

Childhood in Three Cultures in Early America

Joseph E. Illick

San Francisco State University

This essay tells the story of childhoods in three cultures — American Indian, European-American, and African-American — during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with due respect to the divergent requirements of adulthood in each. Beyond that goal, I want to consider how each culture met certain *universal* needs of children. My criteria for universality derive from the attachment theory of the late John Bowlby, a British psychoanalyst.

“Man’s behaviour, it is claimed, is infinitely variable,” Bowlby observes. “It differs from culture to culture; nothing resembling the stable and predictable patterns of the lower species is to be found.” But, he continues, “I do not believe this view can be sustained. Man’s behaviour is very variable, it is true, but not infinitely so; and, though cultural differences are great, certain commonalities can be discerned. For example, despite obvious variability, the patterns of human behaviour . . . that result in mating, in the care of babies and young children, and in the attachment of young to parents are found in almost all members of the human race and seem best considered as expressions of some common plan and, since they are of obvious survival value, as instances of instinctive behaviour.”¹

The basic assumption of Bowlby’s attachment theory is that every one of us, regardless of culture, retains an atavistic awareness of the perils of being unprotected. Thus, an infant is motivated to attach itself to a caregiver for protection from predators or other dangers, a bonding that begins between three and six months and is complete in most cultures by eighteen months.² After it is formed any threat to that attachment creates fear in the child, and that fear, unattended to, escalates into what Bowlby labels anxiety, the antithesis of security. Consistent caregiving promotes not only greater security but, eventually, a tolerance for separation from the caregiver. Thus attachment, not to be confused with dependence, allows for the development of autonomy, that is, the ability to get along on one’s own. Prolonged separation has the opposite effect.³ The quality of our infant attachment plays a major role in the emotional life of each of us throughout the rest of our existence.⁴ Of course, it does not play the only role.⁵

Bowlby is insistent on this matter. “States of anxiety and depression that occur during the adult years, and also psychopathic conditions, can, it is held, be linked in a systematic way to the states of anxiety, despair, and detachment . . . that are so readily engendered whenever a young child is separated for long from his mother-figure, whenever he expects such a separation, and when, as sometimes happens, he loses her altogether.” By separation Bowlby means to

include not only the mother-figure's physical absence but that much harder-to-measure quantity, her emotional absence. On the other hand, absence can be mitigated by a substitute mother, a familiar companion, or familiar possessions.⁶

With the rudiments of Bowlby's theory in mind, we can turn to the narrative of childhood in three cultures.

Native Americans

The original settlers of the Americas, who arrived tens of thousand years before the Europeans and Africans, created a wide variety of cultures in response to their different environments and the ways they chose to survive in them. Most Eastern woodland Indians by the seventeenth century had adopted agriculture and, consequently, lived in villages, but places of residence varied in size from several thousand inhabitants to a few score. Politically, organization ranged from democratic and libertarian to hierarchical and authoritarian.⁷

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to generalize about child rearing among Native Americans.⁸ Children were born at approximately four-year intervals due to protracted breast feeding, prohibitions on sexual relations while nursing, and abortions. A fifty per cent death rate among the children, partly due to infanticide, stabilized the size of the population.

The aim of Native American parents was to train male hunter-warriors, who would be required to act individualistically yet always conform to the demands of a communal, conservative, homogeneous society. Females were instructed as planter-gatherers, and had to possess wilderness survival skills as keen as the males'.

European observers were impressed by the fondness shown toward and good care taken of Indian children by their mothers. Only her death prevented a mother from nursing her infant, in which case the father might be expected to assume the feeding. Still, there were practices, such as bathing and exposing the infant in the coldest weather or allowing him or her to sleep naked between the parents, of which the Europeans did not approve.⁹

During a nursing period of three years or even longer, the child remained close to its mother, usually transported on a cradleboard it was unlikely to experience the intrusion of a newly-arrived sibling. The youngster was thrust onto his or her own resources "from a persuasion," in the words of one observer, "that nature ought to be suffered to act upon them, and that they ought not to be confined in any thing."¹⁰

Children were expected to discover their own ways, not coerced by their parents and not struck by them, a permissiveness that Europeans found amazing. According to Moravian missionary David Zeisberger, "children have entirely their own will and never do anything by compulsion."¹¹ Nevertheless,

these young children must have remained under the watchful eyes of their parents and, probably, the whole village community.

By all accounts, the care of the Native American child conforms to the specifications for secure attachment announced by Bowlby: the mother remains ever accessible during the early years. Bowlby asserts that successful attachment can be judged by a child's ability to explore a strange situation with the mother as a secure base, which is what an Indian child aged three or four was expected to do.¹² Building confidence in this manner is depicted by Bowlby as the pathway to autonomy, which was an explicit goal of American Indian adulthood.

