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MARTIN ZERLANG

Parenting

Anxiety is the hallmark of modern parenthood. Early-twenty-first century parents agonize incessantly about their children's physical health, personality development, psychological well-being, and academic performance. From birth, parenthood is colored by apprehension. Contemporary parents worry about SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME, stranger ABDUCTIONS, and physical and sexual abuse, as well as more mundane problems, such as SLEEP disorders and HYPERACTIVITY.

Parental anxiety about children's well-being is not a new development, but parents' concerns have taken dramatically different forms over time. Until the mid-nineteenth century, parents were primarily concerned about their children's health, religious piety, and moral development. In the late nineteenth century, parents became increasingly attentive to their children's emotional and psychological well-being, and during the twentieth century, parental anxieties dwelt on children's personality development, gender identity, and their ability to interact with peers. Today, much more than in the past, guilt-ridden, uncertain parents worry that their children not suffer from boredom, low self-esteem, or excessive school pressures.

Shifting Assumptions about Parenting

In the early twenty-first century, we consider early childhood life's formative stage, and believe that children's experiences during the first two or three years of life mold their personality, lay the foundation for future cognitive and psychological development, and leave a lasting imprint on their EMOTIONAL LIFE. We also assume that children's development proceeds through a series of physiological, psychological, social, and cognitive stages; that even very young children have a capacity to learn; that PLAY serves valuable developmental functions; and that growing up requires children to separate emotionally and psychologically from their parents. These assumptions differ markedly from those held two or three centuries previously. Before the mid-eighteenth century, most adults betrayed surprisingly little interest in the very first years of life and AUTOBIOGRAPHIES revealed little nostalgia for childhood. Also adults were far less age conscious than they have since become, and tended to dismiss children's play as trivial and insignificant.

The basic assumptions that underlie parenting are cultural constructs that arise at particular points in history. Parenting has evolved through a series of successive and overlapping phases, from a seventeenth-century view of children as "adults-in-training" to the early-nineteenth-century emphasis on character formation; the late-nineteenth century notion of SCIENTIFIC CHILD REARING, stressing regularity and systematization; the mid-twentieth-century focus on fulfilling children's emotional and psychological needs; and the late-twentieth-century stress on maximizing children's intellectual and social development.

Childhood in Colonial America

Diversity has always been a hallmark of American parenting. At no time was this more readily apparent than during the colonial era. Parenting took quite different forms among Native Americans, enslaved African Americans, and European colonists of various regions and religious backgrounds.

European observers were shocked by the differences between their child-rearing customs and those of the Indian peoples of the Eastern woodlands. There were certain superficial similarities. Native peoples, like Europeans, surrounded pregnancy with rituals to ensure the newborn's health, and practiced rites following a childbirth that Europeans regarded as perversions of baptism and CIRCUMCISION (such as rubbing an infant in bear's fat and piercing the newborn's tongue, nose, or ears). The differences in child rearing were especially striking. Girls were not expected to spin, weave, or knit, as they were in Europe, and boys were not expected to farm. Nor were children subjected to corporal punishment, since this was believed to produce timidity and submissiveness.

Maturation among Indians was much more enmeshed in religious and communal rituals than among Europeans. For boys, there were ceremonies to mark one's first tooth, killing of one's first large game, and a vision quest, in which boys went alone into the wilderness to find a guardian spirit. Many girls were secluded at the time of first menstruation. Among certain Southeastern tribes, there was a ceremony called *huskinaw* through which boys and girls shed their childish identity and assumed adult status.

English colonists regarded children as "adults-in-training." They recognized that children differed from adults in their mental, moral, and physical capabilities, and drew a distinction between childhood, an intermediate stage they called youth, and adulthood. But they did not rigidly

segregate children by age. Size and physical strength were more important than chronological age in defining a young person's roles and responsibilities. Parents wanted children to speak, read, reason, and contribute to their family's economic well-being as soon as possible.

Infancy was regarded as a state of deficiency. Unable to speak or stand, infants lacked two essential attributes of full humanity. Parents discouraged infants from crawling, and placed them in "walking stools," similar to modern walkers. To ensure proper adult posture, young girls wore leather corsets and parents placed rods along the spines of very young children of both sexes. The colonists rarely swaddled their infants, and not surprisingly some youngsters fell into fireplaces or wells.

