

# Chapter 7

## Parent-Child Relationships

Title Page Image 7.1

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-kids-kissing-their-mother-4473782/>



### Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Think about the goals of parenting in our society.
2. Critically explore preformational and experiential views about how children acquire knowledge and skills.
3. Understand the major sociogenic theories of child development.

4. Understand the “spanking debate” within the larger context of parental disciplinary techniques and child outcomes.
5. Explore the nature and transmission of social class from parents to children.

*<vignette>*

“What kind of parents are they? Their children are running all over the grocery store and they are going to knock something or somebody over,” Ivana said indignantly.

Ivana’s husband, Thomas, watched as the two children pulled cans off the shelf. “Ivana, I think they may be reading the labels! Perhaps they are just a little careless in their enthusiasm.”

Just then, Maggie, the children’s mom, strolled up with a shopping cart and said to her children, “Okay, which brand of tomato soup has the lowest calories and the highest protein?” The children correctly identified the brand and the relevant information while Maggie returned the cans to the shelf.

Ivana was still indignant. “Those unruly brats not only created a mess but, true to their upbringing, she couldn’t even get them to clean up after themselves. She should have spanked them and made them pick up those cans after pulling them off the shelf! Of course, given where those kids are heading, they will get to do a lot of grocery shelf stocking in their future professions.”

*<end of vignette>*

Ivana has many very firm ideas about how children should be raised. For example, she seems to favour obedient and well-behaved children over children who are exploring and more independent from their parents. Ivana assumes that such lack of discipline will result in these children not having high-status occupations. Furthermore, Ivana seems to think that children should be physically punished when they are not behaving well. Many may share her opinions, or some aspects of her position. This raises some very basic questions about parents and children. For example, we could ask: To what degree are parents the “cause” of their children’s behaviour? We could also ask: Should parents primarily emphasize control of children, or are values about learning more important than being well behaved? Finally, we could ask if Ivana is correct: Will well-behaved and parentally disciplined children be successful as adults, and will the wayward children in the grocery store example have a more modest destiny?

Certainly, different parents will emphasize different techniques of parenting, such as intellectual challenges and discipline. Furthermore, the relationship that each parent builds with each child will be different as well. Of course, the nature of the work world and the economy do not always afford parents the choices they may prefer. Despite economic factors or even the personalities of each parent, almost all parents want the best outcomes for their children and would like their

children to become independent adults. In a very important sense, the major goal of parenting (at least in North America) is the child's achievement of self-sufficiency and independence from the parents. That is, the goal is that children become independent "grown-ups."

Although this may seem like an obvious goal for parents in North America, it has not been the historical goal for many families. Indeed, most agrarian societies have viewed children as an economic resource to supply agricultural labour or home production of goods such as clothing. The Industrial Revolution changed this gradually. At first, children could be employed in industry to the benefit of the parents. So, until the mid-1800s, parents could view children as an economic asset.

The major turning point when children shifted from an economic asset to an economic liability occurred because of two events. The first was the passage of child protection legislation in most industrialized countries to curb the exploitation of children. The second event was a bit more complicated. Since industrialism demands skills such as counting and record keeping, formal education became valued for all, not just for an elite few. With the advent of mass education came legislation that required children to attend school. As a result, children could not be in the labour force because they were in school. Mandatory schooling also made children more expensive. During agrarianism, children paid for their food, shelter, and clothing through their labour. With mandatory education, not only was the child's labour lost to the parents, but children now had to be provided with transportation, school supplies, and eventually expensive brand-name clothing and cellphones (see Goode, 1963; Parsons, 1954).

Although things are changing rapidly, parents in many developing countries still expect their children to stay with the family and eventually take care of them when they are elderly. While the expectation of taking care of elderly parents vanishes as soon as countries develop old age security systems (Zhao, 2009), many in these semi-agrarian countries do not view children's independence from the parents as the goal of parenting. They view the goal of parenting somewhat more from the perspective that the adult child should repay the family with economic and service contributions.

Most North Americans and Europeans have embraced the goal of parenting as the successful rearing of the children to adulthood. The defining element is the interpretation of success. For North Americans, success means that the adult child is economically independent from the parents. Economic independence is usually viewed as the child's achievement of social integration and academic achievement. So, for many parents, the two major components of child rearing are to imbue the child with social skills and to help him or her achieve academic success.

It would seem that today's parents simply want their children to grow up to be independent, and that entails developing the children's social and academic skills. This seems simple, but there is a great division among parents and even scholars as to how we can best achieve these outcomes. This chapter is about parent-child relationships. There are, however, many approaches to conceptualizing what this means and there are several theories about parental

socialization of children. This is a large and complicated area of discourse and we will be able to touch on only some of the most salient topics, such as socialization, parental discipline and its effects on the child, and the transmission of social class.

## Models of Parent-Child Effects

Even Socrates (in Plato's *Meno*, circa 500 bc) was concerned with the socialization and learning of children. Indeed, in the early Socratic dialogues, two positions were argued. One position was that all learning depends on experience (**empiricism**); this would later become tied to the idea that children are a blank slate (John Locke's *tabula rasa*) upon which experience and socialization write. On the other hand, Socrates also argues in favour of the perspective that every human carries pre-existing forms of knowledge, especially analytic forms (**rationalism**). In this perspective, our experience is seen as requiring these pre-existing mental forms of analysis to process the information from experience.

When we “fast forward” to today, we still find these two distinct schools of thought about experience and forms of knowledge. Academically, we can find expressions of the pre-existing forms perspective in developmental theories of language (Chomsky) and cognition (Piaget). Even though these have been dominant theories, we also find the experiential theories to be powerful. We will have more to say about this when we review some of these theories later in the chapter.

These theories of learning and socialization have had an enormous influence on our concepts of parent–child relationships. As indicated, the experiential or empiricist view is associated with the idea that the child is a blank slate upon which experience writes. Because of this perspective, parenting involves writing upon the slate and monitoring access to others writing upon this blank slate. This perspective is one in which all effects on the child flow unidirectionally from the parents to the child (Peterson & Hann, 1999). This is often referred to as the **parent-to-child unidirectional model**.

