

The Role of the Family

Science is the great antidote to the poison of
enthusiasm and superstition.

ADAM SMITH,
Wealth of Nations

I HAVE SAID LITTLE about the influence of experience on the child, especially the consequences of parental behavior. The most important reason for this omission is that the effects of most experiences are not fixed but depend upon the child's interpretation. And the interpretation will vary with the child's cognitive maturity, expectations, beliefs, and momentary feeling state. Seven-year-old boys who are part of a small isolated culture in the highlands of New Guinea perform fellatio regularly on older adolescent males for about a half-dozen years; but this behavior is interpreted as part of a secret, sacred ritual that is necessary if the boy is to assume the adult male role and successfully impregnate a wife (Herd 1981). If an American boy performed fellatio on several older boys for a half-dozen years, he would regard himself as homosexual and possess a fragile, rather than a substantial, sense of his maleness.

Children growing up in Brahmin families in the temple town of Bhubaneswar in India hear their mothers exclaim each month, "Don't touch me, don't touch me, I'm polluted." These children

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do not feel rejected or unloved, because they know this command is a regular event that occurs during the mother's menstrual period (Shweder in press). And a small proportion of American children, whose affluent parents shower them with affection and gifts out of a desire to create in them feelings of confidence and self-worth, become apathetic, depressed adolescents because they do not believe they deserve such continuous privilege.

As these examples make clear, the child's personal interpretation of experience, not the event recorded by camera or observer, is the essential basis for the formation of and change in beliefs, wishes, and actions. However, the psychologist can only guess at these interpretations, and the preoccupations and values of the culture in which the scholar works influence these guesses in a major way. For example, Erasmus (1530), who believed the child's appearance reflected his character, told parents to train the child to hold his body in a controlled composure—no frowning of brows, sagging of cheek, or biting of the lip, and especially no laughter without a very good cause.

Educated citizens in early sixteenth-century London, who were disturbed by the high rate of crime, begging, and vagrancy among children of the poor, blamed the loss of a parent, living with lazy parents, being one of many children, or a mental or physical handicap. These diagnoses ignored the possible influence of genetics, parental love, or social conditions existing outside the home. Two centuries later, a comparable group of English citizens concerned with identical social problems, but still without any sound facts, emphasized the influence of the love relation between mother and child (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969 and 1973).

Many contemporary essays on the influence of family experience also originate in hunches, few of which are firmly supported by evidence. This is not surprising; the first empirical study to appear in a major American journal that attempted to relate family factors to a characteristic in the child was published less than sixty years ago in *The Pedagogical Seminary* (Sutherland 1930). The fact that a hunch about the role of family originates in a society's folk premisses about human nature does not mean that it is incorrect. Eighteenth-century French physicians believed that a nursing mother should bathe the baby regularly and not drink too much wine—suggestions that have been validated by modern medicine. But those same doctors also believed—mistakenly, I suppose—that

could baths will ensure a tough character in the older child. The absence of conclusive evidence means that each theorist must be continually sensitive to the danger of trusting his or her hunches too completely, for at different times during the last few centuries of European and American history, the child has been seen as inherently evil, or as a blank tablet with no special predispositions, or, currently, as a reservoir of genetically determined psychological qualities. Modern Western society follows Rousseau in assuming that the infant is prepared to attach herself to her caregiver and to prefer love to hate, mastery to cooperation, autonomy to interdependence, personal freedom to bonds of obligation, and trust to suspicion. It is assumed that if the child develops the qualities implied by the undesirable members of those pairs, the practices of the family during the early years—especially parental neglect, indifference, restriction, and absence of joyful and playful interaction—are the major culprits.

I cannot escape these beliefs which are so thoroughly threaded through the culture in which I was raised and trained. But having made that declaration, I believe it is useful to rely on selected elements in popular theory, on the few trustworthy facts, and on intuition in considering the family experiences that create different types of children, even if my suggestions are more valid for American youngsters than for those growing up in other cultures.

The Child in the American Family

Among the nomadic Hebrews who herded sheep in the Sinai desert three thousand years ago, and for many contemporary African and Latin American communities, the basic social unit is composed of genetically related adults and children living together in a group to which loyalty is given and from which identity is derived. The fate of each person rests with the vitality, reputation, and success of the kinship group. Hence, the conception of self is dependent on the resources, status, and socially perceived qualities of the family group. Although the nuclear family existed in some early societies, it has replaced the larger kin group in many places and is, at the moment, the most common social unit for most of the world's

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communities. The future of the children in these societies is determined almost completely by each family's status, wealth, resources, and practices.

But in the modern Western world, the individual, not the family, is slowly becoming the basic unit. The high divorce rate, the large number of single-parent families, and the public's willingness to work toward a more egalitarian society through interventions that abrogate the family's power make the person the central entity in the eyes of the law, the school, and the self. Additionally, early socialization practices that promote autonomy, and individual, rather than group, effort and responsibility, lead many adolescents to conclude that their future mood and material success depend upon their personal abilities and motivation. A divorced woman with only a high school education who was living with her three-year-old, said, "I must develop myself, I can't be dependent on anyone but me." This attitude may be historically unique. Although historians argue about the form of the earliest families and when the nuclear structure emerged, no anthropologist or historian has ever suggested that the majority of adults living in older societies believed that their survival, personal reputation, and material success did not depend primarily on their family of rearing. Thus, each American adult must acquire a special state of mind which most families, consciously or unconsciously, train for from the earliest months of life. Few citizens of ancient Athens, Babylon, or Jerusalem, or of modern Tokyo, Jakarta, or Beijing (Peking) would understand this attitude. Thus, some of the qualities of the modern Western family are specific to this historical era.

A second significant characteristic of contemporary Western society is the dignity and respect awarded to women. Although women had high status in a few Polynesian societies and in polyandrous groups, for most cultures about which we have knowledge women had far less power than men, achieved status through marriage rather than through their own efforts, and were punished more severely than men for illicit sexuality. In some communities of Indians in Northwest Guatemala, for example, the most insulting accusation one man can level at another is to call him a woman.

The rise of women's status in Europe and North America over the past four centuries has been associated with an increasingly benevolent evaluation of romantic love. Carl Degler writes, "The growing acceptance of affection as the primary ground for family

formation was an important stage in the evolution of women's place within the family and in our understanding of how the family has altered over time" (1980, p. 18). Although sexuality has never been unimportant in any culture, and is central to the romantic literature of the Middle East, romantic love is today regarded not just as a source of pleasure, but as an experience of great beauty and a major basis for feelings of vitality and self-enhancement.

Love is an intimate, spiritual experience in a world perceived to be impersonal and amoral. The deep anger toward pornography held by many Americans is based, in part, on the threat pornography poses to the idea of faithful romantic love, as distinct from sexual gratification. A love relation is regarded as such a vital part of adult life that families try to prepare their children for that function in ways that some cultures would not understand. Parents arrange parties for young children with boys and girls present, begin explanations of reproduction by noting how much the mother and father love each other, and accept romantic attraction as the most reasonable basis for marital choice, despite differences in status, ethnicity, wealth, and religion.

A third relatively distinct quality of our society is its celebration of the freedom and selfhood of children. Although this attitude was enhanced in seventeenth-century Europe, it has become more pervasive with time. All societies, ancient and modern, love and value children, even though eleventh-century European fathers were not severely criticized for killing their newborn infant if he or she failed the test of fearfulness and cried after being put on a high branch of a tree (Queen, Haberstein, and Adams 1961). The relation of child to parent in most societies is one of loyalty and obligation. In Chinese families, filial love defines the primary bond. The special ingredient in the American form of child-centeredness is its one-sidedness. Parents are supposed to sacrifice for their children, while the children are expected to grow increasingly independent of their parents. For many middle-class families, the child is a beautiful young bird to be cared for until it is ready to fly free in the forest.