Along the way, children were expected to adopt clearly-defined gender roles. Girls learned games that led to the performance of household duties. They were taught to pound corn and accompanied their mothers to the fields, practicing household tasks not expected of boys, whose ball games, archery, and fishing were antecedents of a hunter/warrior occupation.¹³ Scantly clad in winter, boys hardened their bodies as they did their minds; their elders expected of them self-control and absence of "womanly" emotion. Their thoughts were to be focused on places seen and words spoken.¹⁴ Surely the example of parents, especially warrior-fathers, forsaking corporal punishment must have contributed to children, especially sons, exercising restraint.¹⁵

Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europeans explained the absence of corporal punishment from Native American practice as a consequence of the fear that a child so humiliated would commit suicide or, recalling the act in adulthood, would seek revenge on his or her parents.¹⁶ Contemporary historians have found other motives. George Pettitt cites as the "chief inhibition. . . the fact that pain per se cannot be used as a fear-producing, coercive force in a social milieu which places a premium upon ability to stand pain and suffering without flinching." Furthermore, he suggests that children must feel protected from punishment by their families, that children are specially linked to the spiritual world and as such receive kindness and respect, and that the patience and stoicism fostered by life in the cradleboard makes an Indian child "amenable to an early training, so strongly marked by indulgence."¹⁷

The development of self-restraint and stoicism, Pettitt's focus, was closely linked to the cultivation of autonomy. James Axtell informs us: "For the individual, a major goal was to be in control of oneself and one's destiny. . . . those people who enjoyed the greatest autonomy ranked highest in Indian eyes. . . . those who enjoyed power were expected to limit its exercise so as not to impinge upon others." Since power was invisibly gained and lost, while it could not be guaranteed that the powerful would disregard the powerless, it was best to avoid others for fear of antagonizing.¹⁸ In this way, self-restraint, the presentation of a stoical exterior, was linked to autonomy, which was further noted by the absence of corporal punishment — promoted autonomy. Con-

temporary psychological literature leaves no doubt that the presence of such punishment erodes autonomy.¹⁹

Education of the young was not only imparted by the example of elders, but also explicitly transmitted by storytelling. This oral literature was entertaining, but more importantly conveyed cultural beliefs and practices. Often the leading characters of legend and myth were children or youths, making clear that the young were targets of these stories.²⁰

The test of childhood training would be in adulthood; the transit from the one stage of life to the other was well-defined. For girls there were sometimes rituals surrounding the onset of menstruation. For boys, whose passage through puberty was less biologically evident, there were more elaborate ceremonies: the huskinaw and the vision quest. Both involved isolation, as well as sensory deprivation and stimulation. The purposes were to begin life on a new course, though without forfeiting the training of childhood, or to locate through visions the spirits which dominated the young person's life. Sometimes adults gave to a young man a new name, the meaning of which might shame, exalt, or even assign a personality to the recipient.²¹ It seems quite possible that the vision quest was undertaken to find a repository (the spirit) for an idealized projected attachment figure that would endure while the mortal figures failed. In any case, the line between childhood and adulthood was clearly drawn.

European-American Childhood

The Europeans who settled along the Atlantic seaboard in the seventeenth century were mostly English, some of whom left small communities and others of whom emigrated from London. In North America they established themselves in villages or, more often, on isolated farms, though seldom far from neighbors. As the Indian threat receded in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, the colonists rushed westward, again settling in open country. Only five percent of the population was urban, living in towns of 2,500 or more.

In the beginning there were two distinct environments. The 20,000 immigrants to New England naturally increased to 100,000 by 1700 as freedom from indenture, a balanced sex ratio, a healthy climate, and plentiful food encouraged early marriage, a high birth rate, and low mortality. In the Chesapeake region the population was sustained only by continuing migration from England (and of Africans from the West Indies) due to features exactly the opposite of New England. The large, stable nuclear family of the North stood in stark contrast to the constantly reforming household of the South, which might contain a mixture of "orphans, half-brothers, stepbrothers and stepsisters, and wards running a gamut of ages. The father figure in the house might well be an uncle or a brother, the mother figure an aunt, elder sister, or simply the father's 'now-wife'."²²

The patriarchy of New England could not be replicated in the Chesapeake since early parent death and consequent reformation of the household meant that parental control could not easily be exercised. Fathers in the first generation in Andover, Massachusetts, often lived into their eighties, while in Maryland men typically perished in their early forties. However, it is possible that familial stability was possible for Chesapeake children "in the permanent network of relatives and quasi-relatives in which they were embedded."²³

Infants were treated similarly in both regions. If the neonate was swaddled — that is, its head and body tightly wrapped in cloth bands so that it resembled nothing so much as a mummy with an exposed face, a more confining situation than being strapped to a cradleboard — it was not only for the practical purpose of keeping it warm but because of a concern for preparing it to stand and walk upright. Swaddling lasted for about three months, while breast feeding continued through the first year. Until the baby walked, it was carried in the arms of one of its parents.²⁴