As early as Hippocrates (500 bc), scholars discussed theories of “humours,” which today are referred to as personality traits or temperament. Early personality theorists (e.g., Thomas, Chess, & Birch, 1968) pioneered the idea that children had innate differences in temperament from birth and that these differences must be considered in assessing child development. It became clear within this perspective that children were not simply blank slates at birth and that the success of parenting techniques could be dependent on the child's temperament. Certainly, the idea that a “difficult child” or a child with colic would have effects on the parents was not new. The perspective that the child's temperament affects the parents can be considered a **child-to-parent unidirectional model** (Peterson & Hann, 1999). Although the parent-to-child unidirectional flow was much more dominant in the scholarly literature, the idea that the child could have unidirectional effects quickly gave rise to the **bidirectional parent–child model**.

The bidirectional model evolved not only because of the work on child temperament but also because of advances in sociological theory, especially exchange theory. Richer (1968) amply illustrated the effect of exchange theory when he applied its propositions to the parent–child dyad. It was important, Richer noted, that the child could reward the parent with smiles for the parent’s good behaviour and cries for the parent’s bad behaviour as an interpretation of an interchange; such interchanges had previously been assumed by scholars to have all socializing power and effects flowing from parent to child. Bidirectionality is now assumed in most child developmental theories (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and parent–child research (e.g., Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Today’s bidirectional effects model assumes that, even in infancy, the child influences and conditions the interactions with parents and the parents influence the child. It is just as important to recognize that parent–child interaction is dynamic over time, so that what would be perceived as nurturing socialization at one point in time, such as breastfeeding an infant, is simply inappropriate in a mother–teen interaction. Even in less noticeable units of time, there are sudden changes in interaction, such as when the infant acquires the ability to roll over. This new ability necessitates changes in parental caregiving, such as attending to where the infant is placed. Indeed, the dynamic developmental nature of the parent–child relationship is life long and continues as both the child and the parents age. This is one reason we might examine the parent–child dyad throughout the life course.

### A Note on Parent-Child Levels of Analysis

Similar to the marital relationship, the parent–child relationship can be analyzed at several levels. Naturally, we can examine the *individual parent* or *individual child* regarding attitudes, beliefs, and actions. We can also examine the *dyad* (mother–son, mother–daughter, father–son, and father–daughter) in terms of relationship properties such as same-gender or cross-gender, conflict, agreement, consensus, and closeness. Finally, the parents and children can be analyzed as a *family group*. At the family group level of analysis, all of the lower-level measures such as individual attitudes and dyadic disagreements may be used, but we also now have group-level processes such as coalition formation and factions based on “two against one.” Testament to the complexity of each of these levels is that they are all subject to development. For example, the infant has little power over decision making compared to the adolescent’s verbal articulation and physical presence. We will have opportunity to discuss all of these **levels of analysis** (see Table 7.1) as we study parent–child relationships.

Table 7.1 Levels of Analysis for the Study of Parent-Child Relationships	
Level	Appropriate Concepts and Measures
Individual	Attitudes, beliefs, actions
Dyad	Cohesion, agreement and disagreement, negotiations

Group	Coalitions, factions, democracy
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It should be clear from Table 7.1 that although we commonly refer to maturation and development as individual phenomena, they are much more complex. The cases of isolated children Anna and Isabelle, documented by Davis (1947), clearly demonstrate that without the dyad, family, or society, individual development does not take place. The more recent case of Genie (Rymer, 1993) demonstrates a similar point, except that physical abuse also may have been implicated in her early years. Such cases of early social isolation seem to document that without socialization and nurturance, there is very little in us that can be recognized as human. In other words, these cases are often used to assert the *tabula rasa* position. Such cases, in part, led Bronfenbrenner (1979) to assert that the smallest unit of analysis at which we can study child development is the dyad and not the individual. If the biological human (nature) contains no inherent behaviour (feeding, standing, walking) that emerges independently from socialization, then individuals are dependent on socialization (nurturance) for the very essence of being human. Although Bronfenbrenner's assertion of the dyad as the minimum unit of analysis may have somewhat overstated the case for the "blank slate," as do some of those writing about the three cited cases of socially isolated children, these cases of isolated children supply the only direct observational evidence we have in this regard.

## The Nature-Nurture Debate

If we argue that a child is a blank slate and nothing without socialization, we run the risk of minimizing genetic contributions to child outcomes. As mentioned, children are born with personality traits that must be considered. At the same time, the cases of isolated children tend to argue effectively for the nurture side of the nature–nurture debate (see Box 7.1).

Today, much of the nature–nurture debate survives only when protagonists have either a naive perspective on biological inheritance or a view of humans as determined by their experience. In human development, it is usually the case that both genetic components (DNA and RNA) are dependent on the environment for protein. For example, no matter what genetic material a person may have to determine high intelligence, if there is insufficient protein during early life, that "potential" will not be realized (e.g., a child could develop kwashiorkor, a protein-energy malnutrition). Furthermore, we know that children with low intelligence have much better social functioning when they are raised in a supportive family with ample resources to develop the child's social and analytic skills. Box 7.2 shows two formulas depicting the independent effects of nature and nurture. Much of the nature–nurture debate focuses on the "either-or" construct found in the first formula. Increasingly, we see many more outcomes explained by the interaction of these factors, as shown in the second formula.

### Box 7.1

### The Nature-Nurture Debate

The nature–nurture debate refers to the continuing argument about whether most of a human beings’ outcomes, such as criminality and intelligence, are due to genetic or biologically determined causes or due to social experience and learning acquired from various socializing agents, such as parents, the media, and peers. The “blank slate” idea clearly falls on the *nurture* side of the argument. The idea of biological determinants of criminality or intelligence clearly falls on the *nature* side of the argument.

