The subject of child rearing can be bewildering. Parents today are confronted with copious amounts of information about parenting, matched only it seems by their angst about which recommendations to follow. Should they be firm or permissive? Should they focus on personality development or character? These are concerns most parents share. But the concern is not new. The first white settlers in this country, for example, worried that their children were losing the dedication and religious conviction of the parents (Keniston 1977). Worrying about parenting seems to be a tendency among most parents at all times in history.

Moreover, nearly every conceivable approach to parenting has been tried at one time or another. But why? Why does one approach become popular for a time only to be replaced by another that is dramatically different in style and content? Keniston (1977) identifies a key factor — the "ecology of childhood — the overall social and economic system that exerts a critical influence on what happens to parents and children" (p.xiii). It is within this societal framework that parenting practices develop. One approach appears and then disappears only to reappear again. The old maxim what goes around, comes around is surely true in the area of child rearing. In this paper we will take a historical vantage point by examining the development of child rearing practices in America up until the early 1950s. In particular, we will note general trends in those practices in the context of the environmental factors that shaped them.

A note of caution as we begin. Change in family behavior is historically slower (or at least less perceptible) than change in other institutions, and it is therefore more difficult to measure. That does not keep us from noting, however, the meaningful evidence of change that does exist. Much of that evidence comes from the literature describing the child rearing practices of a particular period. And though the existence of that literature does not necessarily mean it reflects the prevailing practices of the day, it does have a role in shaping those practices. According to Bronfenbrenner, "Our analysis suggests that...mothers [in particular] not only read these books but take them seriously, and that their treatment of the child is affected accordingly". Further, he states, "Child rearing practices are likely to change most quickly in those segments of society which have the closest access and are most receptive to the agencies or agent of change (e.g., public media, clinics, physicians, and counselors)" (1958, p.411, cited in Gordon 1968, p.579). And so, many historians give credence to the literature as both an indicator and an instigator of child rearing practices.

Other factors spawn trends in child rearing as well. One is the development of new technologies. In the area of toilet training (a big issue in early child rearing), an advance in technology — development of the automatic washing machine — had a profound impact. "Ergo, out goes the Freudian hypotheses [of the anal stage] and in comes the maytag hypothesis" (Gordon 1968, p.580). Another example: with development of baby feeding formulas came a decrease in breast feeding. And so we do have clues as to how and why certain parenting practices have developed in given periods of history.

Ancient Practices. In A.D. 175 the Greek physician Galen described a
familiar approach to parenting: "The normal child is healthy in every way. His manners need no correcting...So, when they cry or scream or are upset, we should understand that it means something is disturbing them, and we must try to discover what they need and give it to them" (source unknown). Sounds like Dr. Spock! Indeed what goes around does come around.

Other sources paint a different picture, however. The ancients often looked upon children as property: "Justice between master and slave and between father and child is not the same as absolute and political justice, but only analogous to them. For there is no such thing as injustice in the absolute sense towards what is one's own; and a chattel, or a child till it reaches a certain age and becomes independent, is, as it were, a part of oneself, and no one chooses to harm himself; hence there can be no injustice towards them and therefore nothing just or unjust in the political sense." (Aristotle, cited in Steinmetz 1987, p.293-295).

Philo notes this low view of children in commenting on the practice of infanticide: "Some of them do the deed with their own hands; with monstrous cruelty and barbarity they stifle and throttle the first breath which the infants draw or throw them into a river or into the depths of the sea, after attaching some heavy substance to make them sink more quickly under its weight" (Philo, Works, cited in DeMause 1974, p. 28). Though infanticide was officially proscribed in the Western world in A.D. 374, it continued on what was, arguably, a wide spread basis. Innocent III began the hospital of the Santo Spirito in Rome at the end of the twelfth century because of the number of women throwing their babies into the Tiber. Birth ratios from 1391 seem to present evidence of the killing of girl babies: For every 172 boy babies there were only 100 girl babies. And as late as 1527, one priest admitted that "the latrines resound with the cries of children who have been plunged into them" (DeMause 1974, p.29).

