure; (5) financial incentives cannot alter antisocial behavior and adults must be held legally accountable when they or their children deviate from behavioral norms; (6) social policy should be based on the principle that every child needs the loving care of one or more adults, but public policy cannot guarantee that every child will be loved; (7) private individuals and groups must implement social policy by addressing the moral, behavioral, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of children; (8) children should be removed from dysfunctional families and placed for adoption or in residential schools and orphanages; (9) means must be devised to build up "social capital" within the family and between parent and child; and (10) issues of "behavioral poverty" must be dealt with as firmly and with as much resolve as would be mobilized to meet a major menace to the national defense. (FMW)

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Foreword

This is Center of the American Experiment's first occasional paper, and it's superlative. Such is not immodesty on our part, only recognition that Dr. Chester E. Finn, Jr. is our country's most trenchant education analyst, and that "Ten Tentative Truths" is among his bravest best. He was asked to respond to two questions: "What ought society do when families crumble?" And, "What ought government do when children are endangered?"

Checker (as he is known) is also a friend of long-standing; likewise my former boss at the U.S. Department of Education, where he served as assistant secretary for research and improvement under William J. Bennett; as well as a director of American Experiment. He is currently professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University, and heads the Educational Excellence Network.

This paper is a longer version of his keynote address at our inaugural conference last April in St. Paul, "The New War on Poverty: Advancing *Forward* This Time." Here's a sample:

> We know that a well-functioning society must condemn behavior that results in people having children who are not prepared to be good parents. I find it astonishing that, in the face of that knowledge, today we seem to attach more opprobrium to dropping out of school, experimenting on a cat, or uttering nasty remarks on campus than we do to giving birth to what, not so many years ago, were called "illegitimate" children. I am making a point about morality, yes, but the larger point is about honesty: Children fare better in some circumstances than others, and no decent society will remain silent when it comes to pointing out which circumstances are which. We do this not because we enjoy sermonizing, but because if we really care about "at-risk" children we need to help people understand -- and internalize -- the behavioral norms that make for environments in which children thrive.

This is just the first of several publications and research projects emerging from our initial conference. A summary of the day will be released shortly, and we have commissioned a variety of writers to look at making a dent in poverty from various directions. Some of these papers will be released separately over the course of the year, but all will serve as grist for a larger report, in December, to coincide with the seating of a new Legislature and new (or old) governor in January.

We will follow much the same pattern when we hold our next major conference, "What Do We Do When School Reform Fails?" That session, November 16th, in Minneapolis, again will be followed by specific research that will bri.g detail to the discussion.

Well over 300 people attended American Experiment's first conference. For those of you who were there, thanks once more. For those who were not, we hope you can join us in the future. Please call 338-3605 to make sure you're on our mailing list.

And for getting us going, great thanks to Checker, whom Bill Bennett once called -- with his usual acuity -- a great national resource.

Mitchell B. Pearlstein
President

"Ten Tentative Truths"
Chester E. Finn, Jr.
Professor of Education and Public Policy
Vanderbilt University

Keynote Address
Center of the American Experiment
Inaugural Conference
"The New War on Poverty:
Advancing *Forward* This Time"
St. Paul, Minnesota
April 4, 1990

It is a personal honor to be invited to help open this conference, the organizational debut of Center of the American Experiment. The Center is a bold and much-needed venture, a serious effort to bring fresh ideas and alternative thinking to public-policy deliberations in Minnesota in particular and the Upper Midwest in general.

The Center has sometimes used the word "conservative" to describe its orientation and ideas, and I well understand that this has perplexed and even alarmed some people who assume that the phrase "conservative idea" is an oxymoron, "conservative intellectual" an aberration.