Finally, as I noted in chapter 4, in contrast to many, but not all, contemporary societies, Americans place greater value on sincerity and personal honesty than on social harmony. But in many cultures—Java, Japan, and China, for example—the importance of maintaining harmonious social relationships, and of adopting a

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posture of respect for the feelings of elders and of authority, demands that each person not only suppress anger but, in addition, be ready to withhold complete honesty about personal feelings in order to avoid hurting another. This pragmatic view of honesty is regarded as a quality characteristic of the most mature adult and is not given the derogatory labels of insincerity or hypocrisy. The West derides the person who does not say what she thinks, who does not "call a spade a spade." People who are polite to someone whom they dislike, offer tea and cakes to a gossipy neighbor, and tell an incompetent employer how skilled he is are less admirable than those who "speak their mind." These "white lies" are supposed to reflect fear, timidity, and obsequiousness. But what American parents regard as obsequiousness, citizens of Java and Japan regard as appropriate respect.

With the exception of the celebration of romantic love, these qualities of modern American life award exaggerated value to the individual and less significance to the social groups in which each person acts.

In American families, the primary loyalty is to self—its values, autonomy, pleasure, virtue, and actualization. Most parents accept this criterion for maturity and try to arrange experiences that will make it easier for their children to attain this ideal. Some societies tip the other way. In a popular book for parents written about twenty years before China became the People's Republic, the psychologist Chen Hegin listed the seven inborn qualities of children that parents should promote: active play, imitation of others, curiosity, mastery, mutually binding social relationships, pleasure in the outdoors, and seeking the praise of others (Chen 1925). Three of these ideals stress the social, not the individualistic, urges of children. I suspect that Professor Chen would have had some difficulty understanding John Dewey who wrote, at about the same time, that what men have esteemed and fought for is the "ability to carry out plans, the absence of cramping and thwarting obstacles, . . . the slave is the man who executes the wish of others" (1922, p. 304).

THEORIES OF AMERICAN PARENTS

During each phase of the child's development, different problems become foci for parental concern and subsequent action. Dur-

ing the first year, irritability, illness, sleeplessness, and excessive fear of the strange dominate the consciousness of American parents and guide their regimen of care. During the second year, when the child has become both mobile and self-aware, the possibility that the child will hurt himself or others, destroy property, or be shy with peers replaces the earlier worries. By the third year, disobedience, aggression, incomplete toilet training, an inability to play cooperatively with others, and a delayed growth of verbal skills ascend in the hierarchy of preoccupations. Because each of these sources of uncertainty elicits a different pattern of corrective action, the parents' behavior is controlled in an important way by the inevitable products of the child's growth.

When the child's profile begins to deviate from the parents' idea of what it should be, American parents typically call upon one or more of four kinds of explanation. Some parents believe that the child's behavior results from temperamental characteristics inherent in the child's biology and is, therefore, beyond the control of both child and parent, although destined to vanish with time. The mother of an extremely timid, inhibited three-year-old girl told an interviewer, "She was a difficult baby from the beginning, so fussy, with an ungodly scream. She was born a discontent baby. Now she tests a lot and brings out unkindness in me. She is defiant, so strong-willed that I don't think there is anything I can do to change her." Other mothers see the dominant mood of their children as a phase in the universal script for development. The mother of a three-year-old describes her son's first three years:

You never saw a better baby... he cooed, he never fussed, he was bright, alert—he was terrific and good-natured... Then around a year and a half he started to get a mind of his own—able to talk back. I remember fifteen to eighteen months as being a kind of cut-off period in his behavior. He went from being completely good-natured to being ornery at times... By his third year sometimes I'd want to kill him, he really gets so ornery."

A smaller group of parents assume complete responsibility for their child's profile, believing that they have done something to cause the problem behavior. If the child's behavior does not improve, their initial guilt can turn to anger. Other parents attribute most of the child's behavior to the power of environmental forces

over which they have little or no control—the birth of a sibling, a small apartment without a backyard, marital strife, other children in the neighborhood or nursery school, and, always, financial stress. The smallest group of parents ascribe malevolent intention to the child, attributing motives to the child that she is not yet capable of possessing. This imputation is usually accompanied by hostility toward the child. Although well-educated mothers are a little less likely to ascribe anger and malevolent intent to their young child, no parent is immune from this temptation. Generally, parents who are secure about their own qualities tend to be accepting of the child's deviations. Parents who are threatened by their own personal failures are likely to interpret extreme disobedience as a reflection of the child's willful hostility.

The choice of techniques to keep the child on course depends on the parents' explanation of the deviation and on the qualities they regard as most important for the child to acquire. Each parent holds a template for a small set of developing characteristics that represents their ideal form, the time each should appear, and what to do if its arrival is delayed. The mother of a timid three-year-old, who was concerned that her son was being victimized by peers, told an interviewer:

I tell him that you don't hit first, but if somebody hits him, I want him to hit back. It's too easy for him to become a victim. He tends to get hit and be upset and cry. I'm trying to back off, because I generally pick him up and hug him. But now I tell him, he ought to hit them back if they hit him. That's the only way he's going to learn. I hate the whole idea of being less cuddly with him, but you can't have your child be a victim, especially when they go to school.

This mother began to inhibit some of the actions that had flowed spontaneously from her immediate feelings, and to substitute behavior that was based on her theory of how to help her child's future adjustment.

A mother who saw her three-year-old girl as extraordinarily sensitive to reprimand and too obedient told the daughter she was not going to punish her any more, in the hope that, by lifting the fear of disapproval, the girl would become a little more rebellious. Parental socialization practices are under the stewardship of two complementary influences. One is the child's changing surface of

behavior, which is controlled partly by maturation, partly by the child's temperament, and partly by earlier experiences with family and peers. The second influence is the tension between the ideal each parent holds for the stage the child is in and the parents' often unarticulated ideal for the future. For an elite Athenian mother of a son in 400 B.C., the ideal was loyalty to family and to *polis* and perfection of specific talents, especially music, athletics, and oratory. A seventeenth-century Puritan parent promoted control of impulse and the development of piety. And for most contemporary American mothers, the distant ideal rests on five abstract qualities: autonomy, intelligence, humanness, sociability, and control of fear. The child must learn to operate independently of the family, to master school tasks, to be kind to and liked by other children, and to be unafraid of challenge or attack. When the child's behavior violates any of these ideals, parents move into action. If the two-year-old is too timid with other children, the mother may initiate a play group, enroll the child in nursery school three mornings a week, or not insist that the child restrain aggression when attacked unjustly. If the child is too dependent upon the parent for attention, affection, or security, the mother will encourage him to play alone. If he seems slow in learning to speak, she will accelerate his linguistic progress.

Display of aggression, destruction, stealing, and unprovoked assertion of power are threatening to most mothers not only because these acts provoke peer rejection, but equally important, because they are inconsistent with a mood of considerateness toward others. While listening to interviews with both mothers and fathers of three-year-olds, I have been struck by the fact that mothers are more threatened than fathers by signs of meanness in their children. Most mothers value a caring attitude. They want their sons and daughters to be empathic with others and to inhibit urges to intimidate, to fighten, or to hurt other children. This concern, together with the desire to produce an independent youngster, leads many mothers to check their own impulsive, unreflective attempts to punish their children harshly or to fighten them into slavish obedience to parental norms.

Thus, most American parents try to balance promotion of the child's autonomy and separateness from others with encouragement of a desire to be with, rather than apart from, people and a commitment to aiding the welfare of others. The axiom that hu-

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man beings are basically social is viewed as complementary to, rather than inconsistent with, the celebration of autonomy, even though every interaction contains an implicit set of rules that restricts each person. However, in America at least, these constraints are gentle enough that individuals are supposed to be able to move in and out of psychological contact with each other, always prepared to sever a relationship if it bites too deeply into their freedom of choice.

Carol Gilligan (1982) regards the two ideal qualities as separate voices within each person. In American society, the former speaks louder to men; the latter, more forcefully to women. On each encounter with an unfamiliar person, one of the modes characteristically dominates the other. Do I try to determine who will be dominant and who submissive when I first meet a stranger? Or, do I try to establish an affective bond that minimizes hostility and fear in the other? American men are more likely to ask the former question; American women, like Japanese men and women, the latter. As relations deepen, both modes can become part of a relationship; but it is unusual for these two urges to have equal force in any particular relationship.