Colonial America's varied religious cultures exerted a profound influence on child rearing. The New England Puritans encouraged children to exhibit religious piety and to conquer their sinful nature. To encourage children to reflect on their morality, the Puritans spoke frequently about death. They also took children to hangings so that they would contemplate the consequences of sin. To encourage youthful piety, Puritan parents held daily household prayers; read books, such as James Janeway's *Token for Children*, offering examples of early conversion; and expected even young children to attend Sabbath services. One of the Puritans' most important legacies was the notion that parents were responsible not only for their children's physical well-being, but also for their choice of vocation and the state of their soul.

In the Middle Colonies (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware), a very different pattern of parenting arose. Quaker households, in particular, were much less authoritarian and patriarchal than the Puritans'. They were also more isolated since fewer families took in other families' children as servants as Puritans did. Instead of emphasizing sinfulness, Quaker parents sought to gently nurture each child's "Light Within," the spark of divinity that they believed was implanted in each child's soul, through "holy conversation." Quaker parents, unlike those in New England, emphasized early independence, providing their children with land at a relatively early age.

In the Chesapeake colonies of Maryland and Virginia, a sharply skewed sex ratio and a high death rate produced patterns of parenting very different from those in the Middle Colonies or New England. Marriages in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake were brief, and orphanhood and stepparenthood were common. Fathers, who could not expect to see their children reach adulthood, granted their children economic independence at an early age. The seventeenth-century Chesapeake included large numbers of teenage indentured servants who were under very strict DISCIPLINE and frequently suffered corporal punishment.

Eighteenth-Century Ferment

During the eighteenth century, the world of childhood underwent dramatic shifts. Fewer first children were named for parents, who also abandoned the custom of NAMING later-born children for recently deceased SIBLINGS. Children also received middle names, suggesting a greater recognition of each child's individuality. Representations of childhood changed. Stiffly posed portraits depicting children as miniature adults gave way to more romantic depictions of childhood, showing young people playing or reading. Meanwhile, such educational toys as globes, jigsaw puzzles, and board games, appeared, as did children's books, with wide margins, large type, and pictures. Animal stories, morality tales, and science books sought to entertain as well as instruct.

Eighteenth-century child-rearing tracts suggest a shift in parental attitudes. Alongside an earlier emphasis on instilling religious piety, there was a growing stress on implanting virtue and a capacity for self-government by teaching "the Government of themselves, their Passions and Appetites." Many manuals embraced JOHN LOCKE's argument that "a Love of Credit, and an Apprehension of Shame and Disgrace" was much more effective in shaping children's behavior than physical beatings. Yet the eighteenth century also saw a growing obsession with MASTURBATION, following the publication in 1710 of *Onania: Or the Heinous Sin of Self Pollution.* As childhood became associated with asexual innocence, behavior that ran counter to this ideal was rigorously repressed.

Contrasting conceptions of childhood coexisted in eighteenth-century America. These included the Lockean notion of the child as a tabula rasa, or blank slate whose character could be shaped for good or bad; a Romantic association of childhood with purity, imagination, and organic wholeness; and an evangelical conception of children as potentially sinful creatures who needed to be sheltered from the evil influences of the outside world and whose willfulness must be broken in infancy. These views of childhood tended to be associated with distinct social groups. The evangelical emphasis on submission to authority and early conversion was most often found among rural Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian families. The southern gentry and northern merchants were especially likely to shower children with affection, since day-to-day discipline was in the hands of servants or slaves. Meanwhile, the middling orders, especially upwardly mobile farm, shopkeeping, and artisan families, emphasized self-control and internalized discipline.

The American Revolution accelerated antipatriarchial currents already underway. An emphasis on order and restraint gave way to a Romantic insistence on the importance of personal feeling and affection. Fewer parents expected children to bow or doff their hats in their presence or stand during meals. Instead of addressing parents as "sir" and "madam," children called them "papa" and "mama." By the

end of the eighteenth century, furniture specifically designed for children, painted in pastel colors and decorated with pictures of animals or figures from nursery rhymes, began to be widely produced, reflecting the popular notion of childhood as a time of innocence and playfulness.