### Box 7.2

#### Formulas for the Nature-Nurture Debate

##### Formula 1

Child outcome = Nature + Nurture  
 For example: Intelligence = Genes + Family background

##### Formula 2

Child outcome = Nature + Nurture + (Interaction of nature and nurture)  
 For example: Intelligence = Genes + Family background + (Genes X Family background)

It may help if we examine a relatively simple developmental case. Imagine that you are a parent and you are tired of changing diapers on your toddler. You want to know how to get your child to “go potty.” This simple question has indeed baffled many scholars of child development. Some, such as Dr. Spock (1985/1946), thought that training was very important, whereas others emphasized the passage of time. In reality, it turns out that both are important. The child gains some voluntary control of the external anal sphincter valve at about 18 months of age. This appears to be a species characteristic. However, if the child is not exposed to appropriate socialization—that is, “potty training”—then the desired outcome may not be attained. When socialization (potty training) occurs at the same time as control of the sphincter, parents will have the success they anticipate. This is an interaction effect (nature × nurture) between biologically determined maturation and socialization. This effect is so widely acknowledged that most developmental milestones list 18 months of age as when a child is ready for toilet training. This interaction effect between biological development and socialization is presented in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2 Factorial Design of Toilet Training (Socialization) and Physical Maturation**

Toilet Training	Independent Factor: Physical Maturation	Dependent Outcomes: Potty Success
Present	18 months or more	Yes

	17 months or less	No
Absent	18 months or more	No
	17 months or less	No

## Theories of Socialization and Development

Most of the theories about child development can be understood as putting differential weight on the factors within the interaction between nature and nurture. Some theorists place great weight on the maturational, age-graded physical developments that the child experiences. Such theorists believe strongly that the timetable for socialization is set by the physical maturations of humans. This perspective is called **ontogenetic development** and refers to the view that although socialization and learning are important, the guiding factor is the species-specific ontogenetic development. Since such development is true for the human species, we would explain variations in timing by different socialization experiences. This ontogenetic perspective is also responsible for the common infant and toddler developmental milestones used by many physicians and health service agencies.

On the other hand, some developmental scholars believe that the availability and experience of particular socializing agents create developmental outcomes. This perspective, illustrated in Box 7.3, is sometimes called **sociogenic development**. These scholars point out that since ontogenesis is a process shared by all humans, the age-grading processes would be constant and the explanation for differential outcomes such as criminality would be found in the experiences and socialization rather than the ontogenetic processes.

### Box 7.3

#### Why Not Piano? Experience Trumps Physical Maturation?

When I was 6 years old, growing up in the 1950s, I desperately wanted to learn to play piano. Indeed, I was so passionate about music in grade 1 that I was expelled from school because I would not quit singing. When my parents looked into getting me music lessons, they were told that children lack the physical ability and manual dexterity to play a piano in grade 1 and they would have to wait until I was 8 years old. During this time it also was commonly thought that children were not developmentally ready to play violin until they were 10 years of age. My parents capitulated to the “experts” in Western child development at the very same time that the Suzuki method for teaching violin and piano was beginning in Japan. Suzuki argued that with nurturing experience, very young children could be taught both instruments. In other words, Western experts were more heavily influenced by the nature side of the nature–nurture equation and Suzuki (and much of Asia) was more influenced by the experiential view of learning.



By 8 years of age I had received much age-specific socialization in baseball and the piano lessons were scheduled at the same time as baseball practice. If I had started piano when I was passionate about music and unexposed to baseball, I wonder whether I would have avoided the fate of being a less than adequate right fielder. A more compelling question is whether there is a benefit to physical and biological determinism in child development and to withholding experiences for children on the basis that they are not ready. Do you think that the relative emphasis on biological determinism versus experience is an important cultural difference between the East and the West?

For example, George Herbert Mead focused on the learning of social roles and games rather than ontogenesis. Furthermore, some scholars argue (Rogoff, 2003) that many child developmental experiences are culturally organized by the **values** of the culture rather than by age grading. As we examine some of the theories, we will point out these different emphases (ontogenetic and sociogenic).

Besides seeing most development as biologically driven (ontogenetic) or a result of socialization, two other dimensions are important in distinguishing theories of development. One of these is the *time frame* the theory addresses. Though all theories of development view time as critical to the process, some theories (e.g., those of Freud and Piaget) view developmental processes as occurring mainly in childhood. Indeed, if we take childhood as our major concern, then everyone becomes smarter, stronger, and more socially adept as we age. There has been an important shift of focus for some developmental theories, however, so that they include later life, with its physical declines, social isolation, and economic dependence. While child development examines increasing strength and intellectual powers and optimistically stops at early adulthood, lifespan theories argue that stasis followed by decline and death is also part of human development.

Another dimension by which theories may be distinguished involves how a theory approaches stages of development. Many theories of development have conceptualized stages as occurring in an invariant sequence so that each stage must be completed successfully before moving to the next stage. This concept of *invariant ordering* and lockstep progression through stages is especially obvious in earlier theories. For many students and scholars, this deterministic progression is the very essence of what they identify as the process of development. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a much more flexible view of development founded on the perspective that development is a branching process and that one can return to previous states as well as experience new states in the process.

## **Psychoanalytic Theories**

Psychoanalytic theories are often founded on cases seen by a therapist during psychoanalysis. The basic unit of analysis is the individual patient. Certainly, some theories implicate other family members (e.g., the Oedipus complex), but the individual's psyche is the principal focus. Freud is, without doubt, the most well known psychoanalytic theorist.

Although scholars such as William James (1830/1890) had discussed the process of child development as a sequence of stages before Freud, there is little doubt that Freud's (1856/1905) psychosexual theory of development popularized the idea of invariant developmental stages. Accompanying the idea of invariant developmental stages is the idea that each stage is marked by certain developmental adjustments that, if not completed successfully, will detrimentally affect all future development. For Freud, psychosexual development was driven by the libido or sexual urges. These urges may focus on different objects as a child matures toward the final stage of focus on opposite-sex partners. Freud's stages are the oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage, and genital stage. Because Freud's psychoanalytic focus was on the causation of neuroses, much of his discussion of the stages related to the production of mania or hysteria. Freud accepted case observation as evidence and most parts of the theory have failed to be empirically verified. Today, Freud's theory of development is seldom used in designing curriculum or driving research.