The Influence of Social Class There is considerable variation in a parent's ego ideal and theory of how the child works; and a family's social class is an important basis for such variation (Kaye 1982; Kohn 1977). Parents who have not attended college, who see themselves and their children as part of the working class, and who live with chronic financial insecurity, often attribute their personal *angst* to economic stress, which they view as being not completely under their control. These families award a high priority to job security; and a central goal in socializing their child is to ensure that he or she will develop the qualities that guarantee a secure job. Two key qualities are acceptance by peers and the ability to resist being exploited by those with more power.

College-educated parents, especially those with professional vocations, regard freedom of choice, intellectual challenge, and the status of one's work as more important than job security. They believe that anxiety over peer rejection or disapproval obstructs the attainment of these goals, and they try to inoculate their youngsters against the anxiety that accompanies peer rejection, while emphasizing autonomous choice and competition.

Despite cultural differences across modern societies, middle-class

parents are generally more firmly convinced that each child must develop internal controls on temptation, while working-class parents are more likely to believe that some of the control lies with outside referees (Kohn 1977). Further, middle-class parents have a somewhat firmer faith than working-class parents in their own ability to control life events, to mute the malevolence of circumstance, and to guide the child, through their agency, to the ideal they hold. This belief receives occasional confirmation when a mother's telephone call to the school principal produces a change in a teacher's practices or the reassignment of her child to a new classroom. Melvin Kohn notes that an essential feature of middle-class status "is the expectation that one's decisions and actions can be consequential"; the economically less advantaged parent believes "that one is at the mercy of forces and people beyond one's control" (Kohn 1977, p. 189). A child's class membership, unlike the temporary loss of a parent or a brief period of tension in the home, represents a continuing set of experiences. That is the reason it is such a powerful influence on the child.

The Role of Family during Infancy and Childhood

In their attempts to evaluate the influence of the family on the child, psychologists have selected a few child qualities from the large array of potential characteristics. It should not be surprising that the attributes selected are those that are related to adaptation in American society. These include: intellectual skills, as indexed by IQ scores, school grades, and verbal ability; a secure attachment to parents; sociability with peers; reasonable conformity to authority; and autonomy in making decisions. The selection of family qualities is based on the complex assumption that physical affection, interactive play, and a proper balance between restriction and permissiveness have the most significant influence on the establishment of the desirable child qualities.

In order to take advantage of the existing evidence, I have chosen to organize the discussion around these ideas. The best evidence evaluates the influence of the mother. There is insufficient

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information regarding the role of the father or of siblings, and I shall say little about their influence, even though I believe it to be great (see Dunn 1983). Finally, it is useful to remember that when Copernicus's monograph *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres* was published in 1543, no piece of evidence could be unambiguously interpreted as supporting his claim that the sun is stationary and the earth mobile. This hypothesis was appealing to some scholars only because it made more coherent salient facts that had been difficult to understand. Thus, while the suggestions that follow make some of what is known more easily understood and, therefore, lend coherence to the larger theme of human development, none is demanded by the evidence.

THE INFANT IN THE FAMILY

Most observers have been interested in two processes during infancy: intellectual development, especially language; and the infant's emotional attachments to the parents. As I noted in chapter 2, the infant's cognitive competences include sensory-motor coordinations, schemata, and improvements in memory. The expectation that each of these processes grows optimally when the infant is exposed to comprehensible variety is verified by the fact that infants raised in institutions that fail to provide much variety are usually slower in their attainment of these qualities than are children from homes where mothers play and talk with them often (Clarke-Stewart, Vandaer Stoep, and Killian 1979; Ramey, Farran, and Campbell 1979; Bradley, Caldwell, and Elardo 1979). Although the relation between variety and cognitive growth is not always robust, and occasionally fails to be realized, rarely is the direction of the relation reversed. The conclusion that variety of experience facilitates cognitive development may be the least impeachable principle in developmental psychology.

The opportunity to use and to practice emerging competences affects the speed with which sensory-motor coordinations grow. The infant who is restricted to a crib or tightly swaddled takes longer to reach, stand, and walk than the one who is allowed to play with objects and to explore the environment freely. But even though opportunities for play and exploration facilitate motor development, these experiences may not be absolutely necessary. In-

fants who have little or no opportunity for motor activity or exploration, because they are swaddled during the first year of their lives, will—then given freedom to locomote and to explore after their first birthday—walk, run, and manipulate objects as skillfully as infants who have never been restrained. A boy who could not move about in his environment because he had been in a protective plastic bubble since his birth (due to a vulnerability to infection) appeared to be intellectually competent when he died at twelve years of age.

I considered in chapter 2 the history and meaning of the concept of attachment and the controversy surrounding its measurement, but did not discuss in any detail the consequences of variations in the attachment relation produced by experiences within the family. Although the vast majority of children in the world are raised by moderately predictable and reasonably nurturant adults, there is extraordinary variation in the duration, continuity, and affective quality of the interaction between parents and infants. Most American parents and psychologists believe that this variation has significant implications for the child's future adjustment.

Imagine an environment in which an infant is nurtured gently and reliably. The child is fed before he becomes too hungry, diapered before he experiences excessive discomfort, protected from injury and unpredictable events he cannot understand. However, this infant rarely experiences the excited emotional states that accompany reciprocal interaction with an adult. Mayan Indian infants living in northwest Guatemala are raised in this way.

Compare this infant with one who, in addition to receiving nurturant care, experiences frequent, pleasant, playful interaction with caregivers. These children should become emotionally excitable babies who vocalize and smile with the caregiver. American infants are raised in this way; and, as expected, American one-year-olds are more vocal and excitable than Mayan one-year-olds who do not experience much playful interaction with adults.

If a society values emotional spontaneity and worries about children who are subdued, the latter child will be at risk in adolescence and adulthood. Such a child might be ignored or rejected by peers and, as a consequence, become vulnerable to anxiety. However, in a culture that does not celebrate emotional spontaneity—like that of the Mayan Indians—absence of playful interaction during infancy may not be harmful.

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A second component of a secure attachment rests with the availability of the caregiver when the child is in distress. All infants experience pain and unpleasantness, and the persons who come to soothe a child will become associated with the pleasant feelings that accompany relief of distress. The child learns to expect that these adults will reduce her distress in the future and will seek them when she is hungry, tired, in pain, or frightened. But imagine a child in a group where the caregivers come irregularly and with long delays. This child will be forced to develop other behavior when distress arises. She may twist her hair, bury her head in a blanket, or go to sleep. She will not learn to anticipate the care of adults or to approach adults when uncertain. Such a child is insecurely attached. This quality has a singularly significant consequence.

Restraint of aggression and destruction, as well as acquisition of the standards that define mature behavior in a culture, are major goals of development. An attachment to a caregiver creates in the child a special receptivity to being socialized by that caregiver. Because the child resists adopting some socially desired behavior, as well as the standards underlying it, one must have a psychologically compelling reason to inhibit lying, destruction of property, stealing, and disobedience, and be motivated to attain other qualities promoted by the society. The child who is securely attached to caregivers is prepared to curb asocial behavior because he or she does not want to threaten that relation. As a result, the child accepts the family's standards and is likely to establish harmonious relations with other people.

The insecurely attached child grows with more serious risk because he is less receptive to adopting the standards that his parents are promoting. Because he is likely to develop a deviant behavioral profile, he will be rejected by others and, as a consequence, will become vulnerable to uncertainty. The prediction that an insecurely attached infant will become an anxious adolescent is probably correct. What is controversial, however, is whether the adolescent anxiety is due primarily to irregular nurturance during infancy which has produced a permanent change in the infant's affective mood; or to the poor fit between the personal characteristics of a child who has not accommodated to socialization pressures, and peers and adults who expect everyone to display the normative behavior of the society.