In the Chesapeake it appears that an infant could command parental attention during its initial two or three years, after which it was considered a self-sufficient child — and was likely to have lost one if not both of its birth parents. This situation is particularly pertinent to Bowlby's treatment of childhood bereavement and psychiatric disorder, a condition (especially distinguished by suicide and psychotic depression) to which children and adolescents who have lost a father, mother, or both are more than ordinarily susceptible.²⁵ It is doubtful that the familial stability allegedly provided by "relatives and quasi-relatives" could compensate for parental loss. Bowlby (not to say any contemporary psychoanalyst or psychiatrist) would take strong exception to the Rutmans' observation that for the children of the Chesapeake "death was a singing watchman in their world, teaching them from an early age that life was transitory," since it implies that the young easily adapted to the circumstance of loss.²⁶

The trauma of parental loss in the Chesapeake was paralleled in New England by the drama of breaking the child's will. Parents systematically suppressed the child's early attempts at self-assertion during that period which unsympathetic adults today have labelled the "terrible twos."²⁷ Such children were the potential victims of caretakers who were, in Bowlby's terms, "physically present but 'emotionally' absent."²⁸

Breaking the will, of course, involved the mental manipulation of the child, a recent addition to the parental armory justified by the concept of infant depravity. Willfulness connoted sinfulness from which children must be protected. A far more common means of controlling children was the use of corporal punishment.²⁹

At the age of seven or eight boys no longer wore skirts but were put into breeches, marking their entrance to manhood as well as into the work force.

Girls at this age remained skirted, symbolizing their continuing (indeed, life-long) subordination to males; they also were initiated into chores appropriate to their gender. Both sexes frequently began their working lives away from their own homes.

It is a matter of controversy whether this "putting out" system, widespread at least in New England, was primarily for the purpose of apprenticeship or to relieve household tensions. Puritan parents may have felt themselves in danger of being too loving and lax toward their children or, a somewhat different motive, fearful of household conflict. This latter explanation rests on the fact that children were farmed out at puberty, just when friction might occur.³⁰ For Bowlby, however, the issue would not be parental motivation but, rather, the effect of the separation on the child, since he views attachment as a dominant force throughout the latency period.

Parental attitude is important, however, if (as seems to be the case) youth was viewed as a special group. This leads to the question of whether there existed an adolescent culture among seventeenth-century European Americans. The evidence strongly suggests that there was.³¹ Apprenticeship played a part in adolescent culture, as did higher education.³² In a traditional society formal institutions of learning are economically superfluous. However, among the Puritans reading was considered a necessary complement of childhood since it provided access to the Scriptures. Educating and catechising were one and the same, begun as soon as the child could comprehend and absorb.³³

Child rearing in eighteenth-century America showed both a continuity with the past and new developments reflecting the changed circumstances of Americans. Those colonists who remained deeply influenced by religion persisted in the belief that children were depraved and in the practice of breaking their wills. But a new secularism, often associated with the Enlightenment as well as the emerging world of commerce, enabled other mothers and fathers to deal more easily with their young, expecting responsibility without demanding submission. Yet a third group of parents remained partly rooted in the distant past. If they believed in personal autonomy, they were unable to concede it to their progeny. They indulged their children not to nurture them but because they were indifferent to them. Their remoteness may explain their perseverance in the time-honored practice of beating, a punishment often administered by servants rather than themselves.³⁴

Probably these styles of parenting can be assigned to geographical regions and economic classes, as well as specific types of families. The first (evangelical) was most typical of isolated rural areas and the frontier where poorer people lived in nuclear families dominated by the only two adults present. The second (moderate) was apt to be found in somewhat affluent farming villages and commercial towns where an active community, including family relatives who played parts in the lives of children, diffused the authority of the

parents. Parental power was also dissipated in the eighteenth century as the pressure of population on the land led younger sons in search of a living to emigrate to newly-opened western areas or eastern seaports, in either case residing beyond the reach of the household of origin.³⁵ The third embraced those places where prosperity was based on land and slave owning. Here the extended family, stabilized by lengthened life expectancy, was dominated by a patriarch, while children were often tended to by servants.

The growing wealth of eighteenth-century Americans, or at least moderate and genteel Americans, lengthened childhood and, hence, created a new stage of development and a more complex family. If there was an adolescent culture in seventeenth-century New England, there were actual adolescents — that is, young people regarded neither as adults nor children — in the eighteenth century.³⁶

Among the evangelicals, who viewed the years of youth as the time for religious rebirth — which is to say, for suppression of the self — adolescence was a time when personal autonomy could only be interpreted as sinful, a denial of God's sovereignty. The young person was admonished to return to the selflessness of early childhood.³⁷ Among the genteel, personal autonomy was also suppressed as the indulgence shown toward the very young was abandoned when dealing with youth. Girls were socialized into their subordinate roles as women, while boys were coached to be dependent upon their fathers for their very identity.³⁸ From the perspective of attachment theory, the consequences of an evangelical or genteel rearing would be similar.³⁹

Only among the moderates do adolescence and autonomy appear to have traveled together.⁴⁰ Quite literally, since moderate youth was most apt to be mobile and, therefore, well served by autonomy. But with this exception, the line between adolescence and adulthood was otherwise not clearly etched.

