

Dr. Lucien Lombardo's Childhood Social Map

These notes are about experiences and connections from my childhood. They are provided to students to in my "Violence in the World of Children" to give them some examples to work from as they work on an assignment asking them to describe and analyze their social maps and the social maps of someone 20 years different in age. This exercise lets them see how social maps shape opportunities and challenges for individuals and cohorts of children living at different times and in different places. This exercise also helps students see in the context of two lives how the forces in families, schools, neighborhoods, communities, states and nations that shape an individual's social map are them shaped by larger forces in the culture, economy, politics and technology.

From these notes I would write a paper analyzing and integrating these various experiences as they shaped my social map from my childhood to adulthood. The opportunities these experiences presented and the challenges I had to overcome, keeping them in context of place and time. What is presented below is not the paper, just notes to start the paper.

As you prepare to write your first assignment you should make some notes to yourself about your own social map as a child and then interview someone 20 years different in age with whom to compare your experiences.

Here's an example of what the notes might look like from Dr. Lombardo's childhood in Auburn, NY a town of 35,000 in Central New York in the late 1940's and 1950's.

FAMILY:

Positive:

I lived in the same house all my life. Family still lives there. Mother lived within four houses of the house she was born in. Lots of stability present. Lots of extended family, importance of learning from older generations, great grand parents, grand parents, uncles, aunts, all involved in child raising;

importance of family traditions; holiday celebrations; adults "acting childish"; playing games and tricks on kids; did a lot of travel as family; older brother as example; mixture of cultures (Polish and Italian) value both, though closer to Polish traditions because lived in Polish neighborhood (the town was divided into ethnic neighborhoods); attended the Polish church, went to the Catholic grammar school that had Polish nuns for teachers; we all contributed to family tasks, gardening, picking fruits and vegetables and "canning" preserves; caring for lawn; playing catch with father and mother and brothers; taking day trips (some two days); visits to relatives; time listening to stories of parents and uncles and aunts of growing up "in the old days"; being read stories about children and tough times (the little match girl who sold matches on the street at Christmas time and was made sick by the cold); being left alone to figure out how to amuse myself; watching television with family; seeing parents enjoyment at certain shows; seeing family members in the characters; going to watch father bowl and keeping score for the adults ; going to political "rallies" with grandfather and mother; renting cottage on the lake; doing wood working with father; visiting grandfather's office; going shopping down town, at local stores where parents know the shop owners; watching older and younger brothers play sports (seeing parents pride); father's sickness and handling the fears associated with problems; mother's sister and her husband live upstairs; when they moved mother's sister-in-law's family lived there. Grand father comes to live with us. Mother home (mother worker sometimes), father worked.

Negative:

Lots of drinking by some relatives (not immediate family) to me it seemed to give certain persons character (they were 'characters', as I and they got older, it got sadder; conflict over piano lessons and/or sports; feeling of being "poor" but fun in the struggle to deal with it (Little Rascals, Bowery Boys as models); hearing discussions of money problems; watching the 'budget' process of envelopes; 25 cents a day to run the refrigerator and clothes washer and dryer; listening to WWII army buddy stories when father's army buddies visited once in a while;



Peer group:

Friends in the neighborhood; schools mates and friends from church, sports were all the same; freedom to roam our neighborhood and spend time without adult supervision; playgrounds and minor league baseball park within 3 blocks of home; hours spent that these places. Polish Home, Falcons (ethnic athletic and social clubs); summer camp, playgrounds and activities; school yard and activities; generally running around the community on our own; collecting returnable soft drink bottles to collect the deposit to make some money; paper drives; staging shows and parades; exploring near by woods; running through fields; figuring things out together; (hiding things from our parents--smoking but getting caught); We had 'gangs': more imaginary than actual. At one time we gave ourselves names: rebels, anti-rebels, neutrals (bicycle gangs); sports teams, CYO (Catholic Youth Organization basketball leagues and sports practice from 3rd grade on, interactions with kids from other Catholic schools, churches was a major deal because we never had to interact with people outside of our school, church, neighborhood.



Trauma of changing barbers as a teenager; loyalty was important and changing barbers violated that principle.

An important component of my social map was that many areas of family, peer group, school, religion, politics, and community merge in terms of the people with whom children interacted (articulation). We were always with the same groups. We did a wide variety of activities together and had a strong support system.