THE NATURE OF THE CHILD

The belief that the emotions experienced repeatedly during infancy are preserved is attractive to parents and social scientists. But this outcome is not inevitable. Older children who have experienced a great deal of uncertainty during the opening two or three years of life do not always become distressed adolescents, especially if their environments become benevolent after the period of infancy. A twenty-seven-year-old woman who had been abused continually as an infant, and had lived in three foster homes before she was three years old, managed to convince herself during adolescence that she was not inherently bad. She became a loving, satisfied mother who was deeply identified with her only son. By contrast, adult Mayan Indian men living in small villages in northwest Guatemala are hostile, suspicious, and aggressive toward their wives, despite a secure attachment to their mothers who nursed them on demand and stayed close to them for most of the day.

I am not suggesting that it is irrelevant how adults care for infants. It does matter! But an insecure attachment during the first year need not always lead to adult pathology, and a secure attachment is no guarantee of future invulnerability to distress. If a secure attachment motivates the child to adopt characteristics that are maladaptive in the larger society, as can happen during periods of transition when old values are changing, the attachment might not be beneficial for the child. Children living in Bombay have a secure attachment to mothers who are playful, caring, and loving. Nonetheless, many contemporary Indian adolescents are anxious because new cultural demands are inconsistent with the values they adopted earlier as a result of their close attachment to their mother. An infant girl in Boston who is closely attached to a mother who promotes passivity, dependence, inhibition of intellectual curiosity, and excessive sexual modesty will grow up possessing qualities that are not adaptive for women in modern America.

Infants need variety of experience and opportunities to explore and to manipulate their environment in order for cognitive development to proceed optimally. To develop a secure attachment, they need a consistently nurturant adult who regularly relieves distress. The consequences of these benevolent experiences, however, will depend on the demands that the social environment will make upon the child in the future. There is no way to inoculate the infant against adult misery, even though parents might be able to make that mood a little less probable.

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THE SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

Language The ability to speak words and sentences emerges in most children during the second year. Very few children utter meaningful words before their first birthday, yet some are speaking complex sentences by their second. The current belief, which is well justified, is that the human brain is prepared to detect the subtle differences in spoken phonemes—as between *ba* and *pa*, or *go* and *ko*—as it is able to detect subtle changes in color, density of contour, and movement. The child is biologically prepared not only to perceive an object as a unit but also to hear the bursts of sound that define speech as discrete units and to infer that these bursts of sound have something to do with the objects and actions that he or she perceives in the real world. Although this ability develops in all children, it does require exposure to speech. Hence, one of the central experiences of the second year is hearing people talk, especially being spoken to directly by others. But there is no simple relation between the amount of speech heard and the rate of language development (Maratsos 1983). Even though young children attending day-care centers in Australia hear less speech from adults and speak less often than children of the same social class being reared only at home, the two groups of children are very similar in language development. The author of one study concluded that “the absolute amount of input from adults is not a factor which determines the rate (or course) of language development.”*

Learning Prohibitions As I indicated in chapter 4, all children during the second year begin to develop an appreciation of standards for correct behavior, but they need their parents to inform them which behaviors are proper and which improper. If parents indicate that yelling is wrong on one occasion but imply that it is permissible on another, the child is less likely to adopt a standard against yelling.

I now pose two difficult questions. Are there some actions that adults should always disapprove? Does it make a difference which methods parents use to encourage adoption of their standards? Parents ask these questions more simply: What should I punish? How shall I punish? A complete answer to the first question has to be

* A. Cross, personal communication, 1982.

somewhat relative to the culture in which the child lives. Aside from chronic disobedience to adults, physical aggression toward family members, destruction of property, open sexual display, and indifference to all standards of personal cleanliness, there is considerable cultural diversity in the behavior selected for socialization. In villages where there is no running water, parents do not insist that children wash their hands before eating; in homes without valuable objects, children are not warned continually about being careful. Parents unconsciously promote those standards that are likely to be adaptive when the child is older. It is not adaptive for adults in modern America to hold racist ideas, although such attitudes would not have provoked shame or guilt in colonial Virginia. Academic ability is far less central to adaptation in rural villages in Latin America, Africa, or Indonesia than it is in America; and working-class mothers living in Guadalajara, Mexico, encourage hard work, making money, obedience, and emotional expressiveness more forcefully than they promote academic talent.*

I now turn to the more difficult question of mode of socialization. Most parents rely on a combination of five mechanisms to socialize their children, but use these mechanisms with varying frequency. The mechanisms are: observation, punishment, praise, withdrawal of emotional support and signs of value, and, as noted in chapter 4, acting as a model with whom the child can identify. Adults of most societies assume that children will learn what is correct, and practice it, simply by seeing what others do and listening to what adults say. This assumption is valid for a standard on how to eat at the dinner table. But observation, without some sign that certain behavior is disapproved, may not work for qualities like honesty. Observation is most effective when the relevant behavior is public and most of the people the child encounters behave in the same way. The child who is told never to hit another but plays with some peers who yell or strike out when frustrated, while others do not, will be less likely to accept restraint on aggression as being obviously correct. In societies, like ours, where there is so much behavioral diversity, observation will not be an effective mechanism for all standards. Hence, combinations of the other four mechanisms are necessary for socialization. But two of these

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mechanisms—punishment and withdrawal of love—are direct restraints on the child's freedom to choose which standards to adopt. Although restriction of a child's personal freedom does not bother parents in most communities around the world, it is a tender theme for American parents.

The Consequences of Restriction Western scholars and parents remain preoccupied, as they have since the Enlightenment, with two relatively independent aspects of parental behavior toward children. The first is defined by the display of love; the second, by restriction. Contemporary theorists assume that a child who is loved and not restricted excessively—that is, given freedom of choice—is most likely to adjust successfully to our society and take joy from life. The child who is unloved and restricted severely has the poorest prognosis. The reasons for awarding prominence to parental love will be considered later. I consider the issue of restriction first.

The balance between a restrictive or a permissive attitude toward children seems to cycle historically, at least in European society. English parents from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century suppressed the indulgent attitudes they had been showing and began to restrict children more seriously and to promote suppression of many of their natural impulses. During the next hundred years, bourgeois English families became permissive; but in the nineteenth century, families locked their children in closets and disciplined them harshly, until the end of the century, when, a lenient, impulse-accepting attitude became popular once again.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, long before there were any scientific data, American and European scholars urged mothers and fathers to let a child disobey them in order to develop the child's independence and necessary emancipation from the family. James Sully, writing as the century came to a close, reminded families of John Locke's declaration, "Children love liberty, and therefore they should be brought to do the things that are fit for them without feeling any restraint laid upon them" (Sully 1896, p. 83). Sully declared that children resented any check on their impulses, and that a child's deep antagonism to the law and adult restraint was grounded on the expectation of liberty, which Sully viewed as natural.

* R. H. Magaña, personal communication, 1981.

We should not care to see a child give up his inclinations at another's bidding without some little show of resistance. These conflicts are frequent and sharp in proportion to the sanity and vigor of the child. The best children, best from a biological point of view, have, I think, most of the rebel in them. (p. 269)

Three decades later, a textbook in child psychology declared:

The whole process of a child's development has as its goal its emancipation from the parents, so that its own life may be free to develop to the fullest without the hindrances that are inevitable if there continues an attachment to the home. . . . parents who are wise will grant freedom gradually and increasingly and will welcome rather than resent signs of a desire for independence on the child's part. (Rand, Sweeny, and Vincent 1930, p. 352)

A physician friendly to Freudian theory declared simply, "The greatest of all sins of parenthood is to stand between the child and self-realization—to obstruct his psychological freedom" (Miller 1922, p. 19).

The friendliness to a permissive regimen—which, incidentally, prepared Western society for Freud's ideas—has lasted until the present decade. But there are already signs that America is about to begin a period in which restriction is viewed more benevolently (Stone 1977).

Permissiveness and Freedom The concern with restriction among modern American parents is attributable, in part, to the celebration of individual freedom and private conscience. Many American parents are afraid that restriction will make children fearful of authority. As a consequence, children may be reluctant to exploit opportunities when free choice is necessary, and their veneer of civilized behavior will be based on fear of disapproval rather than on a personal conscience.