If anyone can show them otherwise, it will be my friend Mitch Pearlstein. But part of what he and the Center will demonstrate, I expect, is the failure of these tattered labels "liberal" and "conservative" to convey useful distinctions today. In my own field of education policy, for example, those who get called conservative are in fact deeply displeased with the status quo and accordingly spend most of their time agitating for revolutionary changes in well-established assumptions, in the rules by which the system operates, power relationships and governance arrangements. By contrast, those commonly dubbed liberals tend to be reasonably satisfied with the basic arrangements as they have evolved over time and to resist most strategies for non-incremental change.

Yes, there are exceptions on both sides and of course I oversimplify. But within the policy arenas I know best, there is no doubt in my mind that the central norms of the existing system tend to find their staunchest defenders among people who probably voted for Carter, Mondale and Dukakis in the last three presidential elections, while the farthest-reaching proposals for fundamental change are apt to be endorsed by people who most likely voted twice for Reagan and thrice for Bush. This suggests that the old designations no longer convey accurate signals. The new meanings are not entirely predictable, either. And that is reason enough to look to Center of the American Experiment for some surprises.

I hope there will be some at this conference. My own intention, as I venture into a set of issues on which I've had not a great deal to say in the past, is to be bold yet tentative: Bold in that I'm going to say things in direct language that some will think ought to be cushioned, shaded and made indirect. But tentative, too, in that these are provisional thoughts, open to revision and correction.

The questions Mitch posed for me and for the panel that follows are: "What ought society do when families crumble? What ought government do when children are endangered?"

These have been on my mind for some while, partly because within my own field we do not have satisfactory answers to them. In education, it's been evident for years that there are really two crises facing the nation, overlapping and yet separate. One is epitomized in the fact that the average child emerging from the average school -- a middle class youngster, more often than not -- has not learned nearly enough. That crisis I think we know how to deal with, even though we haven't dealt well with it yet, and were this an education conference I'd devote the rest of my time to explaining why our efforts to date have not gotten us very far and what we should be doing differently.

The second crisis is another matter altogether. It is the plight of what we used to call deprived or disadvantaged children, boys and girls who some call the children of the underclass or, more commonly today, "at-risk" children. I'm talking about kids who are at risk of a great deal more than not learning enough math, science, history and geography, though that remains part of their problem, too. They are at risk sometimes of life and limb, of body and soul, of spirit and morality, of abandonment and abuse, of drugs and poverty, of neglect and crime and prison. And of reproducing under circumstances that make it likely that their progeny, too, will be at risk in the same ways only perhaps worse.

This, clearly, is not just an education crisis, and it is not something that schools alone are capable of dealing with. We could begin with the most rudimentary facts of all, namely that a youngster reaching his 18th birthday has been alive for about 158,000 hours. If he has conscientiously attended school -- no absences -- for the customary 180 days each year for 12 years at the standard rate of 6 hours a day, he has spent almost 13,000 hours in school. If we add kindergarten it comes to about 14,000. That is equivalent to saying that the youngster has spent approximately 9 percent of his hours on Earth under the school roof. Which implies 91 percent spent elsewhere. Ponder what that means in terms of the leverage of the school -- the influence of the 9 percent -- if most of what is going on during that other 91 percent is at cross purposes to the values, lessons and actions of the school.

Assume that the 91 percent is not just bland or neutral. Assume it is negative and destructive. Assume that this child lives in poverty, with his mother and siblings but no father on the scene, in a tenement or housing project in a neighborhood infested with crack houses, crime and random violence, without much in the way of YMCA's or safe parks and supervised recreation opportunities. If you want to make the scenario bleaker, suppose that Mom -- a school dropout, perhaps a teenage mother, an unemployed welfare recipient -- is also an alcoholic or addict who does not or cannot get up in the morning to dress and feed the youngster and get him properly off to school, much less check to see if he's done his homework. Grimmer still, suppose she was addicted when this child was in utero, and that the youngster we see heading for school is part of the first generation of "crack babies" now making their way into kindergarten and first grade, with things all messed up inside their heads in ways we do not yet fully understand, messed up as a consequence of something that happened before they were even born.