DeMause concludes "that a very large percentage of the children born prior to the eighteenth century were what would today be termed battered children...The child in antiquity lived his earliest years in an atmosphere of sexual abuse. Growing up in Greece and Rome often included being used sexually by older men....sexual use of children was everywhere evident in some form (1974, pp.40-43).

A word of caution is in order here. Many authors would see DeMause’s interpretation as rather extreme and would point out that he, like others, puts too much reliance on the use of secondary historical sources. Pollock notes that studies using primary sources such as diaries, memoirs and letters, present a much less repressive picture of childhood (1983). One must be careful about extrapolating a few horror stories to paint a picture of an entire society. But suffice it to say, the approach toward parenting in the ancient world was very much a mixed bag, with children often being ignored and even severely abused.

1700-1890. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, many researchers note a change in attitude toward parenting — particularly in America where we will focus our inquiry. Efforts were made to bring child abuse under control (DeMause 1974), and unlike Europe, infanticide in Colonial America was virtually unknown.

Philippe Aries (1962, cited in Hawes 1985) notes that although children and childhood were not inventions of the eighteenth century, the extensive changes of
that time brought on by the process of industrialization, made children into an increasingly differentiated and important part of society. Evidence of this change includes the houses that gave children more (and more private) space; schools that began educating them for a more worldly and independent life;...books and toys that catered to their desires; and more openly affectionate parental behavior and less demanding physical discipline as evidenced by contemporary literature.

This view sees the eighteenth century, particularly in America, as the precursor of the modern approach to child rearing. Yet the beginnings of the modern era were rather harsh — due in large part to the prevailing view of human nature. The Calvinists, Puritans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists of the day saw human nature, as reflected in the child at birth, as totally depraved. Though a child appeared sweet and innocent, it was born with an evil disposition. Parenting practices, therefore, must be directed toward dealing with that evil. "Above all...children in America were subjected to a regime destined to civilize and tame them, to restrain their natural tendency to run wild" (DeMause 1974, p.364). Since a child was naturally subject to unbridled appetites and passions, a parent's job was to break that child's will, much in the same way one would break a wild horse (DeMause 1974).

This view of the nature of a child was even reflected in the teaching practices of the day: "He [the teacher] derived an intense joy from the agonies of the little victim [student] trembling and shivering on the bench. And he used to administer the whippings coldly, slowly, deliberately...he asked the boy to let down his clothes, lie across the bench...and pitched in with the leather thongs...In every person there is a Good Spirit and an Evil Spirit. The Good Spirit has its own dwelling-place — which is the heart. So has the Evil Spirit — and that is the place where you get the whipping" (DeMause 1974, p. 10).

Further into the 1700s and into the nineteenth century, however, due in large part to the influence of Locke and Rousseau, society's attitude toward human nature, and hence children, began to shift. Rather than intrinsically evil, human nature was seen as good or at least neutral, reflecting Locke's view of the mind as "white paper, void of all characters." The problem then was not a child's nature but the influence of society.

Advice-givers argued that children received "impressions" from their environment that would powerfully shape their malleable personalities. These impressions (whether pleasant or unpleasant) left their mark on children much more than did rational arguments or appeals to abstract reasoning. Thus it was important that from an early age children receive the correct kinds of impressions (Hawes 1985).

The belief that an infant must be prevented from acquiring bad habits found easy acceptance in a society concerned with self-control and orderly development. The infant, having a neutral nature, was equally prone to good and evil, yet the child's malleability offered the opportunity to encourage the former tendency and eliminate the latter.

This view is reflected in The Maternal Physician (1811) was written by an anonymous American matron dealing with both the physical care and the character training of the child. In particular, she advocates the guidance and discipline of the child's will, relating how her nine month old son "gave evident signs of an obstinate and passionate temper." So she "began a course of discipline
which, in a few years, so entirely subdued a refractory spirit...that now I have not
a more amiable child, or one who renders more prompt obedience to the
commands of his parents; and this was accomplished before he was four years
old, so that I have had no occasion to use the least severity since" (cited in Lomax 1978).