Children in American cities, unlike those in small traditional villages, are often in situations where no family member, distant relative, or friend is nearby to supervise their behavior. Hence, it is recognized that each person must develop a private conscience. The child must inhibit stealing from a friend because he believes such action is wrong, not because he will be ashamed if he is discovered or anxious if chastised by his family. If modern society is to work, contemplation of cheating, stealing, or hurting another

must generate anticipation of self-condemnation. It is widely assumed that, in order to develop a private conscience and the attendant emotion of guilt, the child must believe he has a choice with respect to conforming to a particular standard. If the only reason a child does not steal is fear of punishment, then when that child is in a situation where he cannot be discovered—for example, on his own in a busy department store where no one will see him steal a toy—he may steal because there is no reason not to do so. Hence, many parents who want to promote a private conscience in their child are gentle in their socialization. They use verbal reasoning, mild reproof, and deprivation of privileges because these practices do not generate extreme fear or anger, but provoke the child to think about why he has misbehaved.

This philosophy of child rearing resembles the advice given to Chinese parents almost sixty years ago by an author who warned of the dangers of frightening the child. He urged parents to avoid any form of punishment that would produce fear, and never to punish the child early in the morning or in the evening: the former would spoil the day's work, and the latter would interfere with a quiet night's sleep (Chen 1925).

The Effects of Restriction: The Evidence Ambiguity surrounds all conclusions pertaining to the consequences of excessive parental restriction or punitiveness because these consequences are based not only on the degree of parental restraint, but also on the reasons given to the child, on the bond of affection between parent and child, and on the harshness of the punishment. There is no scientific study of the effect of parental restrictiveness alone.

Diana Baumrind (1983) of the University of California, who has conducted some of the most extensive scientific work on this issue, notes that a child's compliance to the parents is not related in any simple way to parental restriction or punitiveness. Baumrind has observed preschool children from middle-class homes in group and individual settings as well as at home with their parents, and invented three types of parents: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parents are controlling, but affectionate, and encourage autonomy in their children; authoritarian parents are controlling but less affectionate; while permissive parents are minimally controlling but affectionate. It is difficult to do justice to the wealth of rich detail contained in Baumrind's important mono-

graph (Baumrind 1971). But an important result is that the consequences of these different parental patterns are not the same for boys and girls; and that the combination of restrictive control, warmth, and encouragement of autonomy, not restriction alone, affects a child's aggressiveness and independence. For example, although daughters of authoritarian parents are less independent and daughters of authoritative parents are more independent, these relations are less clear for sons.

A different long-term study of the consequences of early parental restriction on adolescent and adult behavior also revealed inconsistent, and even counterintuitive, results. For example, excessive maternal restriction of sons during the first three years of life predicted minimal dependency on others in adulthood, but excessive restriction had no predictive consequences for girls (Kagan and Moss 1962).

The Mehnaku Indians of central Brazil, who are very indulgent with their infants, treat a consistently disobedient older child in a special way. They "grab a child by the wrists, drag him to a corner, slosh a dipper full of water on his legs, and vigorously scarily his calves and thighs," using a fish-tooth scraper. "Children scream in anger and rage, and for some it is a terrifying experience" (Gregor 1977, p. 276). Yet the adults in this community who were punished this way as children do not appear to be more aggressive or more conforming than the children growing up in groups who do not follow this seemingly harsh practice.

Seventeenth-century Puritan parents beat their children or locked them in a room for a day to socialize unacceptable behavior, apparently persuaded by the Pilgrim pastor, John Robinson, who wrote that the pride children develop "must in the first place be broken and beaten down, that, so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness, other virtues may, in their time, be built thereon" (Demos 1970, p. 135). These strategies are disapproved of today—we call such parents abusive—because of the belief that children who are physically punished become afraid of and hostile toward their parents.

But fear and hostility are not inevitable if the punishment is perceived by the child as part of a relation that is supportive and respectful in other ways. Japanese children and adults, who are noted for their conformity to family and to social standards, have

close attachments and feel strong loyalty to their families. But before the Second World War, and the introduction of Western values favoring gentler socialization, many Japanese fathers were harshly punitive. Yet the reminiscences of successful Japanese adults contain little hostility toward these strict fathers. A Japanese stage director retrieves some memories of his father: "He was very strict in teaching us manners and etiquette. Morning and evening we children bowed to our father in the traditional fashion with both our hands on the tatami" (Wagatsuma 1977, p. 199). A president of a Japanese automotive company recalls, "Once his anger was over he did not nag or complain, but when he was angry I was really afraid of him. His scolding was like thunder. . . . I learned from my father how to live independently, doing everything on my own. He was the greatest model for my life" (p. 199). A physician novelist recalls his father, a prominent doctor and poet:

My father was, above all, an awesome, frightening being. He was often enraged. When he became angry, it was with all his physical and spiritual strength. Even when I overheard my father reprimand somebody in the next room, a cold shiver used to run down my spine, not to speak of the times when I was chastised. . . . And yet, he was truly a support as I grew up. (p. 200)

Perhaps an American child treated like these Japanese sons would become far less successful in our society and would harbor strong antipathy toward the parent. But such an outcome is likely only if the child perceives the parental behavior as arbitrary and reflecting hostility. Baumrind notes, "It is not the exercise of firm control per se, however, but the arbitrary, harsh, and nonfunctional exercise of firm control that has negative consequences for child behavior" (1983, p. 139).

Additionally, the significance of severe restriction and harsh punishment, like the consequences of any family experience, is a function of how variable that experience is in the broader culture. Imagine a community where all parents prohibited and punished children harshly for domination of other children. All children would be similarly motivated to inhibit the bullying of peers; and so when they became pre-adolescents, there would not be a large number of children dominating a small group of timid ones. But in our society, where few parents punish a child for dominance, while

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most parents are permissive, children from the latter families are more likely to dominate those from the former, maintaining an attitude of passivity in them.

Although many Americans see only negative consequences of parental restriction and punishment, there is one potentially desirable outcome. The child who accepts most parental restrictions elicits praise and acceptance and comes to feel valued and even virtuous. Children who consistently refuse to accept parental restriction may acquire a sense of freedom but may also develop a feeling of unworthiness that is not adaptive (Baumrind 1983).

Some of the adult members of the Fels Research Institute longitudinal population told me in an interview that they recalled their parents as restrictive and punitive when they were younger children. The descriptions written twenty years earlier by visitors to the homes of these adults revealed that the parents had, indeed, been excessively punitive and, in a few cases, harsh. But twenty years later, these adults were productive, happily married, and without symptoms and regarded their parents' earlier restrictiveness of them as benevolently motivated. They were happy that their parents had been punitive because those practices inculcated habits they found to be valuable in adult life (Kagan and Moss 1983).

Since the consequences of restriction and punishment are complex and tenuous, why are there strong feelings on this matter? The answer lies, as I indicated earlier, with the popular belief that children need to be free. Excessive restriction—the nineteenth century called it “breaking a child’s will”—is supposed to make it difficult for children to assume responsibility and accept the freedom of adulthood. This argument against restriction, which was renewed at the turn of the century, was a reaction to two earlier trends: the excessive punitiveness characteristic of most of the nineteenth century; and the excessively protective attitude of late nineteenth century mothers, who, it was suggested, were producing a degree of dependence on the family that was inconsistent with the characteristics our wisest commentators thought necessary for adjustment in twentieth-century America. As a result, writers in the psychoanalytic tradition urged parents to be less punitive, less prohibitive, and less protective, in order to permit their children to become emotionally free of the family. Today our society

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contains too much isolation, too little involvement with family, and too much loneliness. We can expect the next generation of essayists writing for American families to urge more restriction rather than less, for, as I noted earlier, the popularity of restriction cycles about every one hundred years. A recent study of young American mothers suggests this trend may have already begun.