Yes, I've been depicting a worst-case scenario. But I'm not fantasizing. Let me make this a little more real by quoting at some length an article in the Washington Times of March 27. The headline read "Storied welfare family is evicted." Bear with me:

> Jacqueline Williams, who moved into a sparkling D.C. row house two years ago with her 14 children and hope for a better future, fled through a back alley yesterday with all she had left: her husband and one child.
>
> The District yesterday condemned the Northeast house as unfit for habitation.
>
> When city officials moved the Williams family from a shelter into the house, it had been newly renovated. But family members virtually destroyed the interior.

An eviction crew hauled away their belongings; the city took away the last of the 11 children now in foster care, and the landlord boarded up the doors.

Mrs. Williams was left homeless again, marking a tragic end to one of the city's most intense efforts to help a poor family get back on its feet. . . . The owner of the house . . . has estimated the damage at $40,000. . . .

Mrs. Williams gained national notoriety in 1987 after Mayor Marion Barry met her and her children in a homeless shelter and said, "Why don't you stop having all those babies?" His remark sparked a national debate about how far government should go to help poor families. The mayor and Mrs. Williams ended up on Phil Donahue's TV show.

Faced with an embarrassing and costly dilemma, the city persuaded [the landlord] to let the Williams family move into the seven-bedroom row house. . . . The city donated furniture and set up social services to help the family.

But Mrs. Williams, who at one time seemed determined to become self-sufficient, began turning away social workers, city officials said. By last summer it was clear that the family was in financial trouble, despite various forms of public assistance. At various times both the water and gas were shut off because of non-payment. . . .

The city took the first step early this month. It removed 11 of the 12 children who were still living at the house with Mrs. Williams and her husband, Leroy. A court had declared that living conditions were dangerous and ordered the youngsters placed in the care of the city's child protective services agency. . . .

While this is clearly a distinctive -- and sensationalized -- case, try to keep it in mind as we move forward this morning.

Asked what to do about situations such as this, it takes no great effort to outline the familiar positions commonly associated with "left" and "right".

From liberals, we usually hear a stern demand for ever-more comprehensive public services of various kinds, ranging from income maintenance to pre-natal health care to family counseling to early childhood education to drug treatment. These and myriad other services are to be provided through public agencies by trained and licensed professionals using approved procedures that conform to government regulations. Coordination among service providers is deemed very important. The government making the regulations and the taxpayer footing the bill should be as far away as possible, which is to say federal is better than state is better than local. Private agencies may be involved in limited ways, so long as they conform to public standards and procedures. Private funds are welcome only so long as they do not displace public resources. It is best if they are used for pilot and demonstration purposes -- trip advancers, so to speak, for future journeys by government. To the extent that benefits and services are not universal, eligibility should be determined by a means test, i.e. income related. The poorer you are, the more you receive by way of assistance. In no case will any moral judgments be rendered. Your misfortunes, such as they are, result entirely from forces outside yourself and beyond your control.

The conservative version has certain ritualistic qualities, too. Government should stay out of people's lives as much as possible. If the family is deteriorating, it is at least partly the fault of unwise public policies. Never should such policy reward sloth or foster indolence. Immorality and dependency are apt to result from over-generous social programs, and the more the government does with, to and for children the more it interferes with the abilities of families to look after their own. Families are supreme, and wise policy will help parents to make the important decisions for their own children, including choosing among various providers of diverse services when such are needed. But instead of routinely putting the

kids under the care and supervision of others, economic strategies -- preferably via the tax code rather than handout programs -- should strengthen the family's ability to fend for itself, including having a parent stay home to look after young children directly. The alternatives to fending for oneself should be as unattractive as possible. And social policy should carry a fairly heavy load of moralizing, of messages of abstemiousness and self-discipline. Society didn't mess up your life, except perhaps by trying too hard to help. You mostly brought these tribulations upon yourself.