This plasticity of a child's character presented a danger however — they would
inevitably go wrong if they were not properly instructed and controlled. Hence,
any child led astray by the world must be speedily corrected. Evidence of this is
seen by Hawes in America's construction of

dazzling array of educational settings...Sunday schools for infants in
factories, monitory schools for children in densely populated settlements,
refuges and orphanages for abandoned children. From 1840 to 1860, they
expanded their institution-building efforts...concern of the young and very
young increasingly found expression in the creation of
educational...settings that irreversibly transformed the meaning of
childhood and childrearing...The object was moral regulation, character
development, and ultimately control over the consciousness of the rising

The tools for exercising this control were many and frequently included the use
of shame. The Puritan ministers Josiah Smith and John Barnard suggested that
shaming children was a legitimate and effective way to obtain desirable behavior.
The Pennsylvania Quaker publication, Advice on Children called the inculcation
of a "sense of shame" a "benevolent art in instruction" (DeMause 1974, p. 370).

Fear was another tool. The dark closet, tying to bed posts, rough-handling, and
the rod were all used. It was even common to warn children that they would die if
they did not behave.

Keniston (1977) points out that the zeitgeist of the time contributed to this
approach to parenting. In nineteenth century America the social-cultural ideal was
self-sufficiency. As the country had moved away from European economic and
social systems based on feudalism, it reveled in individualism and
self-sufficiency. To depend on others was virtually a sin whereas independence
was equated with such moral virtues as industriousness, enterprise, and
self-control.

Self-sufficiency was expressed politically in the democratic ideal and
economically in glorification of the work ethic. But in the realm of the family,
self-sufficiency led to both moral virtues and family problems.

Before the nineteenth century the ideal family was seen as part of the
community at large — "little commonwealths" — to use the Puritan phrase. Now
industrialization both encouraged and necessitated that the family stand on its
own. The consequences were not all good.

For many it was a time of great economic pressure and the self-sufficient family
became an economic unit in which all members had to play a role. Paintings of
the time portray children in the same kind of clothing adults wore — a sign of
how much they participated in the world of adult responsibilities. They were
expected to undertake major chores by age 6 or 7 and they were frequently
"bound" to an employer by age 11 or 12 — contributing to the family's finances
until they left home in their twenties (Keniston 1977). According to the United
States census of 1870, one of every eight children between 10 and 15 years old was gainfully employed.

But it should be noted that even in the midst of harsh realities, there was movement toward a more careful and considerate view of children. This period of time, called the Victorian era, (named after the reign of Queen Victoria in England from 1837-1901), is often viewed today as one where parents were prudish, harsh and demanding. But as Carl Degler notes, the nineteenth century family was "child centered, companionate, private and domestic...marriage was based on affection and love, representing a bond between two individuals, rather than an alliance between families (cited in Hareven 1983, p.339).

Degler sees this period as giving rise to the "modern family" — a close family unit that was more democratic, less "patriarchal” with less sternness in the father and with more permissive child rearing practices (Hareven 1983).

As the self-sufficient family turned inward, it became a place of protection from a harsh and competitive world. The father was seen as bulwark against an aggressive and selfish industrialized world, while the mother was repository of tenderness, purity and generosity. An essay from the period was typical: *The Wife, Source of Comfort and Spring of Joy* (Keniston 1977). The family of the time was, in a sense, the reverse of the general society:

The brave new world of nineteenth century America was, in some respects, a dangerous world — or so many people felt. The new egalitarian spirit, the sense of openness, the opportunities for material gain, the cult of the *self-made man*: all this was new, invigorating, and liberating at *one* level — but it also conveyed a deep threat to traditional values and precepts. In order to seize the main chance and get ahead in the ongoing struggle for success, a man had to summon energies and take initiatives that would at the very least exhaust him and might involve him in terrible compromises. At the same time he would need to retain some place of rest, of harmony — some emblem of the personal and moral regime that he was otherwise leaving behind. Within this matrix of ideas the family was sharply redefined. Henceforth the life of the individual home, on the one hand, and the wider society, on the other, represented for many Americans entirely different spheres (Tufte 1979, pp.50-51).