According to the ideal of "republican motherhood" that flourished in the late eighteenth century, mothers were responsible for implanting the republican virtues of civility and self-restraint in their sons and ensuring that America's republican experiment would not follow the path of the Greek and Roman Republics. To ensure that women could fulfill this responsibility late eighteenth century saw a surge in female academies and a marked increase in female literacy.

By the early nineteenth century, mothers in the rapidly expanding Northeastern middle class increasingly embraced an amalgam of earlier child-rearing ideas. From John Locke, they absorbed the notion that children were highly malleable creatures and that a republican form of government required parents to instill a capacity for self-government in their children. From JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU and the Romantic poets middle-class parents acquired the idea of childhood as a special stage of life, intimately connected with nature and purer and morally superior to adulthood. From the evangelicals, the middle class adopted the idea that the primary task of parenthood was to implant proper moral character in children and to insulate children from the corruptions of the adult world.

Parenting in Nineteenth-Century America

Early-nineteenth-century travelers reported that American children were far more independent and much less rigorously disciplined than their European counterparts. A British visitor, Frederick Marryat, offered a particularly shocking example. After a youngster disobeyed his father's command, the man described his son as "a sturdy republican," while "smiling at the boy's resolute disobedience."

Yet as early as the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a new kind of urban middle-class family, much more emotionally intense than in the past, was emerging. These families were much smaller than their colonial counterparts, as parents rapidly reduced the birth rate from an average seven to ten children in 1800 to five children in 1850 and three in 1900. These families were also more sharply divided along generational lines, as child rearing was increasingly concentrated in the early years of marriage. They were also more mother-centered, as fathers left home to go to work and mothers assumed nearly exclusive responsibility for child rearing. Meanwhile, middle-class children remained within their parents' home longer than in the past. Instead of shifting back and forth between the home and work experiences outside the home, the young remained at home into their late teens or early twenties.

As socialization within the home was prolonged and intensified, child rearing became an increasingly self-conscious activity—a development underscored by a proliferation of advice manuals, mothers' magazines, and maternal societies, where pious mothers discussed methods for properly raising and disciplining children. The advice, which increasingly came from secular authorities rather than ministers, emphasized several themes. One was the crucial significance of the early years. As the Rev. Horace Bushnell wrote in 1843, "Let every Christian father and mother understand, when the child is three years old, that they have done more than half of what they will do for his character." Another key theme was the critical importance of mothering. As Lydia Maria Child put it in 1832, her "every look, every movement, every expression does something toward forming the character of the little heir to immortal life." The goals and methods of child rearing were conceived of in new terms. Mothers were to nurture children—especially sons—who were resourceful and self-directed; they were to do so by internalizing a capacity for inner discipline and self-control not through physical punishment, but through various forms of maternal influence, including maternal example, appeals to a child's conscience, and threats to withdraw love.

Class, Ethnic, and Regional Diversity

At the same time that the northeastern middle class embraced the idea of intensive mothering and a sheltered childhood, very different patterns prevailed among slave, farm, frontier, mining, and urban working-class families. Their children actively contributed to their family's well-being by hunting and fishing, assisting in parents' work activities, tending gardens or livestock, toiling in mines or mills, scavenging or participating in street trades, and caring for younger siblings.

Parenting under SLAVERY was especially difficult. As a result of poor nutrition and heavy labor during pregnancy, half of all slave newborns weighed five-and-a-half pounds or less, or what we would consider dangerously underweight, and fewer than two out of three slave children reached the age of ten. Nearly half of the former slaves interviewed by the Works Progress Administration were raised apart from their father, either because he resided on another plantation, their mother was unmarried or widowed, or their father was a white man. By the time they reached the age of sixteen, fully a third of those interviewed had been sold or transferred to another owner.