Occasionally these two world views converge in awkward and unhappy compromise. The Family Support Act of 1988 was such an amalgam. So, it appears, was the child care bill passed by the House of Representatives last week. The tension is such, however, that even where a statute appears to forge a compromise, the fights continue years later over every word in the regulations, over each request to waive any of the provisions of those regulations, and over every year's appropriation.

But these are not only tussles between lobbyists and interest groups, not just debates about this program or that project. The visible part of these icebergs comprise only small fractions of their total mass. Under the surface are huge issues involving our most profound beliefs about human nature, the essential elements of organized society, the nature of our polity and the shape of our culture.

These are weighty matters. They need periodic re-examination, and there is no reason to suppose that a diverse population of a quarter billion is going to agree on all of them.

I do not expect in this paper to resolve these disputes, to forge consensus about the proper role of society with respect to crumbling families or to craft the optimal policies for government vis-a-vis endangered children. I do, however, want to try out 10 precepts that might guide us in the quest for such policies, precepts anchored in my own understanding of human nature, the good society and the capabilities and frailties of government. I believe them all to be true but I offer them for discussion in a spirit of rare tentativeness.

First, in this domain it is a mistake to expect to treat everyone alike. The norms of uniformity and universality are out of place here. The crack baby of the slums is simply not the same as the healthy infant of the middle class. The child pedaling his tricycle through a safe and stable neighborhood is not the same as the child trying to fall asleep with gunfire crackling down the block. I disagree completely with experts such as Julia Wrigley, a UCLA sociologist who recently wrote in Educational Policy that policies and programs for children should be uniform and universal, blind to differing circumstances. Acceptance of the principle of differentiation, she says, results in lower standards for programs that serve the needy, segregation of children from one another, and stigmatizing of services and the people actually receiving them.

I respond that any policy or program designed to apply to all 50 million or so American youngsters is going to be unimaginably clumsy, unacceptably costly and probably ineffectual, far too intrusive for some children's needs, yet not nearly bold enough for others. Jacqueline Williams's children inhabit a very different set of circumstances than do the cardiologist's progeny in McLean. To pretend otherwise does none of them a favor. It is also contrary to common sense, a failing that surprisingly often turns out to be fatal for policy ideas.

Yet to agree with me about the need for tailored policies and differentiated programs is to adopt a standard that democratic government often cannot meet. We've hopelessly jumbled our notions of equality, turning a principle of governance into a concept of programmatic

entitlement. We can get away with differentiating by income -- though even this sometimes has perverse consequences. I am talking about something harder: Differentiating according to what, echoing James Coleman, we can call the social capital accumulation in the lives of individual children and families. Because we find this so difficult to do in public policies and government programs, be warned that agreeing with me on this one portends a great deal of private sector involvement of various kinds in society's response to children's varying circumstances.

Second, we must steel ourselves to speak the truth in public places about social norms that we know to be good for children and about the malign consequences of deviating from those norms. This, too, is something government -- and those in elective office -- find nearly impossible to do. When public officials utter unwelcome truths, we tend to mock them and not to re-elect them. For this kind of honesty, we probably need to turn instead to religious authorities, business leaders, educators, columnists, even sports figures and television personalities.

They should, for example, speak what everyone knows to be the truth about families and parenting, politically ticklish though it has become. With rare exceptions -- the truth, remember? -- two-parent families are good for children, one-parent families are bad, zero-parent families are horrible. This is not something to be ashamed of. It is the product of the species' experience in billions of instances spanning the millenia. Nor is it the only wisdom we've acquired. We know, too, that with rare exceptions, a couple that has children must remain a couple if the children are to be well-served. We know that people who are not married -- or joined in some other stable fashion -- should not have children.