African-American Childhood

Most of the Africans brought to North America originated in west and west-central Africa. In the seventeenth century they arrived by way of the West Indies, while in the eighteenth century the vast majority came directly from Africa. Along the 3500 miles of coastline from Senegal to Angola and in the interior there was considerable variation in climate, vegetation and, consequently, ways of living. Several hundred mutually unintelligible languages existed in this enourous area.

Nevertheless, there were cultural similarities. The primary identification for the African was with his/her family and its descent groups. In west Africa descent passed through the male; in west-central and central Africa, through the female. In either case, polygamy was a frequent if not universal practice.

Most Africans lived in small villages, although there were also large trading centers. Local economies were pastoral or agricultural, not based on hunt-

ing and gathering. Slavery existed as an institution tied to the kinship system, with slaves employed as outsiders within the family. It was not American chattel slavery.⁴¹

In west Africa women nursed their children for two to three years and abstained from sexual intercourse until weaning was complete, yielding a birth interval of three to four years.⁴² There were few African-American children until several decades into the eighteenth century when the slave population began to reproduce itself naturally in North America. At that time nursing lasted only a year, suggesting that slaves acculturated (or were forced by work requirements to adjust) to the English practice of early weaning.⁴³

On the plantation, only one of many slave experiences, mothers were expected to return to work soon after giving birth. They had either to take their infants into the fields or return to the slave quarters several times a day to feed them.⁴⁴ The death rate among black infants was exceptionally high compared to that of their white counterparts, a fact attributed to nutritional liabilities, crib death, and poor postnatal care.⁴⁵ Once weaned, babes were under the care of children, usually siblings, only a few years older than themselves. (By the age of seven or eight a slave child was likely to have been delegated other than babysitting chores.) This child-care practice was sanctioned by tradition. Among the Tiv of central Nigeria, for example, a six-month-old is assigned to an older sibling, usually of the same sex, who takes on the role of protector and accompanies the child everywhere.⁴⁶ These caretakers, unsupervised in America unless an aged non-worker were available, cannot have been trustworthy.⁴⁷

But the basic psychological point is that for the African-American child *on the plantation*, the mother was frequently inaccessible, having to return to work soon after she delivered.⁴⁸ Bowlby is not certain whether inaccessibility in itself raises fear in a child. Fear could also be aroused either by the distress an infant feels in the absence of someone who will soothe and feed it, or by the greater intensity of response when an infant alone undergoes fear-inducing experiences (e. g., the presence of a strange or a loud noise).⁴⁹ But separation inevitably engenders fear, although being left with a familiar companion/caretaker in a recognized place, as was the case with the young African-American child, would mitigate the situation.⁵⁰

In the eighteenth century, Chesapeake mothers may not usually have been separated by sale from their small children and so could expect to see them in the evenings. On large plantations over half the fathers might also be present. Other fathers and older, working children were likely to reside on nearby farms. With the emergence of a native-born slave population, a kinship network appeared, similar to that in west Africa, allowing most children to live in the presence of familiars.⁵¹

The games slave children played were the consequence of their dawning recognition of their enslaved condition. "Whipping" and "auction" provided ways of acting out so as to neutralize the real events. Also a portent of the future was the way meals were served to them: in troughs, as if they were animals. The master treated them less as stock than as his little pets (though he treated his own children similarly), even spoiling them while their parents attempted to enforce discipline by whipping them, another form of anticipating the future.⁵² African-American parents were training chattel slaves to be submissive workers, conforming (at least in appearance) to the demands of house mistresses, drivers, and owners who felt free to interfere in the child-rearing process.

Despite the beatings, and perhaps because of the patronizing attitude of the master, childhood did not demand more than light work until about the age of twelve, when many of the children left home and the harsh field life began. Even the cushioning effect of the kinship system could not protect the young at this point, which surely marked the movement from childhood into adulthood. It was an abrupt change. The separation of the child from his or her family as a pre-adolescent could only intensify the fears of early childhood, a situation which served the interest of the slaveholder if only by investing the alternative, escape, with terror. Such separation would also be an obstacle to the normal socialization of a young person. Simultaneously, the search for attachment probably reinforced the kinship system.

Conclusion

In appraising the child-rearing techniques of the three cultures, we can return to Bowlby. He is at one with Darwin in the belief that there is an optimal environment for any biological structure, an "environment of evolutionary adaptedness" in which the organism functions best. For humans that environment would be the one inhabited until the past few thousand years, when habitats began to vary enormously.⁵³ Since the living situation of Native Americans most closely approximated the human primeval environment, it is hardly surprising that this child rearing should conform most closely to the Bowlby attachment model.