Childhood represented a battlefield in which parents and masters competed over who would exercise primary authority over children. One of enslaved children's harshest memories was discovering that their parents were helpless to protect them from abuse. Still, slave parents managed to convey a sense of pride to their children and to educate them about how to maneuver through the complexities of slavery. Through their naming patterns, transmission of craft skills, religious customs, music, and folklore, slave parents gave their children the will and skills necessary to endure slavery

and sustained a sense of history, morality, and distinctive identity.

Urban working-class and immigrant families depended for subsistence on a cooperative family economy in which all family members, including children, were expected to contribute to the family's material support. During the nineteenth century, as much as twenty percent of many working-class families' income was earned by children under the age of fifteen. Key decisions—regarding emigration, school attendance, and the timing of entry into the workforce and marriage—were based on family needs rather than individual choices, and working-class and immigrant parents frequently invoked their authority to ensure that children handed over their unopened paychecks.

Rural families also depended heavily on their children. On the western frontier, parents encouraged children to act independently and to assume essential family responsibilities at an early age. Even very young children were expected to perform essential tasks such as cutting hay; herding cattle and sheep; burning brush; gathering eggs; churning butter; and assisting with plowing, planting, and harvesting. In rural areas schooling tended to be sporadic and intermittent.

Turn-of-the-Century Parenting

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed far-reaching improvements in children's health, as physicians successfully treated digestive problems such as diarrhea, dysentery, and worms; respiratory problems such as consumption, croup, pneumonia, and whooping cough; and such diseases as scarlet fever and infections. The pasteurization of milk was particularly important in reducing child mortality. These medical successes encouraged well-educated parents to embrace the notion that child rearing itself should be more scientific. During the 1880s and 1890s, the CHILD STUDY movement, spearheaded by the psychologist G. STANLEY HALL, collected information from mothers and teachers and promoted greater awareness of the stages of childhood development (including ADOLESCENCE, a term that he popularized) and increased sensitivity to children's fears, insecurities, and anxieties.

The belief that scientific principles had not been properly applied to child rearing produced new kinds of child-rearing manuals, of which the most influential was Dr. Luther Emmett Holt's *The Care and Feeding of Children*, first published in 1894. Holt emphasized rigid scheduling of feeding, bathing, sleeping, and bowel movements and advised mothers to guard vigilantly against germs and undue stimulation of infants. At a time when a well-adjusted adult was viewed as a creature of habit and self-control, he stressed the importance of imposing regular habits on infants. He discouraged mothers from kissing their babies, and told them to ignore their crying and to break such habits as thumb-sucking. Upper-class and upper-middle-class mothers, like Dr. BENJAMIN SPOCK's mother, were much more likely to adopt Holt's advice than were working-class mothers. The behaviorist psychologist JOHN B. WATSON—who, in the 1920s, told mothers to "never hug and kiss" their children or "let them sit in your lap"—claimed Holt as his inspiration.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the field of CHILD PSYCHOLOGY exerted a growing influence on middle-class parenting. It provided a new language to describe children's emotional problems, such as sibling rivalry, phobias, maladjustment, and inferiority and Oedipus complexes; it also offered new insights into forms of parenting (based on such variables as demandingness or permissiveness), the stages and milestones of children's development, and the characteristics of children at particular ages (such as the "terrible twos," which was identified by ARNOLD GESELL, Frances L. Ilg, and Louise Bates Ames). The growing prosperity of the 1920s made the earlier emphasis on regularity and rigid self-control seem outmoded. A well-adjusted adult was now regarded as a more easygoing figure, capable of enjoying leisure. Rejecting the mechanistic and behaviorist notion that children's behavior could be molded by scientific control, popular dispensers of advice favored a more relaxed approach to child rearing, emphasizing the importance of meeting babies' emotional needs. The title of a 1936 book by pediatrician C. Anderson Aldrich—*Babies Are Human Beings*—summed up the new attitude.

CHILD-GUIDANCE clinics, founded in the late 1910s to treat juvenile DELINQUENCY, attracted an expanding clientele of middle-class parents, concerned about eating and sleeping disorders, nail biting, bed-wetting, phobias, sibling rivalry, and temper tantrums, and by problems involving school failure, running away, disobedience, and rebellious behavior. Yet many parents failed to address children's informational needs regarding SEXUALITY, especially girls' need for information about menstruation, and increasingly favored having schools assume this responsibility. As early as 1922, half of all schools offered some instruction in "social hygiene," an early form of SEX EDUCATION.