This shift in the perception of the role of family was reflected in the literature following the Civil War. Parents were advised to emphasize the good and innocent qualities of childhood — showing more understanding and less stringent discipline. Jacob Abbott wrote numerous popular texts that reflected this gentler view of the child's nature and encouraged a more lenient parental role.

This benevolent attitude toward children was in part a reflection of a growing secularization of American values and increased material prosperity. But, in addition, children were the beneficiaries of a reevaluation of the causal relationship between behavior and the social and physical environment. Before the Civil War, poverty, illness, intemperance, and criminality were viewed primarily as failures of the *individual*. But by the end of the nineteenth century, personal failings came to be attributed more to the environment — conditions beyond the control of the individual. This view placed the child in a new position (Lomax 1978). By the turn of the century, a new trend in child rearing was
gaining ground.
1890-1920. America was on the move as the nineteenth century waned. On every level change was apparent. The population increased from about 57 million in 1885 to over 100 million in 1915 — in large part because of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. As the economy mushroomed, factories and cities appeared almost overnight. Industrialization was in full bloom — it was the age of the machine.

But every new benefit seemed to produce a new liability. A wide range of concerned individuals tried to deal with the negative consequences of industrialization, giving rise to the Progressive Movement that brought about reforms and changes in the period of the 1890's to 1920 (Hawes 1985).

This movement led to the organization of the first White House Conference on Children in 1909. In 1912 reformers also pushed for the establishment of the Children's Bureau — a centralized clearinghouse for the distribution of information about the proper nurture of children.

In part as a reaction to the industrial revolution and what was perceived to be a concomitant decline in morality, the Victorian age flowered. In parenting, the idea of a "well adjusted personality" was unknown — what was emphasized was character development. And though we generally think of the Victorian approach as rather rigid and harsh, in the realm of parenting it was, in a sense, liberal and sentimental. Child rearing practices were somewhat relaxed, even indulgent. Young people were intentionally shielded from near-adult roles. The showering of love on a child was seen as the key to success in child training.

In the child rearing literature of the day there were frequent references to God and to the values of a Christian home. The mother was presented as having the crucial role in the character development of a child because it was believed that character is developed by imitation. Therefore if the mother was good, honest, cheerful and orderly, so would the child be. This emphasis on imitation rather than formal instruction was, in part, the legacy of Darwin's work which held that man was a product of outside forces.

Giving the mother the central role was necessitated by the decreasing role of the father. With the rise of business enterprises around the turn of the century, fathers were spending more time away, so mother had to take over management of the home, including the children. By the early twentieth century only about one tenth of white married women were employed.

And as the role of older children in the work force decreased during this time, the concept of "adolescence" emerged (a term coined by G.S. Hall in 1904). The idea was further reinforced by American churches which were defensively motivated to form youth societies to ward off big city and immigrant influences on their young people. These societies created self-contained worlds wherein immaturity could be prolonged.

1920-1930. This era began in the "roaring twenties" — a reaction to certain Victorian reform movements including prohibition of 1920-1933. If some segments of society were rebelling against Victorian repression in the "speakeasies" much of the rest of society was reacting to the reaction. Parenting practices saw a renewed emphasis on discipline. Regimentation and sternness were key — parents were told to minimize affection:
It was believed that stimulation of any sort would lead to precocity in the older child and dullness in the man. Furthermore, baby's strength was needed for rapid growing, and picking the baby up deprived him of his strength. Still another reason for discouraging physical contact with baby was the belief that postnatal conditions for the infant should closely approximate prenatal conditions and since the infant was not handled in the uterus, he should not be handled after birth" (Stendler 1950, p.128).