In the opening pages of his first volume, Bowlby points out that "most of the concepts that psychoanalysts have about early childhood have been arrived at by a process of historical reconstruction based on data derived from older subjects." His own method is prospective rather than retrospective: "observation of how a very young child behaves toward his mother, both in her presence and especially in her absence, can contribute greatly to our understanding of personality development."⁵⁴ This statement could serve as a rationale for studying the history of childhood: it *may* give us important clues to the emotional lives of adults. Of course, while an approach to the past per-

ceived as psychohistorical is not novel, neither has it been popular. But for those historians who are interested in dealing with human feelings and their consequences for thought and behavior, John Bowlby's attachment theory may provide a more reliable route than traditional psychohistory.

For those who are interested, there is no shortage of work to do. In treating Native Americans, for example, one must wonder about the psychological impact of the tremendous mortality brought by European diseases to which Indians had no immunity. On a less dramatic level, since women were the growers and gatherers and, hence, often occupied in the fields, who took care of the children when their mothers were at work?

Regarding the European Americans, specifically the inhabitants of the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century, the separation from parents enforced by the high mortality rate might be expected to have produced children who were barely functional as adults. Is there evidence in early Virginia or Maryland that such was the case?⁵⁵ For the eighteenth century it might be appropriate to wonder, using the Bowlby perspective, about the effect on a European-American child whose primary caregiver was an African American.

Among African Americans, the identity and influence of the aged supervisors of children whose parents spent most of their time at work in the fields seems important to know.

One of the values of a new perspective is that familiar material may assume meaning that it hitherto lacked. Certainly John Bowlby found this to be true as he looked at developing children. Perhaps historians will be similarly responsive.

Notes

1. John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (3 vols., New York, 1969-1980), I, 39. See also II, 81. Bowlby obviously is using the term instinct not as Freud did but, rather, as Darwin would, the "common plan" being the survival of the species. Bowlby argues that just as there is continuity in anatomical and physiological equipment between humans and other animals, so there is continuity in behavioral equipment, though humans have "in the course of evolution undergone special modifications that permit the same ends to be reached by a greater diversity of means." To understand the modifications to the prototype, Bowlby utilizes control systems theory, i. e., the system (in this case, the animal prototype) has purpose, and it modifies itself in response to feedback. *Ibid.*, 40-56.

Also unlike Freud, Bowlby conducted his research or looked at the research of others on children *during their childhood* (he also considered research on lower-order animals); he does not draw upon adult memories of childhood. This strikes me as the most critical of differences, elevating Bowlby's work to a science which is testable.

I was alerted to Bowlby's work by San Francisco psychoanalyst Aubrey Metcalf, who has been of invaluable aid to me in writing this essay. Elizabeth Cramer, a psychotherapist in New York, has contributed insights, as have historians John McFaul, Gary Nash, and Roger Thompson.

2. Here it is evident that Bowlby deviates from traditional psychoanalytic thinking which explains attachment to the mother figure in terms of the satisfaction of psychological needs. After considering animal behavior, Bowlby observes: "At first sight it might appear that there is a sharp break between attachment behaviour in man and that seen in sub-human primates. In the latter, it might be emphasised, clinging by infant to mother is found from birth or very soon afterwards whereas in man the infant only very slowly becomes aware of his mother and only after he has become mobile does he seek her company. Though the difference is real, I believe it is easy to exaggerate its importance." *Ibid.*, 198.

3. The child who is attended to builds up a

confidence that such will always be the case, unlike the unattended child who is more likely to be continually fearful. As Bowlby states: "there is a strong case for believing that an unthinking confidence in the unfailing accessibility and support of attachment figures is the bedrock on which stable and self-reliant personality is built." *Ibid.*, II, 202, 322. See also pp. 344, 361. On dependency, see p. 243.

4. "By most children attachment behaviour is exhibited strongly and regularly until almost the end of the third year. . . . A main change is that after the third birthday most children become increasingly able in a strange place to feel secure with subordinate attachment-figures, for example a relative or a school teacher. . . . throughout the latency of an ordinary child, attachment behavior continues as a dominant strand in his life. During adolescence a child's attachment to his parents grows weaker. . . . For most individuals the bond to parents continues into adult life and affects behaviour in countless ways." *Ibid.*, I, 204-207.

5. As Bowlby states the matter: "As a class of behaviour with its own dynamic, attachment behaviour is conceived as distinct from feeding behaviour and sexual behaviour and of at least an equal significance in human life." *Ibid.*, III, 39.

6. *Ibid.*, II, 5, 16, 23. On psychopathology Bowlby observes: "This does not mean that a crippling of personality is the inevitable result [of separation from or loss of a mother figure]; but it does mean that, as in the case, say, of rheumatic fever, scar tissue is all too often formed that in later life leads to a more or less severe dysfunction." *Ibid.*, III, 22.

7. This variety is evident in such texts as Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America* (2nd ed., Chicago, 1969) and is summarized in Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* (3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1992), 9-17.