The Depression, World War II, and the Baby Boom

The GREAT DEPRESSION imposed severe strains on the nation's parents. It not only threw breadwinners out of jobs and impoverished families, it also forced many families to share living quarters and put off having children. More than 200,000 vagrant children wandered the country. Many fathers were overwhelmed by guilt because they were unable to support their families, and unemployment significantly lowered their status within the family. The father's diminished stature was mirrored by a great increase in the money-saving and -earning roles of mothers.

Wartime upheavals caused by World War II also had a profound impact on parenting. The war produced a sudden upsurge in the marriage and birth rate; spurred an unprecedented tide of family separation and migration; and thrust millions of mothers into the workforce. The war also accel-

erated a trend toward more affectionate child rearing, as mothers took the position that it was normal and healthy to embrace their children. At the same time, the war temporarily reduced opposition to CHILD LABOR, both paid and volunteer work—such as gathering scrap materials or tending victory gardens—since work might reduce juvenile delinquency, which appeared to be a mounting problem.

World War II produced intense concerns about "faulty" mothering, especially maternal overprotectiveness and its mirror opposite, maternal neglect. Americans were shocked by the number of men, more than 5 million, rejected for military service on the basis of physical or psychological deficiencies. Philip Wylie, author of the 1942 best-seller *A Generation of Vipers*, blamed such problems on the combination of a dominant, overly protective mother and a passive or absent father. There was also a tendency to blame juvenile delinquency, latchkey children, illegitimacy, truancy, and runaways not on unsettled wartime conditions, but on neglectful mothers. An important wartime legacy, based on JOHN BOWLBY's studies of British children separated from their parents during the war, was a heightened stress on the significance of maternal attachment in developing feelings of security and competence in children.

No families were more deeply affected by the war than Japanese Americans. In the spring of 1942, 120,000—two-thirds of them U.S. citizens—were relocated from homes on the West Coast to detention camps located in barren and forbidding parts of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Toilets, showers, and dining facilities were communal, precluding family privacy. The internment camps inverted traditional family roles and loosened parental controls.

Severe problems of family adjustment followed the war. Many returning GIs found it difficult to communicate with children, while many wives and children found the men excessively strict, nervous, or intolerant. Estrangement and problems with alcohol were not infrequent as families tried to readjust after the war. The next decade witnessed a sharp reaction to the psychological stresses of wartime. Americans married at a younger age and had more children than in preceding generations. Responding to the postwar housing shortage, millions moved to new single-family homes in the suburbs. Many war-weary parents, scornful of the child-rearing homilies of their parents and grandparents, embraced the advice of Dr. Benjamin Spock, who rejected the idea of rigid feeding, bathing, and sleeping schedules, and told parents to pick up their babies and enjoy them.

Nevertheless, class and ethnic differences in parenting practices remained widespread. Allison Davis and Robert Havighurst found that middle-class parents began training children in achievement, initiative, personal responsibility, and cleanliness earlier than working-class parents, who placed a higher premium on obedience and relied more on corporal punishment; and that African-American parents had a more relaxed attitude toward INFANT FEEDING and weaning than their white counterparts.

Postwar parenting was characterized by an undercurrent of anxiety, sparked partly by concern over children's physical and mental health. The early 1950s was the last period when large numbers of children were left crippled by POLIO or meningitis. Psychologists such as Theodore Lidz, Irving Bieber, and ERIK ERIKSON linked schizophrenia, homosexuality, and identity diffusion to mothers who displaced their frustrations and needs for independence onto their children. A major concern was that many boys, raised almost exclusively by women, failed to develop an appropriate sex role identity. In retrospect, it seems clear that an underlying source of anxiety lay in the fact that mothers were raising their children with an exclusivity and in an isolation unparalleled in American history.