Middle- and working-class mothers of three-year-old children listened to a recording of a short essay, approximately four hundred words, comparing the relative wisdom and utility of a restrictive or a permissive mode of socialization, and then tried to remember as much of the essay as they could. More of the middle- than working-class mothers remembered more words from the argument that promoted restrictiveness as a desired regime. One of the striking differences between the two groups of mothers involved a pair of sentences in the middle of the essay. One sentence noted that excessive permissiveness with a young child could produce an adolescent who would perform poorly in school, take drugs, and become a delinquent. Most of the middle-class mothers remembered this idea in great elaboration, and none distorted it. By contrast, fewer working-class mothers remembered this idea; and for those who did, over one third distorted the meaning of the passage. They stated in their recall that excessive restrictiveness would predispose a child to acquire these undesirable qualities (Kagan et al., in preparation).

Each mother’s selective memory for each of the themes in the essay reflects a balance between her concern over having a child who is capable of reasonable conformity to authority and one who is fearless. Middle-class mothers, who are generally more permissive than working-class parents regarding open disobedience, worry that their permissiveness might be inimical to the development of effective study habits and a sense of responsibility—qualities that are necessary for good school performance, college entrance, and a professional vocation. Hence, when this apprehension was articulated in the essay, the middle-class mothers elaborated the relevant information in their recall. By contrast, working-class mothers, who are more punitive, worry that too much restraint and punishment might make their child excessively fearful of authority, passive with peers, and vulnerable to exploitation in the competition for jobs. When information in the essay articulated

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those worries, it was registered with special salience and recalled in greater detail. Middle-class Japanese mothers living in the city of Sapporo also remember more of the information promoting the permissive argument, because they believe that a child's anger toward a parent obstructs the development of a closely interdependent relationship, and that restrictiveness, by producing anger toward the mother, interferes with a harmonious relation to the parent.

Is there any advice possible in all of this frustrating complexity? Because private conscience, self-confidence, and suppression of anxiety are likely to remain adaptive characteristics in our society, the best advice to parents is to establish an affectionate relation with the child, to decide on the particular behavior to be socialized, and to communicate disapproval of undesirable behavior when it occurs, along with the reasons for punishment. If this strategy does not work, deprivation of privileges the child enjoys can be used to accomplish the socialization goal. Harsh physical punishment and excessive threat of withdrawal of love are probably unwise and, I may add, unnecessary if the first two conditions are met.

THE YEARS FOUR THROUGH SEVEN: THE SENSE OF BEING VALUED

As children enter the fourth year, it is more difficult to list the experiences they must have for optimal development. Four-year-olds can provide variety for themselves, have established an attachment to their parents, and are aware of and practice many of the standards their families promote. The four-year-old is self-consciously in control of much of her behavior, linguistically sophisticated, motorically coordinated, and able to anticipate the wishes and actions of others. The four-year-old is almost self-sufficient enough to survive if left without any caregivers. Hence, in order to prescribe, we must look forward and ask what the child must master in the future in order to adjust to his or her society.

In most contemporary cultures of the world, as in those throughout history, seven- and eight-year-old children are assigned the tasks of gathering wood, planting, sewing, hunting, cooking, and taking care of younger children. Children in modern societies have only one outstanding challenge: they must master

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the tasks of the school—reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. Thus, four-year-olds in modern societies require experiences that will prepare them for coping with this special challenge. The preparation involves preliminary knowledge of letters and numbers, the ability to persist in the face of difficult intellectual problems that generate anxiety, valuing intellectual talent, and a willingness to conform to the arbitrary requests of adults. Because these qualities help the child during the first years of school, interaction with parents that promotes these skills—reading books, solving problems, playing with numbers, and the creation of an accommodating, rather than a disobedient, posture toward unfamiliar adults—should be helpful to the child when he reaches school.

Second, parents are role models with whom the child identifies; hence, parents should display behavior the child classifies as good, for the five-year-old who perceives the parents as nurturant, just, and virtuous, and identifies with them, will come to regard the self as possessing these desirable qualities.

Third, the five-year-old must believe she is valued by her family. This belief is not an obvious derivative of the state of attachment established during infancy. I have noted that Western society attributes considerable power to parental love, and has done so since the seventeenth century (see chapter 2). The psychological power ascribed to parental love, or its absence, has a parallel in the potency attributed in other societies at other times to spirits, loss of soul, sorcery, sin, gossip, God, and witchcraft. "Parental love" has two meanings. One refers to the special emotion parents feel toward a child. A second refers to the child's belief regarding the favor in which he or she is held by the parents. Western society is preoccupied with the significance of the first—a mother's feeling of love for her young child—and assumes that the child's belief will follow automatically. But these two meanings are not always correlated. Experts warn of the potential danger of diluting the mother-child attachment with substitute caregivers. The film *Autumn Sonata* (1978) provokes private assent from hushed audiences who hear a married woman tell her aging mother that the former's psychic anguish is a historical transformation of the mother's failure to love her thirty years earlier. A mother's love for the child is treated as a mysterious force which, if sprinkled plentifully over young children, guarantees salvation. But for the child who is not

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fortunate enough to have had a loving mother, the future is poisoned. If most human societies held this belief, one might be persuaded of its validity; all people believe that one must eat to survive. But the contemporary Western belief in the long-lasting psychological danger of insufficient maternal love is not shared by many societies, nor was it held by our own society several centuries ago.

The Child's Perception of Rejection There are many reasons modern American children and adolescents worry about whether they are loved by their parents, and many adults believe that their anxiety and insecurity have been partially caused by their parents' earlier rejection of them as children. These beliefs stem, in part, from the child's failure to meet parental standards. It will be recalled from chapter 4 that, as the child approaches her second birthday, she shows behavioral signs of anxiety if she cannot implement a behavior she feels obliged to display. The recognition that one cannot meet a standard regarded as appropriate provokes distress. Let us apply that conclusion to the contemporary parent-child relationship. The child cannot ignore parental standards because she is in a "closed" situation, dependent upon the care and instrumental help of the parents. The child accepts these standards as reasonable demands to be met. Additionally, the child recognizes that the parents, and many other children, have met these standards, and thus that they are within human capacity. It is not possible for the child to rationalize the standards away.

But if a particular child finds the standards too difficult to attain, she becomes vulnerable to distress. Some people may call this emotion shame; others, guilt; others, a sense of unworthiness. This emotion can generate a feeling of impotence either to cope with problems or to attract the approval and affection of others. The child believes that the self is not worthy of positive regard. The increasing suicide rate among Japanese adolescents who fail to gain university admittance is an extreme reaction to this feeling of unworthiness. This is one reason the child should not be permitted to violate the standards of family and society too frequently or too seriously. Parents should help their children avoid temptations that lead to the violation of standards, should not be so restrictive that the child is forced to disobey, and should reassure the child who is unable to meet parental standards for mastery.

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A central fact of modern, middle-class Western society is that standards of academic accomplishment are so high that many children fail to meet them. More important, there is no easy way for a child to do penance for this failure. There are no useful instrumental activities that the American child can engage in to prove his effectiveness, utility, or value. The average middle-class child is an object of sentiment with no useful economic role in the household. This situation contrasts sharply with the child in a rural village in a less developed community, who is aware that his work is of value to the family, or with the average Massachusetts adolescent during the late nineteenth century, who provided about one third of the family's income (Kett 1977).

As the one-year-old American child runs to the mother for reassurance when anxious over a discrepant event, the anxious seven-year-old seeks reassurance of his worthiness if he fails to meet a parental standard. The best form of reassurance is a sign of parental acceptance and love. However, some parents find it difficult to award such reassurance honestly, and their children continue to feel distressed and unworthy. The adults in our society who believe that their anxiety and apprehension are due to lack of parental love during childhood may have failed to meet parental standards and, not receiving the needed reassurance, carried this belief into adulthood. This argument implies directly that the child who does not experience distress over failing to meet parental standards, either because the standards are too permissive or because the child is fortunate enough to meet them, is less likely to attribute adult distress to earlier parental rejection, even if the parents were not particularly loving when he or she was young.