We know that a well-functioning society must condemn behavior that results in people having children who are not prepared to be good parents. I find it astonishing that, in the face of that knowledge, today we seem to attach more opprobrium to dropping out of school, experimenting on a cat, or uttering nasty remarks on campus than we do to giving birth to what, not so many years ago, were called "illegitimate" children. I am making a point about morality, yes, but the larger point is about honesty: Children fare better in some circumstances than others, and no decent society will remain silent when it comes to pointing out which circumstances are which. We do this not because we enjoy sermonizing, but because if we really care about "at-risk" children we need to help people understand -- and internalize -- the behavioral norms that make for environments in which children thrive.

Third, really a corollary of the second, we need to understand, and to teach our fellow citizens, that once the "normal" arrangements for child-rearing are ruptured -- using "normal" here in the sense of conforming to the norms I've just alluded to -- all the alternatives are going to be worse. There are some exceptions, such as the happy adoption that takes a child from bad circumstances into a loving family. Basically, however, we must acknowledge that child-rearing arrangements not based on a decently functioning family are inferior to arrangements that are based on such a family. It's like a heart transplant. You may live for a while, and you may be better off than when your own heart was failing, but you are always worse off than people with healthy hearts that came into the world with them.

To acknowledge this is not enough. We need to teach it, to preach it, to persuade people of it. It's a whole lot more important to the society's future than stopping smoking or lowering cholesterol levels or recycling aluminum cans.

Fourth, we are not talking mainly, or even primarily, about poverty of the sort that is measured in dollars and dealt with via income strategies or employment programs. Poverty is certainly present in many cases of deteriorating (or unformed) families and endangered children, but it is seldom the major factor. What we are talking about, above all, is what Senator Daniel P. Moynihan terms "the importance of behavior". In a lecture delivered a year ago at Brown University and subsequently published in The Public Interest under the title "Toward a Post-Industrial Social Policy," Moynihan has this to say of anti-poverty efforts of the past:

> [The effort] was most successful -- was hugely successful -- where we simply transferred income and services to a stable, settled group like the elderly. It had little success -- if you like, it failed -- where poverty stemmed from social behavior. Indeed, it could not have succeeded there because of a massive denial that a problem really existed. . . .
>
> It is obvious that American society rewards traditional family patterns, and punishes those that in the past would have been called deviant. What is less obvious is why this fact is so obscure to so many. The disjunction between our norms and our behavior is dysfunctional in the extreme.

But it is not just family structure. "Substance abuse," Moynihan points out, "is equally dysfunctional." We could say the same of gang warfare, mass rapes of innocent joggers and cyclists, and the proliferation of automatic weapons in city streets: Examples of anti-social behavior that bespeaks impoverishment more of the soul than the pocketbook, desolation of the value structure of civil and free society, erosion around the edges of the singular characteristics that led our kind to be called "human".

Fifth, economic measures may deal with dollar poverty, but economic incentives cannot be counted upon to alter anti-social behavior. Income transfer programs will not win any new war on what we may term "behavioral poverty." "A tough-minded approach to post-industrial social issues," Moynihan concludes his essay, "may lead to the coming of age of American social policy."

Here, it seems to me, is where many conservative commentators on "family policy" sometimes verge on naive utopianism. I just don't see expansions of the earned income tax credit, or whatever, making people significantly less apt to shoot one another with assault rifles. We also have evidence that economic welfare strategies can induce unfortunate consequences. If I may quote two of the "laws of social programs" from Charles Murray's seminal book, Losing Ground, the "law of unintended rewards" holds that, "Any social transfer increases the net value of being in the condition that prompted the transfer." The "law of net harm" asserts that, "the less likely it is that the unwanted behavior will change voluntarily, the more likely it is that a program to induce change will cause net harm."

My main point here, however, is simply that we cannot count on conventional welfare-type programs, grounded in an economic conception of poverty, to set matters right when the matters in question are essentially behavioral. Hence I believe we need to promulgate -- and then enforce -- a doctrine of accountability for parents as well as for their children.