During the 1960s, there was a growing sense that something had gone wrong in American parenting. Books with titles like *Suburbia's Coddled Kids* criticized permissive child rearing and parents who let their children bully them. Meanwhile, maverick social critics, including Edgar Z. Friedenberg and Paul Goodman, argued that middle-class parents were failing their children by conveying mixed messages, stressing independence and accomplishment but giving their offspring few avenues of achievement or autonomy. At a time when Americans were worrying about gaps of all kinds—such as the so-called missile gap and the "credibility" gap—the generation gap was the most distressing of all. This gap was easily exaggerated and romanticized, and social scientists demonstrated that there was little divergence of ideas between the young and their parents on most moral and social issues, and that the biggest division was among youth themselves, especially between white middle-class and white working-class adolescents. Nevertheless, many families witnessed bitter clashes over dress, language, music, sexual morality, and, especially, politics.

Trends in Parenting since 1970

Since the early 1970s, parental anxieties greatly increased both in scope and intensity. Many parents sought to protect children from every imaginable harm by baby-proofing their homes, using car seats, and requiring bicycle helmets. Meanwhile, as more mothers joined the labor force, parents arranged more structured, supervised activities for their children. Unstructured play and outdoor activities for children three to eleven declined nearly 40 percent between the early 1980s and late 1990s.

A variety of factors contributed to this surge in anxiety. One factor was demographic. At the end of the twentieth century most children had one sibling or none. As parents had fewer children, they invested more emotion in each child, and many lived in fear that their offspring would underperform academically, athletically, or socially. An in-

crease in professional expertise about children, coupled with a proliferation of research and advocacy organizations, media outlets, and government agencies responsible for children's health and safety made parents increasingly aware of threats to children's well-being and of ways to maximize their children's physical, social, and intellectual development. Unlike postwar parents, who wanted to produce normal children who fit in, middle-class parents now wanted to give their child a competitive edge.

Excessive efforts to overload children with activities led experts such as David Elkind to decry a tendency toward "hyper-parenting" as ambitious middle-class parents attempted to provide their children with every possible opportunity by filling up their afterschool time with lessons, enrichment activities, and sports. These experts feared that overscheduling and overprogramming placed excessive pressure on children and deprived them of the opportunity for free play and hanging out.

Shocking news reports intensified parental fears, including the revelation in 1973 of the serial murders of twenty-seven juveniles by Elmer Wayne Henley and Dean Corll, and the poisoning of eight-year-old Timothy O'Bryan by cyanide-laced Halloween candy in 1974. These incidents were followed by highly publicized claims that young people's well-being was rapidly declining. During the mid-1970s there was alarm about an epidemic of teenage pregnancy. This was followed by a panic over stranger abductions of children, triggered by the mysterious disappearance of Etan Patz in New York City in 1979 and the abduction and murder of Adam Walsh in 1981 in Florida. Other panics followed, involving the sexual abuse of children in day care centers; violent YOUTH GANGS and juvenile "superpredators"; youthful substance abuse; and declining student performance on standardized tests.

These panics were highly exaggerated. The teenage pregnancy rate had peaked in 1957 and was declining, not rising. A federal investigation disclosed that few missing children were abducted by strangers; the overwhelming majority were taken by noncustodial parents or were runaways. No cases of multiple caretaker sexual abuse in day-care centers were substantiated. Although youth violence did rise in the late 1980s and early 1990s (in tandem with violence by adults), the rate fell sharply in the mid- and late 1990s until it declined to levels unseen since the mid-1960s. Similarly, rates of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use by juveniles dropped until they were lower than those reported in the 1970s. Finally, the reported decline in student performance on standardized tests reflected an increase in the range of students taking the tests, not deteriorating student achievement.

Nevertheless, these panics produced a nagging, if inaccurate, sense that recent shifts in family life—especially the increasing divorce rate and the growing number of single parent households and working mothers—had disastrous consequences for children's well-being. They also left an imprint on public policy, as many municipalities instituted curfews for juveniles; many schools introduced dress codes, random drug tests for student athletes, and "abstinence-only" sex education programs; and states raised the drinking age, adopted graduated driver's licenses, and made it easier to try juveniles offenders as adults in the court system. Other efforts to restore parental authority and discipline included the establishment of a rating system for CDs and video games; installation of v-chips in TVs to allow parents to restrict children's television viewing; and enactment in some states of laws requiring parental notification when minors sought abortions.