The almost overwhelming zeal for reform in nearly every aspect of American life influenced the fledgling profession of psychology which had its beginnings in the 1880's. By the early twentieth century, American psychologists had developed two major approaches to psychology. Many were interested in mental measurement, seeing mental tests as socially useful for classifying and sorting individuals and groups in the national population. Others were more interested in a psychology of behavior inspired by Darwin's suggestion that instincts were the major phylogenetic survival instruments.

It was the later that led, by 1915, to a new developmental or genetic psychology whose advocates, including G.S. Hall would emphasize stages of growth, origins of mind, and child psychology (Hawes 1985).

America was in love with science and the early behavioral and scientific approach of psychology was epitomized by behaviorist psychologist J.B. Watson. In his famous book of 1928, Psychological Care of Infant and Child, he advocated conditioning the behavior of babies by scientific control with strict feeding and sleeping schedules, toilet training at six months, no hugging or kissing. "Mother love is a dangerous instrument," he wrote, "that can wreck a child's chance for future happiness." The only physical contact he advocated between parent and child as a brisk handshake each morning.

But by the late 20s the rationale of strict early training was being undermined by a new view of child development — Freudian psychology. G.S. Hall sponsored a conference in 1909 at which Sigmund Freud first spoke to an American audience. And the twenties saw growing acceptance of Freud's theories as applied to children. Arnold Gesell, a devotee of Freud, wrote that it was a waste of time to attempt to "condition" a baby until his nervous system had reached the requisite Freudian stage.

Freud's greatest influence was his emphasis on personality development. If the ideal person in the mid-nineteenth century was a person of strong moral fiber; now, thanks to Freud, the ideal was a person with a well-balanced, flexible personality. Implicit in Freud's theories was the promise that, if a child's early experiences were pleasurable and if he suffered a minimum of frustration and was given a maximum of understanding, he would develop into a well adjusted person. These ideas had a profound impact on child rearing that has persisted to our day.

1930-1950. This era commenced with the Great Depression. In these difficult times parenting focused on caring for a child's physical development. Concern about malnutrition was paramount. "The up-to-date mother was one who knew her calories and her vitamins, who fed her family scientifically, and who saw that her baby had fresh air (however cold) and sunshine" (Stendler 1950, p.130).
The Depression forced families to concentrate on survival. A family with no bread puts fun and relationships at a low priority. Any time for leisure was often used for a second job. "The healthy family during the Depression was one that was fed, sheltered, and cared for by parents who loved each other and their children but didn't have leftover energy to demonstrate it in tangible ways beyond providing mere sustenance" (Curran 1983, p.121).

The trauma of the depression led to a decade that focused heavily on child welfare:

During the Depression years, public recognition of the special needs, rights and place of children and youth expanded dramatically...a host of cultural and social landmarks attested to this: the formation of the American Academy of Pediatrics in 1930 (defining a medical specialty in terms of the young age of the patient); provisions for dependent and crippled children in the Social Security Act; new child labor laws;...growth of public child care facilities; medical breakthroughs...; public health gains...; the popularity of child stars such as Shirley Temple and Mickey Rooney...; and the discovery of the "teenager," reflected partly in the magazine Seventeen, which first appeared in 1944 (Hawes 1985, p. 489).

But this focus on children should not lead us to conclude that children were the center of attention. As the nation moved out of the Depression and grappled with the societal storms brought on by World War II, there was a shift away from child-centered to parent-centered families. As family relations focused on the parents as the core of family life, a much greater autonomy was afforded women within the family and the society in general. As the country made the final shift from an agrarian to a manufacturing/technical society it moved from a slow-paced, family-based culture to one of fast food and family stress (Curran 1983). With this shift came new trends in child rearing. In the late 30s and early 40s the country left the era of scientific regulation of a child's behavior, to viewing children as needing little parental direction. Children were seen as "self-regulating" if they were left to develop on their own. Child rearing practices moved in the direction of greater permissiveness or indulgence (Gordon 1968).