Erikson (1902; Erikson & Erikson, 1997/1982) was a neo-Freudian trained in psychoanalysis by Freud's daughter Anna. His major contribution to developmental theory was to extend Freud's view to adulthood and old age and to see developmental stages as representing deep conflicts that needed to be resolved before moving to the next stage. Erikson's stages are not expressed as psychosexual stages but are organized according to the conflicts inherent in the stages. His work did not reject the Freudian work so much as extend it. The major conflicts in the sequential order that Erikson identified are trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair. The resolution of each of these conflicts is necessary to move on through the process. Thus Erikson, like Freud, believed that development was a progression through a set of invariant stages where completion and success at each stage is contingent on the successful resolution of previous stages. Erikson's extension of developmental stages to the entire life course, including old age and dying (integrity versus despair), indicated a major move away from Freud whose focus was on development as experienced only in childhood.

## **Psychological Theories**

Psychological theories are different from psychoanalytic theories. Psychology is an academic discipline that studies the mental processes of individuals whereas psychoanalysis is within medicine and is clearly oriented toward pathology and treatment. Psychological theories are mainly "curiosity-driven" theories rather than "treatment-driven" theories. The basic unit of analysis in psychological theories is the individual's mental processes. Ontogenetic interpretations (nature) have been the hallmark of many psychological theories of development. Indeed, psychological theories of development have often sought to anchor theories in what may be perceived as the firm grounding of species-specific and biologically determined development. As we shall see, such motivation often pays scant attention to cultural variation and social determinants.

Without doubt, Piaget (1952/1936) constructed one of the most influential theories of child development. His theory of a child’s cognitive and perceptual development relied on invariant stages that had to be experienced and learned before the next stage could be experienced. Piaget stages are detailed in Table 7.3.

Piaget influenced numerous scholars to follow his example and view development as invariant sequential stages. For example, Kohlberg (1971) envisioned moral development as having six sequential stages. However, Kohlberg differed from Piaget in one very important respect. Whereas Piaget had focused on child development, Kohlberg viewed moral development as a lifelong progression. As the study of aging has expanded (see Chapter 10), increasingly the study of development has become less focused on childhood and more focused on a lifespan perspective.

<b>Table 7.3 Piaget’s Stages of Development</b>		
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Properties of Stage</b>
0 to 2 years	Sensorimotor	Differentiation of object form background and object permanence
2 to 7 years	Preoperational	Vocal and written language and nominal grouping
7 to 11 years	Concrete operational	Conservation of matter and ordinal series
11 years and greater	<a href="#">Formal operational</a> (see linked video)	Formal symbolic logic: manipulation of symbols
Source: Adapted from Inhelder and Piaget (1958); also see Atherton (2010).		

Although Piaget’s perspective was very influential and continues to be so in certain areas, its inaccuracies are readily apparent today. Piaget did not envision a flexible sequence but only a lockstep sequence. In other words, he did not envision Mozart writing music at the age of 3 nor chess masters at the age of 8, as both music and chess involve formal operations. Likewise, some elements of one stage may be experienced early while other elements may be delayed. Many of us can recall someone who had early acquisition of some skills but not others. Finally, the strict determinism of Piaget’s model was questioned from the outset, with scholars reporting cultural variation (e.g., Levi-Strauss, 1949). After many decades of supremacy, Piaget’s theory has at least “softened” into a probabilistic rather than deterministic theory, while some critics may even reject Piaget in favour of more social and experiential theories (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978). Certainly, the early learning of music and mathematics popularized by social and experiential views of learning such as the Suzuki violin method and early math programs have raised questions about Piaget’s theory.

## Sociological Theories

In contrast to the psychological focus on the ontogenetically developing individual, sociological theories of development have traditionally focused on the parent–child dyad, the family, or larger social units as the unit of analysis. Furthermore, the determinants of development are usually viewed as more social (nurture) rather than ontogenetically determined (nature). Most of the sociological approaches to child development refer to the process as *socialization*, a term that reflects the social nature of development. Although there are a great number of theories of socialization, we will discuss just three: G.H. Mead's theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach, and attachment theory.

G.H. Mead's (1934) posthumously published book *Mind, Self and Society* gave a foundation to much of the child's development as a *social being*. G.H. Mead was not alone, since at this point in history numerous other scholars were vitally concerned with questions about socialization. Among these was the work of American anthropologist Margaret Mead, who authored several books on socialization, such as *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and *Growing up in New Guinea* (1930). G.H. Mead focused on the social mechanisms that created an understanding of society so that the child could increasingly integrate as a participating member. He identified two crucial sequential stages in development. Unlike the psychiatric or psychological theories of development, Mead's theory conceptualized the outcome of development as the ability to take on and perform social roles in society.

According to Mead, for the child to be competent at performing social roles in a society, he or she must navigate two successive stages of development. The first stage is the **play stage**, which is marked by the child learning how to take on and *play* a social role. For example, a young boy may put on his father's shoes and coat to play "daddy." A young girl may play "mommy" to her doll. Mead argued that in these early play efforts, the child gradually learns that there is a range of expected and approved behaviours and unacceptable and unsanctioned behaviours. For example, when the young girl bashes her doll in the head, an adult may tell her that this is not acceptable behaviour for a mother and if the behaviour continues, the doll might be taken away until the girl could treat "baby" correctly. This initial stage is critical for developing the child's ability to take on a role and to understand that a role is determined by social rules (norms and expectations) and that unacceptable behaviour will be punished.