A kinship group, limited to 25 people, was the basic unit of society. The tribe was composed of about 500 people, the smallest congregation possible without violating the taboo against incest. A. J. Jaffe argues, however, that the smaller groups had to belong to networks

of 4,000 to 5,000 people to maintain a "reasonable balance of the sexes." *The First Immigrants from Asia. A Population History of the North American Indians* (New York, 1992), 76. Incidentally, Bowlby is friendly to the work of anthropologist R. Fox, who argues (in *Kinship and Marriage*, 1967) that the basic human social unit is not the nuclear family but a mother and her children (and maybe her daughter's children); societies differ by the way the father attaches to this unit. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, I, 60.

For more bibliographical citations, see Margaret Connell Szasz, "Native American Children," in Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, eds., *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (Westport, CT, 1985), 311-342.

8. Driver, for example, though he emphasizes variety, generalizes about birth, infancy, and puberty, as well as education. *Indians of North America*, 365-373, 378-395. See also John U. and Donna M. Terrell, *Indian Women of the Western Morning* (New York, 1974), 157-175.

9. James Axtell, ed., *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America: A Documentary History of the Sexes* (New York, 1981), 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 22. Fondness did not prevent some Indians, the Hurons at any rate, from exchanging children with other tribes "as evidence of trust and goodwill and also to provide hostages." Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (2 Vols., London & Montreal, 1976), I, 64.

10. Axtell, *Indian Peoples*, 15. Already, of course, they had begun walking and little boys had been equipped with tiny bows and mock arrows. *Ibid.*, 13.

11. *Ibid.*, 24.

12. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, I, 338. Elsewhere Bowlby points out that his theory has two steps; "from the early months onwards and throughout life the actual presence or absence of an attachment figure is a major variable that determines whether a person is or is not alarmed by any potentially alarming situation; from about the same age, and again onwards throughout life, a second major variable is a person's confidence, or lack of confidence, that an attachment figure not actually present will none the less be available, namely accessible

and responsive, should he for any reason desire this. The younger the individual, the more influential is the first variable, actual presence or absence; up to about the third birthday it is the dominant variable. After the third birthday, forecasts of availability or unavailability become of increasing importance, and after puberty are likely in their turn to become the dominant variable." *Ibid.*, II, 203-204.

13. Since we have plenty of evidence from the Europeans themselves that children were being guided by their elders, we must take the European amazement at Indian permissiveness as evidence that Europeans were far more overtly coercive with children. "Fathers and mothers neglect nothing, in order to inspire their children with certain principles of honour," observed the Jesuit missionary Charlevoix of the Miami and Potawatami, adding that "in this consists all the education that is given them," an observation which seemed to imply that more was needed. Charlevoix concluded with an expression of surprise: "It would seem that a childhood so ill instructed, should be followed by a very dissolute and turbulent state of youth; but. . . the Indians are naturally quiet and betimes masters of themselves, and are likewise more under the guidance of reason than other men. . . ." Axtell, *Indian Peoples*, 34.

14. Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 47-48; Bruce G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North* (New York, 1969), 65.

15. In *Primitive Education in North America* (Berkeley, 1946), George A. Pettitt cites examples of corporal punishment being meted out — not, however, examples from the Eastern woodland Indians (pp. 6-7).

16. Axtell, *Indian Peoples*, 25, 34, 39.

17. Pettitt, *Primitive Education*, 6-39. Regarding the issue of family protection, Pettitt argues that punishment, though depicted as existing for the good of the recipient, still must be administered from the outside, most frequently by the mother's brother.

18. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York, 1985), 16.