Perhaps parents of this era did not want to see their children suffer as they did in the depression.

In 1930, Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a series of articles in Ladies Home Journal entitled Mental Hygiene in the Home. These articles discussed child rearing in light of a child's emotional needs. He emphasized the influence of the home and the importance of finding the cause of behavior.

In 1950, Celia Stendler reflected on this era:

The past two decades [1930-1950] have witnessed a revolution in child training practices in America which has been tremendous in its scope and far-reaching in its effects. From an era where the mother was taught that the child must have its physical wants cared for and then be left alone, must be fed on a rigid schedule, must learn to cry it out, must be toilet trained early and must not be spoiled by attention, we have come to a time when exactly the opposite advice is advocated. Today the mother is advised to feed the baby when he's hungry, to delay toilet training until
he's ready for it, to see that the baby gets a reasonable amount of cuddling and mothering, to let the baby initiate the weaning process. And just as a mother of 1930 was taught that the popular doctrine of 1930 would produce the right kind of child, so the mother of today is assured that if she weans and toilet trains and cuddles in the approved fashion, her child will have a well-adjusted personality (Stendler 1950, p.122).

Stendler questions why such radical changes have occurred in the absence of any scientific justification. She attributes the change to the influence of popular literature. Clark Vincent (1951) agrees with Stendler and Michael Gordon (1968) also notes distinct parallels between changes in patterns of middle class infant training and practices advocated in parent-education literature. Wolfenstein (1953, cited in Gordon 1968), studied the development of child rearing by focusing on changes in recommendations in the literature on four areas of infant development and training: 1) masturbation 2) thumb sucking 3) weaning 4) and bowel training. She writes: "In respect to masturbation and thumb sucking, the curve of severity [in method of training suggested] shows a consistently declining direction. In weaning and bowel training we find a "U" curve rising in the twenties and subsequently declining...In 1942-45, the handling of the infant in all areas has become very gentle, this tendency is continued and even carried further in 1951" (Wolfenstein 1953, p.128; cited in Gordon 1968, p.579).

The childrearing advice of the 1930s and 40s conceded to the emotions and "natural" development of children. Parents needed to be no less vigilant than before, but they were to watch more closely for cues which the children offered. "The hope was that the child would still end up as regular as clockwork — but the tendency was towards less mechanical methods to achieve that goal" (Hawes 1985, p.502).

This new approach was evident in such books as Babies Are Human Beings: An Interpretation of Growth (Aldrich 1938); Keep Them Human (Dixon 1942); You, Your children, and War (Baruch 1944); Our American Babies (Whipple 1944); and Infant and Child in the Culture of Today (Gesell 1943). These books generally ignored or played down the matter of discipline. "If one can judge a time from its books, the 1940's during the war and in the years immediately afterwards may be described as the most permissive time in child care" (Hawes 1985, p.503). Bronfenbrenner (1958, cited in Gordon 1968) also notes this trend toward permissiveness, particularly among middle class mothers.

With an emphasis on personality development — discipline and character development took the back seat. Emotional problems of adjustment rather than moral problems claimed the attention of the writers of the day. Behavioral problems such as thumb-sucking, temper tantrums or autoerotic acts were seen as "passing phases" characteristic of certain developmental stages and were best dealt with by ignoring them.

Following the war, America experienced substantially greater affluence and geographic mobility. Both had a profound effect on the family. Moving away from kin had a major impact on the idea of the extended family. Loneliness, the separation of family from relatives, and an abundance of available time changed the role of wife and mother in particular. Many women left the home to return to college or enter the work force. "Today we live with the results... Today's women
are not necessarily giving up what their mothers had — they're simply attempting to add what their dad's had (Curran 1983, p.121).