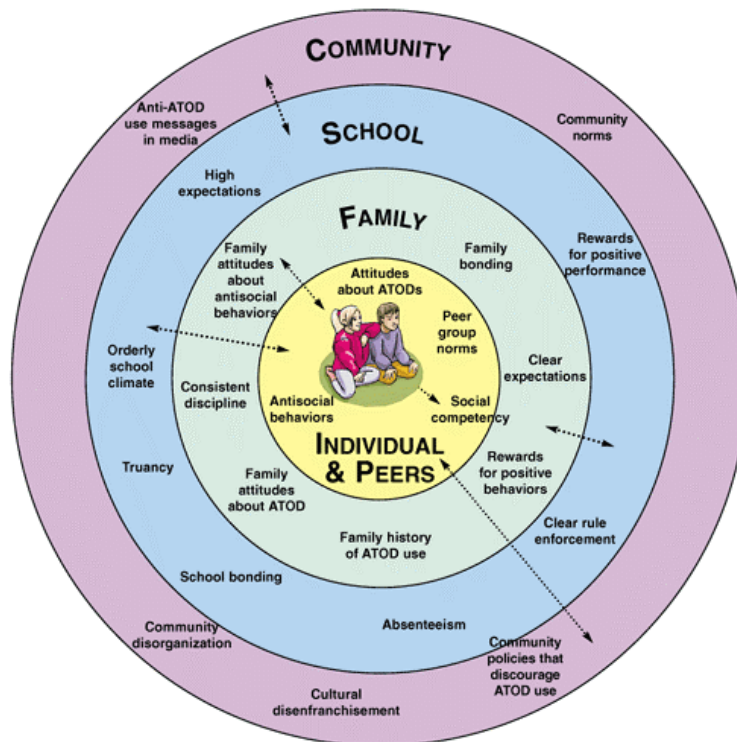
Mead, however, recognized that while role taking is an important process to learn and social roles are a basic building block of social systems, much more has to be learned. He argued that the second stage of socialization, the **game stage**, is required to teach the child that roles are always an organic and dynamic part of a larger social organization. In the game stage, the child learns that several roles can be performed as long as the actor knows the rules of the game. For example, in baseball a child may learn that assuming the role of a batter is contingent on his or her team being up to bat, and that after three outs the child will once again assume the role of a first baseman. In other words, social roles are dynamically linked to the rules of the game and to the time-oriented development of the game (e.g., the ninth inning). Likewise, a young child

may play with a Barbie doll using a different set of roles and norms than used with a baby doll that wets itself and cries. By taking on multiple roles within and between games and time periods, children learn that roles are constructed within a larger system of norms and expectations and that these rules of the games may change over time. Furthermore, the child learns that he or she may take on multiple roles and thus have complex identities.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed a social and **ecological theoretical model of development** that has had a lasting effect in staging research on children. He argued that the smallest unit with which we could analyze development is the dyad. In other words, he asserted that the child did not develop alone but always during interaction with another human. We have already seen that this is so with the reported cases of isolated children. Bronfenbrenner did not stop with the dyad, but further reasoned that development is an outward movement of the child's interaction and increasing competence with levels of interaction. First, the child might interact with only one or two significant adults, but soon the child is in daycare, kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school, the workplace, and community environments. Each level brings new forms of interaction and new relationships. Bronfenbrenner further argued that the age grading of these various interactions (what in 1989 he called the *chronosphere*) means that the child is gradually and systematically exposed to an expanding and increasingly complex set of interactions. Bronfenbrenner's theory has proven very useful in sensitizing developmental researchers to the many age-graded, life course interactions.

**Image 7.1**

Note: Influence of ATOD = Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs



There is no doubt that the single most influential developmental theory today is **attachment theory**. In many ways, attachment theory stands between the determinism of ontogenetics (nature) and the models of socialization (nurture). As its name indicates, attachment theory is very much concerned with social relationships and how they are basic to human development and well-being. Bowlby (1953) initiated attachment theory. Observations of subhuman species suggested that animals may “imprint” on a caregiver from birth. Although Bowlby’s observations did not suggest an immediate imprinting, he argued that humans develop a strong and important affectional bond with one consistently present significant caregiver, usually the mother. Bowlby’s work received additional weight from the empirical and measurement expertise of the developmental scholar Marie Ainsworth (1967). In the 1980s, attachment theory was extended to adult attachment by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Today, forms of attachment and pathological consequences are recognized in the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition (DSM-IV, 1994).

Attachment theory argues that human infants need to form secure, affective attachments to one significant and consistent caregiver. The infant or child will explore and learn about his or her environment once assured that there is a stable and secure base from which to explore. This affective attachment is usually observable and measurable by 6 months of age. For example, the familiar phenomenon of 9-month-old children “making strange” by crying when held by strangers can be interpreted as an indicator of attachment. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) conducted famous “strange situation” laboratory observations of children aged 12 to 18 months. They observed mother and child pairs as the mother stayed in the laboratory room with the child, a stranger entered the room, the mother left the room, and then the mother re-entered the room. Based on these observations, Ainsworth and colleagues developed three attachment styles. Later, Main and Solomon (1986) added a fourth attachment style. These attachment styles are outlined in Table 7.4.

Originating in the work of Hazan and Shaver (1987), the extension of attachment theory into adult relationships has developed “attachment styles” for adult romantic relationships based on the schema an adult uses to interpret relationships. For example, adults may want a close relationship but be afraid of being emotionally hurt. Such adult attachment styles are then correlated with retrospective accounts of child attachment or simply treated as an adult phenomenon.

<b>Table 7.4 Child Attachment Styles</b>	
<b>Observed Style</b>	<b>Properties from “Strange Situation” Observation</b>
Secure	Firmly attached to caregiver, explores with checking back for caregiver
Anxious-resistant	Disturbed when caregiver absent, angry with caregiver on return

Anxious-avoidant	Treats stranger and caregiver similarly but avoids caregiver on return
Disorganized	Lacks coherent pattern of response to caregiver leaving and to stranger
Source: Ainsworth et al. (1978); Main and Solomon (1986).	

<b>Box 7.4</b>
<b>Child Attachment Style</b>
For more detailed information about attachment styles, watch <a href="#">this video</a> .

## Maternal Deprivation and Daycare

Attachment theory has been important to one of the most debated areas in the last 50 years: alternatives to maternal care. Starting about 1970, women’s labour force participation began to grow throughout the world. As a result, women experiencing childbirth after 1970 were increasingly more likely to return to work than stay at home with their children. The debate has focused on the possibility of harm to children placed in alternative care situations, and attachment theory has been central to this debate.

Much of the early literature on institutionalized daycare as an alternative to maternal care was conducted in high-quality daycares that were often part of laboratory settings at major universities. The first tests used were typically based on Ainsworth et al.’s (1978) “strange situation” observations. The overall conclusion in most of these early studies was captured in a review by Belsky and Steinberg (1978). Given the constraints of these early data, they concluded that there was no evidence that daycare was harmful or that maternal care was superior for infants. They also noted that there was no evidence that daycare was harmful to the mother–child bond. Furthermore, they noted that daycare does increase the frequency of peer interaction.