In evaluating recent changes in parenting, there is a tendency to exaggerate evidence of decline and ignore the genuine gains that have occurred. There is no evidence to suggest that most parents are less engaged in childcare than in the past or that adults have become "anti-child." While fewer parents participate in PTAs, many more take an active role in soccer leagues and Little League. While parents are having fewer children, they are investing more time and resources in those they do have. Contemporary parents are much more aware of the children's developmental needs and of the dangers of abuse, and most fathers are more engaged in child rearing than their fathers were.

Rising divorce rates and increasing numbers of working mothers have not had the negative psychological consequences that some have claimed. Research suggests that children suffer more when their parents stay together but have high levels of conflict than when they divorce. Also, working mothers are less likely to be depressed than stay-at-home mothers, and provide valuable role models, especially for their daughters.

There can be no doubt that contemporary parenting is more stressful than it was in the early postwar era. Today's parents are beset by severe time pressures and work-related stress, and fewer have supportive kin or neighbors to help out in a pinch. Their children are growing up in a violent, sex-saturated environment, where the allure of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and consumer products is widespread. Many of the vacant lots and other "free" spaces where earlier generations were able to play without adult supervision have disappeared. The result has been a hovering, emotionally intense style of parenting and a more highly organized form of child rearing, which may have made it more difficult for children to forge an independent existence and assert their growing maturity and competence.

See also: **Baby Boom Generation; Child Care; Child-Rearing Advice Literature; Fathering and Fatherhood; Mothering and Motherhood; Same-Sex Parenting; Theories of Childhood.**

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STEVEN MINTZ

Parents Magazine

Founded in 1926 in New York City, *Parents Magazine* became the key vehicle for transmitting the message of parent education in the twentieth century. This mass-circulation monthly, initially called *Children, The Magazine for Parents*, popularized scientific knowledge on child development to help parents rear their children. Over the course of the twentieth century, it reached into millions of homes.

The magazine reflected and shaped the booming parent education movement of the 1920s. Experts in child health, psychology, and education translated research studies into popular terms and offered practical suggestions. Official cooperation came from four universities and a distinguished board of advisory editors. Extensive advertising promoted such items as ready-made baby food, preparatory schools, and summer camps. The magazine's motto, "on rearing children from crib to college," suggested the middle-class expectations readers held for their children.

The founder and publisher for over fifty years was George J. Hecht, a businessman and social service worker who had earned an economics degree from Cornell, then worked for Creel's Committee on Public Information during World War I. Hecht believed that even educated, middle-class parents needed access to knowledge and assistance in raising their children. He received funding for his venture from the LAURA SPELMAN ROCKEFELLER MEMORIAL Foundation, a chief benefactor of the parent education movement.

Hecht recruited Clara Savage Littledale to serve as editor of the new magazine, a position she held for thirty years until her death in 1956. Littledale was a graduate of Smith College, a journalist, and the mother of two children. To make the latest findings in child development research available to parents, Littledale published articles on such topics as infant care, DISCIPLINE, character building, and SEX EDUCATION. Yet she was wary of parents relying too much on expert advice rather than their own common sense. She balanced research material with pieces based on humor, sentiment, and everyday experience, and included tips that readers sent in. She urged parents to relax and to enjoy their children—a message that presaged by at least a decade BENJAMIN SPOCK's *Baby and Child Care.*

In its attention to expertise and research, *Parents Magazine* reflected the privatized and professional orientation of parent education that took hold in the 1920s. But the reformist impulse shaped the magazine as well. Hecht and Littledale, who had both come of age in the Progressive Era, exhorted parents to look beyond the concerns of their own families and to support legislation on behalf of children and families. The magazine thus linked the private realm of child rearing with larger public concerns.

The popularity of *Parents Magazine* was immediate and enduring. Within a year of its founding, the magazine was selling 100,000 copies a month. Circulation reached 400,000 subscribers at ten years and almost a million by the maga-