With the rise of suburban living following the war families began losing the battle with time. Along with the patio and the two-car garage came lessons, youth leagues, and commuting to work. The dining room, symbol of family unity, eventually gave way to the family room with its symbol of separation — the TV set. In 1946, only 8,000 American households contained a television set; by 1948, there were 100,000; and by 1950 the number had risen to 3.9 million sets — accounting for about 45 percent of all households (Hawes 1985, p.558).

The post-war period also gave rise to the **baby boom**. In the eighteen years after the war, the population increased more than it had in the fifty years preceding 1946. At the same time, America, with only 6 percent of the world's population, was **producing** nearly two-thirds of the world's goods, while **consuming** one-third of the world's goods and services (Hawes 1985). As a consequence, baby boomers were the healthiest, best-fed, best-clothed, and best-housed generation the nation had seen.

This age of prosperity glorified motherhood. One of the most influential books of the period, *Modern Woman: the Lost Sex* appeared in 1947 and launched a strident attack on women who placed careers above motherhood. Ferdinand Lundberg, a free-lance writer, and Marynia Farnham, a psychiatrist, drew heavily on Freudian concepts to argue that women who rejected the role of motherhood were suffering from "penis envy." Only when such women purged themselves of this sickness, and only when society gave motherhood the respect it was due, would women recover their true identity.

The value placed on motherhood and the family structure of mother-in-the-home was reflected in the popular media with such moves as "Mildred Pierce" starring Joan Crawford who sacrifices her life for the benefit of an ungrateful daughter. Such television shows as "I Remember Mama," "Ozzie and Harriet," and "Leave it to Beaver" were typical of the genre. Familistic values meant good box office and high ratings, suggesting that the media faithfully reflected popular attitudes during the period.

The post-war period saw a swing back toward child-centered families, perhaps most strongly reflected in Dr. Benjamin Spock's wildly popular book, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* published in 1946. By 1976 the book had sold 28 million copies, making it the best-selling book in the twentieth century, next to the Bible. Spock's discussions of masturbation, thumb-sucking, weaning, and toilet training are generally in agreement with what is specified in other literature of the day including *Infant Care* (a publication of the U.S. Children's Bureau, first published in 1914) (Gordon 1968). The approach of these publications is generally permissive with an emphasis on gradualism and gentleness.

The popularity of Spock's book may be attributed to a "fortuitous convergence between the book and the times" (Hawes 1985, p.539). His book appeared at the onset of the baby boom when millions of novice mothers who were seeking medical advice were also open to Spock's psychological advice. That advice was "child-centered" in a double sense. First, he advised permissiveness in handling the child, and, perhaps more importantly, he implied that proper child care required a good deal of thought and time on the part of both mother and child.
Spock's psychological advice was basically Freudian in character, although, as with other followers of Freud, he strained out many of the more overt psycho-sexual aspects of Freud's theory.
Conclusion. From Colonial America of the eighteenth century to suburban America of 1950 the country witnessed many swings in child rearing practices. But why the differences? As we have seen, it is in part because society's approach to child rearing is a function of culture and major historic events. If you were living in 14th century Europe, for example, your concern for your daughter might have been that she not grow up to be a witch. But if you were living in the early 1800s and a pioneer crossing the plains of America, your concern for your children would have been their survival.

Times change, and to at least some extent, parenting changes with the times. Child rearing practices are very much a function of when and where you live. Perhaps, though, that is not as big a problem as one might assume. Certainly one of the lessons of the history of child rearing is that parents must prepare their children to live in the world of their time and place. We do not advocate abusive parenting, but different approaches have worked at different times.

If nineteenth century parents had to prepare their children for the industrial/machine age, today parents must prepare their children for the computer/space age — a world that requires sociability (our world places high importance on the ability to interact with others), intellectualism (we are a technological society), independence (our society values and therefore rewards autonomy), and the ability to function in a fast paced, stressful society. History tells us that different needs have dictated differing approaches to child rearing. We conclude that it will continue to be so.

References