We are accustomed to talking about accountability for schools and other providers of public services. I suggest that we need to devise systems of private accountability, as well. I will resist a full discourse on the subject, but would point out that any real accountability system includes consequences, both the happy, welcome kind and the other kind. Accountability is rarely welcomed by those unaccustomed to it. For its consequences are not just idle talk.

We need to be ready to impose real, material consequences on adults when they or their children deviate from behavioral norms.

This doesn't mean being stupid about it. There are only a few situations, for example, in which a child is well-served by clapping his parent in jail. But the principle of "parent liability" must include the willingness of the larger society to inconvenience people in ways they do not welcome. In Wisconsin, welfare benefits for the parent are slashed when the child is truant from school. The California penal code allows prosecutors to seek fines from parents who fail to exercise "reasonable care, supervision, protection and control over their minor child." A local ordinance in Arkansas also provides for a fine of up to $500 (and jail for up to 30 days) for parents whose children violate the town's curfew. In February, a Michigan judge ordered a woman accused of smoking crack while pregnant to be tried on child abuse and drug delivery charges. The Colorado Legislature has before it a bill to make the parents of juvenile delinquents responsible for their treatment and detention costs.

The American Civil Liberties Union does not like such measures. Most faculty members in social work schools deplore them. And we should not look for applause from those affected by them. I'm not going to try here to evaluate the merit of individual measures of this kind. I merely assert that the doctrine of parental accountability for their own and their children's behavior means that we must be prepared to think along these lines.

Sixth, we should embrace as a guiding principle of social policy Urie Bronfenbrenner's proposition that "In order to develop, a child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults in care and joint activity with the child." When asked to restate what he meant by "irrational involvement," he said "Somebody has got to be crazy about that kid!" This I think we all know to be true. But do we also understand that public policy cannot vouchsafe love? The most it usually can do is to see that the corporeal and cognitive needs of the child are met. Seldom can government fill spiritual and emotional voids. Once in a while, it can create conditions in which something good happens. But we dare not count on it.

Seventh, if government cannot furnish a suitable shepherd for the lamb, we must ask ourselves through what other mechanisms society may be able to. Our social policy should not be equated to our public policy. As we look beyond government, we turn -- in addition to extended families, kindly neighbors and individual benefactors -- to what have been termed mediating structures, voluntary associations, small platoons, even "points of light." We have a great many of them in this country, and it's one of our abiding societal strengths. But they haven't always had a happy marriage to our public norms. We get skittish when these other providers of services have religious ties, for example, when they give priority to people of their own race, ethnic group or creed, when they impose entrance requirements or fees or make people wear uniforms or spell out moral codes. We tease people for being "Boy Scouts" even though the scout virtues -- trustworthy, loyal, obedient, etc. -- are reasonable facsimiles of the kind of behavior we need many more people to manifest. We also worry about unevenness in the services such organizations render and inconsistency in the treatments they provide.

But let me say it again: If we are serious about finding shepherds to deal with the moral, behavioral, spiritual and emotional dimensions of all our children, we cannot limit ourselves to government. And we cannot confine ourselves within the boundaries of what is conventionally thought reasonable for public employees to do. It is no coincidence that when a group of businesses opened a free private school in Chicago designed to be a model for effective education of disadvantaged children, one of the first decisions they and the

new principal made was that teachers in this school will routinely make home visits. The Washington Post recently reported on an elementary school in Prince William County, Virginia, where an eighth-grade teacher concluded that some of her students needed a strong black male role model and proceeded to bring her own husband to school -- and not just once -- to work with them. This, I dare say, is not covered in the union contract for teachers in that school system. The teacher received no additional compensation for doing it. But it was a wonderful thing to do.