A decade later, the research had changed. Belsky (1988) again summarized the research literature, but this time concluded that infants in the first year of life with more than 20 hours per week in daycare were at higher risk for developmental difficulties at a later age. Belsky and Eggebeen (1991), based on their longitudinal study, determined that children under 3 years of age with more than 20 hours per week in daycare were significantly more likely to have compliance problems in elementary school.

The change in Belsky's conclusions prompted a host of criticism from advocates of daycare. Although much of this criticism was aimed at the data or at the relatively small but nonetheless statistically significant effects for child non-compliance, some of the criticism was aimed at attachment theory. Most notable is the criticism by Hays (1998), who argued that the "strange situation" protocol for attachment theory may be methodologically flawed in that children in daycare who experience independence earlier may simply be coded as less attached. Certainly, there have been other criticisms of attachment theory, such as that it fails to control for child temperament; to account for family background factors such as income, social class, and ethnicity; and to account for community and school variables.

The research in this area continues to expand and, as appropriate for the role of a scholar, Belsky (2003–2005) has modified his position according to new research findings. In his most recent summary of the research, Belsky concluded that children are at greater risk for developing insecure attachment if they are in daycare for more than 10 hours per week during the first year and the mother is insensitive to the relationship with the child. This not only softens earlier admonitions but also adds that there is an interaction effect between the mother's insensitivity and daycare. Belsky still maintains that children in daycare through the first four and a half years show more difficulties with their behaviour through grade 1. Children who spend more time in daycare (regardless of the quality of the daycare) show more problem behaviour through grade 3. Belsky also reports that high quality daycare is associated with higher levels of language and cognitive functioning in children. For Belsky, the implications are clear: Countries should pursue family policies favouring parental leave and should avoid alternative care as a decision into which parents are pushed for economic reasons.

It is important to view care arrangements in the broader context of parent–child relationships. Although parents and parenting techniques have an effect on children, increasingly children are affected by daycare arrangements, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and elementary and secondary school. The mass media, which include television, internet, movies, and cellphone "apps," all have early and prolonged access to the developing child. We cannot easily separate the effects of parental techniques on the child from those of peers and mass media. Because of this complexity, any statistically significant effect on child outcomes may be moderated by these many other variables.

## Parenting Techniques

To a child, it must seem that the parents have supreme power over him or her. For the parents, however, the perception may be entirely different. In previous centuries, parenting techniques were largely the choice of the parent. Certainly, in the Roman *pater familias* (circa ad 100), the patriarch had complete control of even the life and death of children as well as the ability to sell them into slavery. This absolute authority of the father and head of the family was eventually narrowed by law. The steady increase in individual rights has resulted in today's parents being much more tightly controlled than at previous times in history. Today, parental behaviours toward



their children are constrained by laws about neglect, exposure to danger (failure to supervise), mandatory schooling, child abuse, abandonment, and use of physical force. Child assistance phone numbers help to ensure that children can report infractions. The mother who leaves a child unattended in the car while she uses an automated bank machine could be charged with neglect or abandonment (see Box 7.5). The father who fails to supervise a child using playground equipment, resulting in an injury to the child, could be charged with failure to supervise. If the government agency responsible for child welfare deems that parents are not adequately caring for and protecting their child, the child may be seized and placed in foster care.

### **Box 7.5**

#### **Criminal Code of Canada: Part VIII Offences Against the Person and Reputation**

##### **Duties Tending to Preservation of Life**

##### **Abandoning Child**

**218.** Everyone who unlawfully abandons or exposes a child who is under the age of ten years, so that its life is or is likely to be endangered or its health is or is likely to be permanently injured,

- (a) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years; or
- (b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding eighteen months.

R.S., 1985, c. C-46, s. 218; 2005, c. 32, s. 12.

Source: [https://www.canadiancrc.com/child\\_abandonment.aspx](https://www.canadiancrc.com/child_abandonment.aspx)

Today's parent-child relationship is not only more defined by legislation than ever before, but also more controlled by informal social norms as to what is "correct" parenting. Public inspection of parental behaviour is at an all-time high, in part because of the moral and legal beliefs about spanking. Certainly, a mother or father who uses physical punishment in public may well be reported to authorities. In addition, there are very strong feelings about abandonment. Some of the cases of moral outrage toward parents are humorous, such as the March 2009 case in which a car thief found an infant in the back seat, returned to find the child's parents, and scolded them for leaving their child alone in the vehicle.

The parent-child relationship is lifelong and the academic study of parent-child relationships spans a long duration from early childhood until the death of either the parent or the child. However, most developmental sociologists study parenting as it pertains to the young child from infancy through the elementary school years since, during this period, parents are charged with

the greatest responsibility for the child, the child has the least amount of power, and the parental socialization of the child is most effective. Indeed, if you review brainwashing techniques, you will find that brainwashing involves first stripping a person of prior socialization; developing a warm and close relationship between the captive and one significant captor; totally controlling the environment in terms of rewards, punishments, and all other influences; and finally rebuilding the socialization. Parents do not have to strip previous socialization and identity since the infant is unencumbered by these. They largely control the environment, the rewards, and the punishments of the infant. They can limit playmates and select alternative care and preschools according to their religious, cultural, and moral values. Of course, as the child grows, the parents increasingly lose control over rewards and punishments and the environment expands to include influences of peers and mass media. This early socialization, however, forms the child's world view, morals, and identity and is perhaps the single most powerful influence throughout one's lifetime.

### Box 7.6

#### Explaining Things to Billy

"Billy, get back here!" shouted the boy's alarmed father. Billy's dad was mowing the lawn and two-and-a-half-year-old Billy had been playing on the driveway. His dad had yelled because Billy was headed for the street in front of the house and there was a fair amount of automobile traffic.

Billy's dad kneeled down to have a talk with the boy. "Billy, if you go into the road, a car might smush you, and then you would be hurt or dead. It's like a really big 'ouchy' and you don't want that, do you?"

Billy obediently said, "No, Daddy." Then he paused thoughtfully and asked, "If I were dead, would I still get to go to the birthday party tomorrow?"

Billy's dad quickly incorporated the idea that Billy could not conceptualize death or even being "smushed." He replied, "If you go into the street, you will end up in your room, and you will not go to the birthday party." Billy's dad was not confident that even this deterrent could be understood by Billy.