19. Philip Greven, *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York, 1991),

- 135-136.
20. Pettitt, *Primitive Education*, 151-160.
21. Axtell, *Indian Peoples*, 48, 53, 57; Pettitt, *Primitive Education*, 59-74, 87-104.
22. Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, "Now-Wives and Sons-in-Law': Parental Death in a Seventeenth-Century Virginia County," in Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1979), 167.
23. The regional comparison and appropriate citations appear in Ross W. Beales, Jr., "The Child in Seventeenth-Century America," in Hawes and Hiner, *American Childhood*, 16. The quotation is from Rutman, "'Now-Wives and Sons-in-Law'," 169. See also Lorena S. Walsh, "'Till Death Us Do Part': Marriage and Family in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," in Tate and Ammerman, eds. *Chesapeake*, 126-151. On Andover see Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY, 1970).
24. Walsh, "'Till Death Us Do Part'," 141-142; John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York, 1970), 131-133. English husbands were known to protest against their spouses feeding their own children, demanding that wet nurses be hired. Unlike Indian men they were unwilling to forsake the sexual company of their wives; they were inclined to subordinate the well-being of their progeny to their own appetites. Joseph E. Illick, "Child-Rearing in Seventeenth-Century England and America," in Lloyd DeMause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (New York, 1974), 304-310.
25. *Ibid.*, III, 295-310. Bowlby makes clear that not every child who loses a parent is impaired. *Ibid.*, 310, 318. He makes no pretense of knowing why some individuals recover from experiences of separation and loss while others do not. *Ibid.*, II, 5.
26. Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, *A Place in Time. Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750* (New York, 1984), 119. The issue of children and death is dealt with more realistically in Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Puritan Family and Religion: A Critical Reappraisal," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 39 (1982), 52-54.
27. Walsh, "'Till Death...'," 142-143; Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 134-139.
28. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, II, 23; also 208, 210.
29. In "Child Abuse in Context: An Historian's Perspective," in *Past, Present, and Personal* (New York, 1986), 68-88, John Demos persuasively argues that parents in early New England did not abuse their children. In *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1987), 25-29, Elizabeth Pleck counters that the Puritan definition of child abuse differed from ours: "Acceptable punishment appears to have included most beatings and bruising that fell short of maiming or *permanently* injuring the child." The definitive work on child abuse is Greven's *Spare the Child*.
30. Edmund Morgan states both possibilities in *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (2nd ed., New York, 1966), 77-78. For other explanations see Beales, "The Seventeenth-Century Child," 34-35.
31. Roger Thompson, "Adolescent Culture in Colonial Massachusetts," *Journal of Family History* (Summer 1984), 127-144.
32. Roger Thompson, *Sex in Middlesex: Popular Mores in a Massachusetts County, 1649-1699* (Amherst, 1986), 92.
33. Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 87-108. Bernard Bailyn points out that masters increasingly put literacy instruction and other non-vocational matters in the hands of teachers. *Education in the Forming of American Society* (Chapel Hill, 1960), 32.
34. Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament. Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York, 1977). Greven points to three patterns of temperament, which he labels evangelical, moderate, and genteel, the third characterizing members of an American gentry whose families "combined an extraordinarily intense and binding affection with an equally intense awareness of decorum and distance." (p. 265) Greven notes that the genteel style "in New England and in the Middle colonies continued to bear the imprint of the values and attitudes of moderation." (p. 265) Examples of

affection are drawn from these latter regions; it is less clear that reverence existed there.

What distinguished the Southern genteel families was the use of corporal punishment, which "was almost certain not to produce characters that were obsessed with guilt and self-denial." (p. 281) Greven argues that genteel planters had a method of subduing the sense of self in their slaves, treating them exactly as evangelicals dealt with their children. (p. 277) This assertion runs contrary to the argument in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974), where Eugene Genovese claims the master petted and spoiled the black children (p. 514), although he also maintains that no family member, white or black, dared cross the master (pp. 70-75), hardly a manifestation of "fond affection." Michael Zuckerman, in "William Byrd's Family," *Perspectives in American History*, XII (1979), 255-311, and Jan Lewis, in *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (Cambridge, England, 1983), 30-39, argue that the Southern genteel family was not affectionate; Daniel Blake Smith, in *Inside the Big House. Planter Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, 1980), especially Chapters 1 and 3, argues that it was.

Obviously, I believe that the so-called gentry in New England and the Middle Atlantic differed from those in the South, which is sometimes Greven's opinion as well. See *Protestant Temperament*, 281, 297.

35. Greven, *Four Generations*. Ch. 9. The early career of Benjamin Franklin illustrates this loosening of parental control.

36. Karin Calvert, "Children in American Family Portraiture, 1670-1810," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 39(1982), 87-113; N. Ray Hiner, "Adolescence in Eighteenth-Century America," *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory*, 3 (Fall 1975), 253-280.

37. Greven, *Protestant Temperament*, 60-61, 65, 66, 74-76, 80, 94, 103, 111-112. Yet as Hiner has shown in "Adolescence in Eighteenth-Century America," the effort to produce conversion experiences in youth had the ironic effect of endowing the young with more power.

38. Smith, *Great House*, Chapters 2, 3. In the

latter chapter Smith sees paternal influence over sons declining (pp. 113-125), though he admits that "deference and duty remained integral to the psychological well-being of most sons." (p. 117)

39. "Severity of upbringing, corporal punishment and subordination increase attachment, albeit an anxious or even insecure one. Beyond common sense we know little at present about the durability and reversability of 'normal' anxious attachment." Personal communication from Aubrey Metcalf, M. D., January 31, 1996.

40. As Greven observes: "the moderates accepted the self as worthy of love, respect, and nurture," *Protestant Temperament*, 202.

41. These three paragraphs are derived from Donald R. Wright's synthetic and concise book, *African Americans in the Colonial Era: From African Origins Through the American Revolution* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1990). In *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge, England, 1992), John Thornton downplays the heterogeneity among Africans coming to North America; see especially Chapter 7. He takes issue with much of the orthodoxy surrounding Africa, the slave trade, and African-American life but does not discuss childhood.

42. Russell R. Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population, 1658-1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 32 (1975), 41.