Adults who have grown up in families that impose minimal standards on cognitive competence or proper character are also vulnerable to distress, but they should be less likely to attribute their *anger* to lack of earlier parental love. They are more likely to attribute it to other forces—their own incompetence, poor motivation, bad schooling, or an unjust society. On the other hand, those who feel secure as adults may attribute that mood to the fact that they are loved as children. But it is likely that they were fortunate enough to have come close to meeting the standards their parents encouraged. In Third World villages, where the standards set for children are relatively easy to meet (to cook, clean, gather wood, or

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take care of babies), children less often experience the distress of failure, and adults are less likely to believe that their feelings of anxiety are due to earlier maternal rejection or hostility.

The Signs of Love Parents should communicate to the child whatever local cultural signs indicate that he or she is valued. Some psychologists have assumed that there is a specific set of parental behavior that always signifies acceptance or rejection, for there is remarkable agreement among American parents and psychologists regarding the behavior that defines these attitudes. Harsh physical punishment, lack of social play, and absence of hugging or kissing are supposed to be signs of rejection, and it would be impossible for an American observer to categorize a mother as being both aloof and loving at the same time. But in isolated rural areas of northern Norway, where farms are separated by many miles, mothers behave in ways that an American observer would regard as symptomatic of rejection in an American parent. If a Norwegian mother sees her four-year-old sitting in a doorway and blocking the passage to the next room, she does not ask him to move but bends down, picks him up, and silently sets him aside so she can pass through. Although a middle-class observer might view this apparent indifference as indicative of dislike, most mothers in this Arctic outpost act that way, and the children do not behave the way our theories suggest.

An uneducated young mother slaps her four-year-old across the face when he does not come to the table on time. The intensity of the act tempts an observer to conclude that the mother resents her child. However, during a subsequent conversation, the mother indicates her deep love for the boy. She struck him because she does not want him to grow up to be a bad boy, and she believes that physical punishment is the most effective way to inculcate her standards. Now the mother's behavior seems to serve an affectionate, and not a hostile, attitude. Feeling loved or rejected is a belief held by a child, not a set of parental actions; hence, a parent's behavior is not always a sensitive clue to the child's sense of being valued. When the child is mature enough—about three or four years of age—to recognize that certain resources that parents possess are difficult to obtain, the child regards the receipt of these resources as a sacrifice and as a sign that he or she is valued. The child constructs a "vote board" of the respective values of various parental gifts, whether embraces, privileges, or presents. The value

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of the gift depends, in part, on its scarcity. Most parents are sufficiently busy, economically constrained, or selfish that they are unable to give the child long periods of uninterrupted companionship or expensive presents; hence, most children place a premium on these prizes. Additionally, children from many cultures learn that physical affection is an essential sign of love, and assign high value to embraces and kisses. After the first World War, child experts emphasized the importance of parental display of physical affection to the child, implying that a lack of such affection might generate anxiety. To the question, "How was your childhood different from the experiences your child is having now?" many older American mothers reply, "I knew my mother loved me, but she didn't show it." Such a statement suggests that a child's belief in his value does not require physical affection but rests on behavior that has come to signify a parent's interest in his happiness. Therefore, there will be uniformity among children in a culture with respect to the parental behaviors that signify love, but the reference for those signs is in the child.

The display of maternal anger toward a child has, during this century, come to signify a rejecting attitude. The family is one of the few settings where anger can be expressed without the inhibiting anticipation of social rejection, loss of status, or counterattack. One spouse often dominates the other, and both parents are always dominant relative to the child. Society is relatively accepting of the misplaced hostility in a husband's display of anger to a wife, which is, in actuality, a reaction to disappointment at work, to difficulties with friends, or to unfulfilled aspirations. But the child, too, is often a target for misplaced parental hostility. Because the mother is usually home with the young child more continually than is the father, the slightest provocation from the child, usually a violation of one of the mother's standards, can release the parent's anger in yelling, physical punishment, or, less commonly, physical abuse. Such behavior is often interpreted by psychologists as indicating a rejecting attitude, even though they are reluctant to make the same inference in the case of the angry husband. They interpret the husband's anger toward the wife as being due to his personal frustrations outside the home, rather than as a sign of deep resentment toward the spouse. Why, then, do psychologists fail to make a similar inference when the mother is hostile to her child?

One reason for this asymmetry in judgment is that most Ameri-

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cans view the love relation between mother and child as inherently stronger, perhaps more natural, than the bond between husband and wife; hence, the expression of hostility toward a child requires an intensity of anger far greater than the irritation that is generated by a frustrating day at work. Second, we find it more difficult to attribute intense anger to women than to men. Thus, most adults assume that a mother's aggression toward her child has to surmount strong internal opposition.

The stereotypes held for the sexes lead most Americans to interpret aggression in men and women differently. Men are categorized as dominant or nondominant; women as loving or nonloving. When aggression, which reflects anger, hostility, and disappointment, occurs in men, we assume it is due to frustration of their motive for dominance or control of their affairs. When aggression occurs in women, we are more likely to assume it springs from a nonloving attitude.

One of the major sources of frustration in modern life is economic insecurity. Marital quarrels are often sparked by one spouse having spent more money than the other regards as proper. Because mothers from lower-class homes experience the uncertainty of economic stress more continually than affluent mothers, they should be more prone to outbursts of anger. And mothers from economically disadvantaged homes do yell, scream, and strike their children more often than advantaged mothers (Kagan and Reznick, unpublished). That fact is interpreted by some psychologists as reflecting a less loving (or more rejecting) attitude toward the child, rather than as indicative of greater frustration.

Of course, it is not possible for the young child to know the real cause of the parent's hostility. The child reacts to the parent's behavior and, if mature enough, to a private interpretation of the parent's intentions. Because mothers typically rationalize their punishment to the child as having been provoked by the violation of a standard, and, therefore, as being in the service of the child's development, the child with an excessively punitive mother is likely to believe that he is bad. The perpetuation of this belief about the self lowers his expectations of accomplishment in school and increases the probability that, when the child becomes an adult, he will be frustrated and prone to anger, thus repeating the cycle.

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But the fundamental cause of the cycle may be due not, as some psychoanalysts claim, to the continuity of the emotional consequences of maternal rejection, but rather to the re-creation in adulthood of the conditions that made the previous generation prone to anger and hostility. The child may be the immediate provocateur of parental hostility, but not necessarily its real target.

Does Love Matter? I now ask whether lack both of parental affection and a loving attitude seriously contribute to the likelihood of future psychological symptoms in the child. There is no easy answer for reasons that are not strictly empirical. When we ask whether the outside temperature contributes to the probability of whether we inquire about the contribution of parental rejection to future psychic illness, we are asking whether a certain set of parental actions usually produces a special mental state in the child—the belief that he or she is not favored—and a future mental state in the same person as an adult—excessive anxiety, depression, or anger. The answers to this question take two different forms.

The first answer is in the subjective frame (see chapter 1) and is concerned only with a person's private belief. The adult who believes that earlier parental rejection determined his present dysphoric state will act as if that hypothesis were true. The second answer, in the objective frame, depends upon whether there is a lawful relation among particular parental behaviors toward the child, the child's perception of favor or disfavor, and a specific adult profile twenty years later. This question has not been answered satisfactorily. Kipsigis mothers in Kenya have older siblings care for young children, Israeli mothers living on kibbutzim use *metaphot*, and many Fijian mothers give their recently weaned two-year-old child to a cousin for adoption. There is no evidence indicating that one group of adolescents feels more in parental favor than another.

The belief that the quality of love between the mother and the young child has a major influence on the latter's future psychological health—a relatively new idea in Western society—may be part of a more general theme: namely, the ascendancy of women in Western society over the last three centuries.

It is natural to award sacred qualities to those who represent the ideals of the society. As European middle-class women began to

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assume primary responsibility for the child's character and to adopt the Enlightenment virtues of charity, kindness, humaneness, and unselfishness in the service of husband and children, they became candidates for sanctification. Men did the evil work of the world; women, by loving, did God's work.