In the academic study of the early parent-child relationship, emphasis is usually placed on two broad areas for child outcomes: child compliance and child achievement. **Child compliance** involves the child's response to the directions from responsible adults such as parents, teachers, caregivers, and authorities. Compliance is essential in early childhood (ages 0 to 4), before the child can reason and conceptualize consequences (see Box 7.6). As the child begins to be able to understand consequences and reason, compliance becomes less important than autonomy and creativity. However, when the child is young, it is essential that compliance is emphasized for the child's own safety.


**Child achievement** is usually divided into two areas: social achievement and academic achievement. Most parents want their children to have friends and to develop social skills. At the same time, parents also want their children to be respectful of teachers and adults, and these, too, are social skills. However, in addition, parents want their children to do well in school and to receive good grades and praise from their teachers. The balance between these two areas of achievement may be difficult at times. For example, how much time does a child spend playing with other children (social) rather than taking special math courses or violin lessons (academic)? On the other hand, some activities, such as group violin lessons or chorus groups, may involve achieving both social and academic skills.

Parents have available to them several techniques and strategies to help their children reach these outcomes. Parental warmth and support are used to encourage and bolster desired behaviours. However, many parental techniques are aimed at control and discipline, to achieve either immediate compliance to commands such as “don’t go in the street” or compliance to longer-term goals such as “practice your violin.” To achieve compliance, parental techniques include coercion, ridicule, withdrawal of love, threats, punishments such as physical isolation (“time out”) or physical discipline, and reasoning.

Some psychologists have approached parenting as a static and relatively stable phenomenon. For example, the noted psychologist Diana Baumrind (1967) argued that parents fall into just three styles of parenting: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (a fourth style, uninvolved, was added by Maccoby and Martin [1983]). Today, rather than placing parents in one parenting category, we know that many variables determine which techniques and strategies parents adopt in relation to a child’s behaviour. In fact, this process is complex and parental techniques change with such variables as the age of the child, the gender of the child, the type of behaviour being monitored, and the place or situation (school or home). For example, most parents reduce spanking frequency starting at about 3 years of age, and by 10 years of age it is virtually nonexistent in most families (Day, Peterson, & McCracken, 1998). Boys receive different treatment than girls, and the frequency and duration of spanking also depends on the gender of the parent. In other words, parental techniques are clearly developmental in that they depend on the age of the child, the immediate environment, and the duration and development of the relationship. Parental techniques change with the development of the child, so to slot parents into a particular parenting style seems to lack an understanding that the parent–child relationship is dynamic rather than static. Indeed, Belsky (1984) produced a more dynamic view of parenting in his process model of parenting shown in Figure 7.1.

### Box 7.7

#### Parenting Styles

 5 Parenting Styles and Their Effects on Life

In Belsky's process model, the child's developmental history includes both previous stages and experience and these are integrated with personality and temperament. Parenting effects on child development are the product of the parents' marriage and the parents' work as they interact with the child's temperament. Finally, the effect of parenting is always joined with the characteristics of the individual child. Clearly, Belsky's model incorporates the bidirectional effects of child to parent and parent to child. Perhaps the largest oversight in Belsky's model is that it does not actively and deliberately incorporate influences from the media, peers, the school, and the community. To do so would of course make the model more complete, but also make it so complex as to lose some of its clarity. Some of these additional variables will be incorporated into the following discussion of parental disciplinary techniques. What the Belsky model does achieve when compared to static categorizations of parenting styles such as "authoritarian" and "permissive" is that it recognizes the bidirectionality of the parent-child influences and allows for dynamic changes over time as the parents and child grow and develop together.

## Parental Disciplinary Techniques

Among all topics surrounding parenting, the disciplinary techniques used by parents are probably most frequently discussed. There is hardly a social group or organization without some opinion on this topic, including religious leaders, the media, political lobbying groups, schools, and legislators. Even such august bodies as the United Nations Study on Violence against Children set a target date (now passed) of 2009 for the worldwide prohibition of spanking. At least 13 countries, including Norway, have adopted zero tolerance laws regarding the spanking of children. At the same time, there are warnings from religious fundamentalists that if we spare the rod, we will spoil our children (see, for example, [https://www.tldm.org/news6/child\\_discipline.htm](https://www.tldm.org/news6/child_discipline.htm)). This area is so fraught with emotion and conflict that few academics or scholars want to venture into these complex issues.

The major finding on the harmful effects of spanking concerns heightened aggression in children who have been spanked. The problem with much of the literature on spanking and aggression is that we cannot perform research that uses an **experimental design**, because this obviously would be not only cruel but also unethical. As a result, most of our knowledge is based on research that uses a **correlational design**. Correlational design does not allow us to analyze separately whether aggressive children are simply more likely to produce behaviours that result in spanking or whether spanking actually produces aggressiveness in children. In other words, we need to control for the traits and attributes of the child before examining the effects of spanking. Seldom do researchers establish baseline data of child temperament. Correlational designs for spanking outcomes are complicated further by estimates that 94 percent of all U.S. parents spank 3- and 4-year-old children and 52 percent of Canadian parents do the same (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). The prevalence of spanking means that the "no exposure" group is numerically difficult to include in research samples.

Image 7.2



There are many other significant problems with research in this area, some of which were noted early on by Steinmetz (1979). One major problem concerns the dependent variable “aggressiveness.” This variable confuses **prosocial aggression** with **anti-social aggression**. Most societies consider prosocial aggression as valuable since it leads people to intervene when another is being hurt or attacked. Another problem with the research is that the direction of the effects of corporal punishment (whether they are positive effects, such as reducing anti-social aggression, or negative effects, such as increasing anti-social aggression) tends to change with conditions such as the gender of the disciplining parent, whether the act being disciplined is aggressive or non-aggressive, whether corporal discipline is conjoined with reasoning, whether the discipline occurs in school or at home, and the age and gender of the child being disciplined. In addition, the degree of physical discipline (low, moderate, or high intensity) often has curvilinear effects on child outcomes. All of this is very confusing in terms of interpreting findings, but it does tell us that any good research would have to account for all of these variables to be able to make any claims about the effects of spanking.