Leaving the parochial school for the community high school was quite a change. All of the things that were connected in the elementary school days started to break down as I got into high school (the articulations break down a little). Religion separated people, social clubs separated people (each ethnic group had its own), ethnic connections not as strong in the broader

community; began interactions outside of the grammar school connections. Fortunately sports teams provided a way of connecting to the larger town community (getting beyond neighborhood). Playing for high school teams in the same community where my father had played and had a positive reputation provided a set of links that helped the transition. In addition, when I started attending high school, I had many of the same teachers my parents had. The stability in the small community was an important part of life.

SCHOOL:

From age 5-13 (K – 8th grade) went to parochial or Catholic school; nuns; priests; succeeding; broadening horizons; helping others through collections (donated money) for Catholic Missions for the poor in different countries around the world ; march-of-dimes; school nurse; altar-boys; funerals; weddings; seeing humanness of priests; hearing them curse at us, seeing them be late for services, watching them drink alcohol. Once I graduated from the parochial school, it was on to high school and associations with kids of many different religions and backgrounds. My older brother was a good athlete and my parents had a very positive history in the high school my mother academically and my father as an athlete. So our family was pretty well known. I had some of the same teachers my parents had and some of the same principles. Many of my teachers were from my parents' generation and knew them as well. This made the transition easier. One of my favorite classes was Latin. I felt I had a head start, because as mass servers (alter-boys) in out Catholic church we had to learn Latin, so any words and the structure of Latin was something I was familiar with. I also participated in athletics (football, basketball and track) which was just sort of expected. It was a follow-up from the Catholic Youth Organizations (CYO) basketball and sports leagues from elementary school.



Negative:

Watching nun "box" Timmy's ears; "watching nun's embarrass girls in the class about their dresses (7th and 8th grades) (this actually came up at the 50th reunion of our 8th grade graduating class in 2009); being hit with an umbrella by nun. New sets of values and confusions associated with the diversity of high

school students not found in earlier grades in Catholic School.

COMMUNITY:

Negative

Ethnic divisions, town was divided into ethnic neighborhoods. Most of my father's family lived 4 blocks away (in the Italian neighborhood) which we didn't go to very often by ourselves. Because we had everything we needed in our neighborhood we felt some isolation from community at large. As grand children of Polish and Italian immigrants (parents were first generation born in US) put down because of ethnicity by others whose families had come to the town generations before (usually Irish and English – protestant families); Even within my two ethnic communities (Polish and Italian) there were problems because my parents' marriage was considered a mixed- marriage.



Links to Economy: At the time, we hustled for \$. Collected newspapers for which a local scrap yard would pay us a few cents a pound; shoveled sidewalks for neighbors and relatives (I always tried to do my grandfather's



before the snow melted – he was a good sport and would always give me 25 cents), emptied wastebaskets; collected soft drink bottles and got a deposit (2 cents a piece) from the stores; spent long nights at the local baseball park (we had a minor league team in our town). I and a friend were often bat -boy for the visiting team; we also sold programs at the ball park and got paid a couple of dollars; I was a 'pin-boy' at bowling center (before pins were set by machines people (usually kids) had to reset the pins and send the bowling ball back. Used money earned for personal treats, bowling, presents for family members' birthdays. My father had several different jobs when I was really young, but in the mid-1950's has started work for the US Post Office as a letter carrier and there was then much more stability in his work. Before my brothers and I came along, my mother worked as a book keeper and secretary. However with children she became a stay at home mom, the economy and my father's postal job allowed for that.

Media:

Television was just coming along when I was young. Before we had a TV in the early 1950's we listened to lots of radio shows. There were many drama and police shows, early morning talk and entertainment shows, and comedy and western radio shows. We became connected to the celebrities and comfortable with their friendly ways of connecting with their audiences. Later many of these same shows came to television. There were also many shows in early TV dealing with the most recent war (WWII) and showing battle scenes and how important the war was. People were occasionally shot and killed in Westerns and police shows, but we never saw the impact of violence, no blood, busted or blown apart bodies in entertainment. More good guys and bad guys and moral lessons since the good guys never seemed to get hurt and they always won. Dramatic television shows were more like dramatic plays on stage. Action was at a minimum and dialogue and characters were more important. These shows taught lots about language and people and the problems people faced and coped with in society, just as plays performed in theaters did. Afterschool hours on TV had shows designed for children and radio in the mid-1950's turned to TOP FORTY as Rock and Roll and teen-age oriented music got its start.