43. *Ibid.*, 38-49. Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fertility Differentials between Slaves in the United States and the West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices and Their Possible Implications," *ibid.*, 35 (1978), 358. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll.*, Eugene Genovese observes that slaves nursed for "two or three years and even longer," following southern practice. His statement is based on some travelers' accounts and recollections of ex-slaves. (pp. 498-499).

In *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, 1987), Mechal Sobel judiciously observes that whites did not simply impose their traditions on blacks but, rather, there was a "social-cultural interplay." p. 5.

44. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 498. In *Time on the Cross. The Economics of American Negro*

Slavery (Boston, 1974), Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman applaud health care for pregnant slave women and state that nursing mothers were kept on a light work schedule. (pp. 122-123) Richard Dunn observes that on the Jamaican plantation of Mesopotamia, women with five or more children were allowed to stay home and raise them. "Caribbean versus Old South Slavery," Paper delivered at the University of Minnesota, April 29, 1994, 21.

45. Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia Himmelsteib King, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism* (Cambridge, England, 1981), 96-116. Fogel and Engerman found no difference between black and white infant death rates in the mid nineteenth century. *Time on the Cross*, 124. But Richard Dunn found the deathrate among black infants "shockingly high" on the Virginia plantation of Mount Airy; over one-third of the slaves who died, 1808-1865, were aged 0-4 (108 of 487 babies recorded as born live). "Caribbean versus Old South Slavery," 15.

46. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 502. Paul Bohannon and Philip Curtin, *Africa and the Africans* (rev. ed., Garden City, NY, 1971), 115.

¹The plantation nurseries described by Fogel and Engerman [*Time on the Cross*, 206-207], on the other hand, resemble contemporary day-care centers.

47. Ira Berlin, in "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), 44-78, describes many different living situations, varying considerably by region and including households where there were but one or two slaves. Jean Butenhoff Lee, in "The Problem of Slave Community in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 43 (1986), observes that 45 per cent of the slaves in Charles County, Maryland, lived in groups of ten or less. Obviously the issue of attachment would be different in these situations than on plantations.

Changes in African-American ways of life during the late-eighteenth century are the subject of essays by Gary B. Nash, Richard S. Dunn, Philip D. Morgan, and Allan Kulikoff

in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 1983).

49. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, II, 178-181. Timing is also important in this situation. An infant whose mother disappears daily before the infant begins attaching, at three months could attach to another caretaker, though the attachment might not be strong. If the mother suddenly becomes inaccessible at six or nine months, the infant would be greatly distressed — and even more so if combined with fear-inducing experiences.

50. "The situational feature of special interest to us in this work is, of course, being alone. Probably nothing increases the likelihood that fear will be aroused more than that." *Ibid.*, 118. Also, 142-143, 148, for the evolutionary explanation of the importance of companionship.

51. This is the position of Allan Kulikoff in "The Beginnings of the Afro-American Family in Maryland," in Aubrey C. Land, et al., *Law, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland* (Baltimore, 1977), 176-182. Cheryll Ann Cody argues that when owners divided their estates they preserved the nuclear family, "perhaps because of its reproductive function," but not the larger kin network. See "Naming, Kinship, and Estate dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 39 (1982), 193. Pointing to the strength of the African-American family, Mary Beth Norton, et al., assert: "For most plantation children, their parents, not the owner, provided the court of first and generally last resort." "The Afro-American Family in the Age of Revolution," in Berlin and Hoffman, *Slavery and Freedom*, 180. This sentiment is echoed, though not so strongly, in John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (2nd ed., New York, 1979), 178.

Richard S. Dunn, in "A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., 34 (1977), 32-65, challenges this positive view of slave family life. Dunn points out that John Tayloe, who was kinder than the ordinary plantation owner,

"kept mothers and young children together, but not always." See "Annual Work Rhythms on Mount Airy," paper delivered at the University of Virginia, June 1, 1990, 11. Usually Tayloe separated children from their parents in their early to mid teens. See Dunn, "African-American Slavery in Microcosm," paper delivered at the University of Minnesota, April 27, 1994, 32-38. Tayloe maintained that young slaves were quite willing to separate from their parents. Dunn, "Caribbean versus Old South Slavery," 28.

Of course Frederick Douglass, drawing on the authority of his own early years in bondage in early nineteenth-century Maryland, always denied the compatibility of slavery with the family. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, 1855), Ch. 3. In the end, I am persuaded that the eighteenth-century African-American

family was, in the words of Jean Buttenhoff Lee, "fragile and subject to disruption." See "The Problem of Slave Community," 361.

52. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 505-508, 510, 514; Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 185.

53. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, I, Chapters 3, 4. Bowlby adds: "Identification of that environment as man's environment of evolutionary adaptedness carries no suggestion that such primeval environment is in some way better than present-day ones or that ancient man was happier than present-day man." p. 59.

54. *Ibid*, 3.

55. This question was raised by Professor John Murrin, Princeton University, when the essay was delivered as a paper. Its answer lies partly in footnotes 6 and 25.