Eighth, while it is usually best to improve the situation within a child's own family, to buttress his natural parents in whatever ways we can, from parent-education programs to church-basement support groups to job-training programs, I believe we are going to have to be prepared more frequently to remove children from their homes and send them into other settings where, in Bronfenbrenner's phrase, someone will be crazy about them. When a family is in a condition of melt-down, our priority must be to help the children. Parents do not always know best, and their interest is not always foremost. Here I disagree with many conservatives. But where I dispute many liberals is that I have little faith in temporary, "foster care" situations, where the child stays for a time until -- it is hoped -- his family gets straightened out. Too many foster situations turn out to be unsatisfactory for too many children. Adoption is in many cases to be preferred. And so are the terrific residential schools and orphanages such as Boys Town in Nebraska, the Milton S. Hershey School in Pennsylvania and the Glen Mills Schools, also in Pennsylvania.

I'm not talking Dickensian conditions. I'm talking about environments that, whether one is looking at physical safety, moral climate, the presence of admirable and caring adults, or the effectiveness of the education and training offered, are vastly more salubrious than those in the child's own home, school and neighborhood. At the Hershey school, it may be noted, most of the 1,150 youngsters in residence today are not real orphans. They have at least one living parent. They are, in the phrase of a Wall Street Journal reporter who recently profiled the school, the "products of a different sort of calamity." Their parents cannot or will not take decent care of them.

No, I do not want to let parents off the hook. Yes, part of me rebels at taking children away from their parents -- or letting parents transfer their child-rearing responsibilities to the paid staff of schools like this. It's vastly expensive, too, in the neighborhood of $30,000 per child per year. But, rememember, we need someone to "be crazy about" those boys and girls.

Ninth, as one of our foremost policy objectives, we should be devising means to generate and accumulate what James Coleman has termed "social capital" everywhere it is in short supply. This means, above all, building it up within the family and between parent and child. For any who may be unfamiliar with the concept, allow me to quote from a recent paper by Coleman:

> While physical or financial capital exists wholly in tangible resources, and human capital is a property of individual persons, social capital exists in the relations between persons.
>
> Social capital can be of several sorts, serving different purposes. If a child trusts an adult, whether a parent or a member of the community, and the adult is trustworthy this relation is a resource on which the child can draw when in difficulties. . . . If the relations in a community are strong enough to establish norms about the behavior of children and youth and to impose effective sanctions

toward their observance, this constitutes a resource for children, protecting them from the predations of peers, and a resource for parents to aid in shaping the habits of their children. These are two forms of social capital; more generally, social capital held by a person lies in the strength of social relations that make available to the person the resources of others.

How can social capital be generated where it does not naturally occur? That ought to be one of our premier policy questions of the 1990's. Coleman himself offers some clues. He suggests, for example, a series of steps that schools can take to help parents learn better how to help their children in the pursuit of education, and a set of actions that parents in a neighborhood or even a workplace can take in collaboration with each other to increase the net social capital available to their children. I will not go down his list. He has a major book just out. My point here is straighforward: We have purposeful policy strategies for boosting investment capital, human capital, and suchlike. We need the same for social capital.

Tenth, and finally, we need to treat these matters as we would a national defense crisis, not just as matters that vex individuals. We are dealing with threats to the commonweal, to the society itself. When significant numbers of five-year olds enter school with their brains messed up, when law-abiding people fear walking down the street at night, when youngsters may be struck down by random gunfire outside their homes or in the school's playground, and when packs of marauding teenagers go "wilding" in the park, it is no exaggeration to say we are facing a national emergency, different in kind but, perhaps, not in degree from threats posed by hostile nations. If, in the words of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, an unfriendly foreign power had done this to us we would have deemed it an act of war.

We should, therefore, think about mobilizing to deal with it as we would a major menace to our national defense. We should expect to submit ourselves to the organizational arrangements, the long-term resolve, the bold changes in familiar assumptions and practices, the inconveniences and perhaps even the inhibitions that we associate with answering grave threats to the nation's well-being. My purpose is not to be melodramatic or to advocate some sort of police state. It is to say that if we have any serious expectation of winning this new war on behavioral poverty, we're going to need not only the imagination to devise strategies suited to victory but also the resolve to see them through.