Further, as close loyalties between men became weaker during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (due, in part, to increased mobility, lack of opportunity to establish long-lasting bonds, and the competitive mood that permeated male relationships), and as moral relativism became attractive to twentieth-century minds, adults searched for some unsullied ideal state that was worthy of commitment. A love relationship—combining mutual psychological enhancement, unquestioned, reciprocal loyalty, and pleasure—was a good candidate. Today many Western adults sanctify love as the primary healing experience. We satirize power and status, politicize and, therefore, corrupt professional competence, belittle the impractical "ivory tower" scholar, and are forced to subordinate natural beauty to the pragmatic need for energy and industrial productivity. The erosion of these ideals leaves the average citizen eager to protect one of the few ideas that remains untainted, and ready to award to women the power to administer one of the last sacraments.

THE YEARS SEVEN THROUGH THIRTEEN

The half-dozen years that precede puberty are preparation for adult life. Young adults in every society must learn an economic skill, accept the responsibility of being parent and spouse, and the duties that come from being a participating member of the society. Children in Third World villages help with cooking, washing, and cleaning; those in modern society learn the necessary intellectual and technical skills. During the years before the Civil War, both middle- and lower-class ten-year-olds left their homes to apprentice with a craftsman in order to learn an adult vocational skill. Ezra Gannett, grandson of a Yale president, left home at eight years of age to live and study with a minister. The sons of the poor had to be unusually enterprising. One seven-year-old boy, Asa Sheldon, began to hire himself out to wealthy farmers and, at age ten, left home to live with a family. But Sheldon's autobiography

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contains no anger or bitterness over the fact that he had to leave home. He treated this experience as a portentous event in his youth (Kett 1977).

During the years before puberty, the American child needs experiences that promote academic talents, a sense of responsibility, and, most important, a belief that he or she can attain the goals that self and community value. An expectation of success is central to these goals. The priority of a particular motive in consciousness is a function of the person's expectancy of gratifying that motive. The motives of an American ten-year-old include: mastery of academic tasks, peer acceptance, and acquisition of behavior that defines the sex roles. The child needs reassurance that these goals are attainable. If one's daily experience does not contain that information, one is likely to stop investing effort, and the motive will become less pressing. The dangers inherent in this sequence are obvious. Failure to gain desired goals produces distress and can provoke antisocial behavior. Hence, the seminal experiences of this era are those that persuade youth that they can successfully gain the prizes they want. A father in a cornfield teaching his eight-year-old son how to plant maize finds it easy to create a situation that will accomplish this goal. It is more difficult when the child is with one teacher in a class of thirty children. From the child's perspective, the private evaluation of progress is based primarily on a comparison of one's performance with that of one's peers. The larger the number of peers used for comparison, the less likely will a particular child conclude that he or she can master a particular talent (Festinger 1954). A child with an average I.Q. and a particular ability profile attending a class of thirty-five children, in a school of one thousand pupils, in a city of one hundred thousand people, will meet or know about more children who are more talented than he or she than will a comparable child in a class of fifteen in a school of three hundred located in a town of twenty thousand people. That is one reason American children growing up in small towns are disproportionately represented among eminent adults. The majority of the original group of astronauts spent their childhoods in towns and small cities, not in our largest municipalities with their many cultural resources.

Each person remains continually sensitive to the presence of individuals who are more potent than self, whether the source of the

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potency is size, intellectual talent, strength, beauty, wealth, status, or endurance. When there are a large number of these more potent individuals, the child or adult may inhibit initiations that might be implemented if the more powerful persons were absent. A phenomenon observed in certain tropical fish provides a persuasive analogy. Among a species of wrasse found in the coral reefs off the Hawaiian islands (*Thalassoma duperryi*), females who swim in the presence of smaller, but no larger, fish—whether male or female—undergo a morphological change. These females stop producing eggs and begin to produce sperm—a change they do not undergo when they are in the presence of larger fish (Ross and Losey 1983).

Although families cannot easily change their place of residence so that their child can be with children of equal talent, parents can try to arrange the lives of their children so that successes are more likely than failures. Schools, too, can create classrooms that do not contain children of seriously different ability in order to prevent the less able children from concluding that they are hopelessly incompetent.

The family's role during this period of development is different from what it was during the first seven years of life. The family now functions less as sculptor and more as monitor, detecting signs of conflict, despair, and anxiety and alleviating or correcting them. In our society, the family should permit the adolescent autonomy of choice in order that he or she may grow up with the confidence of being able to make correct decisions independently and to act with responsibility. I suspect that excessive suppression of an American child's independence is harmful, even though I cannot cite firm data to support that feeling. Finally, parents have to behave in ways that are in accord with the child's standard of virtue, because the identification with family members is still influential. A parent who bursts into tears at the slightest provocation, throws plates, gets drunk, or is disliked by the neighbors threatens a ten-year-old's evaluation of self, insofar as the child is identified with that parent. By contrast, parents who meet the child's ideal provide a base of reassurance when the ten-year-old experiences failure, guilt, or peer rejection.

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Conclusion

In this discussion of the family, I have not only failed to state many firm principles that summarize the influence of the mother on the child, but I have not said enough about the role of fathers or siblings. The reason is that scientists have been unable to discover many profound principles that relate the actions of mothers, fathers, or siblings to psychological characteristics in the child (see Clarke-Stewart and Hevey 1981, as well as Dunn 1983, for a similar view). After a thorough examination of the evidence on family socialization, two respected psychologists concluded that the relations between parental behavior and the child's qualities are generally ambiguous: "In most cases, the relationships that have appeared are not large. . . . The implications are either that parental behaviors have no effect, or that the only effective aspects of parenting must vary greatly from one child to another within the same family" (Maccoby and Martin 1983, p. 82).

The mood of this chapter is captured by a verse invented to describe the current state of the foundations of mathematics:

Little by little we subtract
Faith and fallacy from fact.
The illusory from the true
And then starve upon the residue.
(Hoffenstein, cited in Kline 1980, p. 241)

How can we explain such a pessimistic conclusion?

One possibility is that most of the research has not been sufficiently sophisticated. Some evidence is weak because it is based on asking a mother what she does with her child, while other evidence comes from less than an hour of observation in a laboratory waiting room. Neither of these methods is powerful enough to yield sound inferences. Furthermore, psychologists, in expecting to find a relation between what parents do and a particular outcome in the child, have generally failed to appreciate that the child is always interpreting the actions of parents.

The child lives in a network of relationships with siblings, peers, and adults and is continually evaluating his or her qualities in rela-

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tion to these people, while identifying selectively with some of them. Thus, the effect of an emotionally significant experience—like a father's prolonged absence or a bitter divorce—will depend on how the child interprets these events. Such interpretations are based on the child's knowledge, moral evaluations, and inferences about the causes of his or her current mood. Rarely will there be a fixed consequence of any single event—no matter how traumatic—or special set of family conditions.

This timid conclusion does not mean that families are of little influence, but that parents affect their children in subtle and complex ways. During the first half-year, the infant born to parents who have not attended college is not very different from the one born to parents who graduated from college. Yet, by age six, the differences between the two youngsters are dramatic. Something has happened in the intervening years to produce the divergent psychological profiles; it is likely that the reasons for the differences at age six lie with family experiences. Older brothers growing up in middle-class homes are generally more obedient, more conforming to parental requests, and better pupils than are younger brothers, despite the fact that first- and later-born boys do not differ much during the opening months of life. Once again, the reasons for the variation must lie with parental treatment, as well as with each boy's perception of the other. The power of the family is also evident in the psychological profiles of children from different ethnic groups, all of whom watch the same television programs, attend the same movies, and read the same primers. Children from Mexican-American families growing up in the Southwest are more cooperative and less competitive than black or Anglo children living in the same towns and cities. Children of Japanese parents growing up in California work harder in school and obtain higher grades than do Mexican-American children. Perhaps during the next twenty years we will gain some understanding of how a family's mood, actions, and philosophy mediate these robust differences among older children.