Although there has been a host of ideologically and politically biased “research” on spanking, there has also been some outstanding research on its effects. Straus (1996) argued that spanking creates a violent society. Later, Straus and Paschall (1999) found that spanking has a negative influence on the child’s intellectual development. Slade and Wissow (2004) found that spanking before age 2 is associated with behaviour problems four years later. In addition,

Straus and Paschall's (2009) global data found that children from geographic areas that use less spanking have higher intelligence quotients (IQs) than those in areas that use more spanking. They also reported some notable exceptions in Asian countries where spanking and other forms of physical punishment are practised. They attributed this region's higher IQs and academic performance to strong parental academic values. Naturally, this explanation brings up the possibility that IQs in all countries may be determined more by parental values than by spanking, and that spanking may be spuriously related to IQ.

All of these researchers used longitudinal data so that the causal influences could be better identified. Nonetheless, it is virtually impossible to control for or account for the many variables associated with parents' use of spanking, such as race, class, income, and social development. All of these associated variables have effects on the child's IQ and cognitive development, as do more subtle variables such as the school system and community supports.

There is also a sizable literature arguing that spanking leads to positive outcomes for children. This research makes a distinction between spanking and other forms of corporal punishment such as slapping, hitting with a belt or other object, and kicking. Spanking is often defined as the hitting of the child's clothed buttocks with the palm of an open hand. Some researchers go further and suggest that the number of hits be limited to three and that the hitting not produce welts, bruises, or scars. Some use of spanking is contingent on the desired outcome. For example, when immediate compliance is required, spanking may be the most effective way to achieve such compliance (obedience). For example, if a 2-year-old wants to run into the road (see Box 7.5), a threat of spanking or an actual spanking may gain immediate compliance. However, if the outcome of interest is longterm intellectual development, spanking may be inappropriate. This conditional position on spanking (e.g., Baumrind, Larzelere, & Cowan, 2002) is further complemented and complicated by the fact that when most parents use spanking, they conjoin it with at least one or more other forms of discipline. For example, Larzelere, Sather, Schneider, Larson, and Pike (1998) found that spanking of toddlers used in conjunction with reasoning was more effective in delaying the target behaviours. Indeed, this has led to a new category of spanking where parents use spanking if and only if the child does not obey some other method of discipline. For example, if a child is put in his or her room for a "time out," refuses to stay there, and the parents state that the child will get a spanking if he or she comes out of the room again, that is termed *conditional spanking* (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003).

More recently, a question originally raised by Steinmetz (1979) has become central to the spanking debate: Are the outcomes for other disciplinary techniques any less harmful than the outcomes for spanking? The early assessment of this question by Steinmetz indicated that most forms of discipline, such as "time out," withdrawal of love, scolding, isolation, and use of reasoning, were often associated with increased aggression similar to that seen with spanking. It seems that children do not like to be disciplined! A recent review (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005) of 26 outcome studies regarding different disciplinary tactics concluded that conditional spanking is better associated with positive child outcomes (prosocial behaviour, self-esteem, etc.) than are alternative disciplinary strategies. Surprisingly, spanking achieved long-term outcomes equal to

or better than those associated with alternative forms of discipline. The authors of this study were careful to exclude forms of physical abuse and overt assault as disciplinary tactics.

Among academics, the spanking debate certainly has not been resolved. Clearly, we need large longitudinal samples and detailed diary reports of discipline to address many of the remaining questions about causation. Furthermore, we need much more information about the target child's personality and behaviour before disciplinary tactics are ever used by the parents to ensure that spanking is not the result of problematic traits or temperament in the child. Nevertheless, a more complete picture is emerging about the many complicating control variables (age of child, temperament, gender, type of behaviour being punished, place, gender of disciplinarian) as well as the types of discipline being used (spanking, conditional spanking, other forms of physical punishment, "time out," withdrawal of love, ridicule) and the associated outcomes (long-term and short-term compliance, self-esteem, anti-social aggression, prosocial aggression). This complex debate is far from resolved but we have gained considerable sophistication in the questions we now ask. Even if we had all of the scientific answers, those factual answers would not address the moral question about the use of spanking and corporal punishment.

## **Intergenerational Transmission of Social Class**

One of the most interesting areas of research about parenting techniques is on the association between parenting techniques and the intergenerational transmission of social class. This is an important area for sociological study since it involves the transmission of inequality. For example, a recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report by Cristina d'Addio (2007, p. 4) shows that intergenerational income mobility is higher in Nordic countries, Canada, and Australia than in the United States, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Rates of intergenerational income mobility show the degree to which inequality is tied to the status into which you are born (**ascribed status**, such as a caste system) or the degree to which status can be changed through hard work or affirmative action programs (**achieved status**). Cristina d'Addio argues that education, especially early childhood education in families, is responsible for much of the inequality and mobility.

According to Cristina d'Addio (2007), early economic work on the transmission of social class and inequality (Becker & Tomes, 1979, 1986) argued that mobility was composed of parentally transmitted "endowments" to children, financial transfers to children, and the constraints on mobility in the social system (equality of opportunity). Later, the idea of "endowments" was broken down into the components of physically transmitted endowments (e.g., genetic IQ, athleticism), the human capital the child receives (knowledge, skills), and the cultural capital the child receives (cultural practices appropriate to a class). Clearly, the second and third of these, human capital and cultural capital, are more subject to social policy and inquiry.

For many years, sociologists thought that the most important part of social class was human capital. Even indicators such as socio-economic status were composed of years of education, occupational prestige, and income. Indeed, education was thought to give a person the skills

and training needed to get a good job with high income. Much of the research on intergenerational transmission focused on formal education as a key to mobility. For example, Cristina d'Addio (2007) argues that wealthy families can afford an enriched environment for early learning and language and good schools that aid the child's later success in education and acquiring human capital. Human capital was then seen as instrumental to high income, and income was a significant dimension of class. Early social class characterizations such as Warner, Meeker, and Eells's (1949) six classes relied heavily on income, as have many more recent class characterizations (see Beeghley, 2004).

**Image 7.3**



In today's post-industrial economy, this supposition has run into some trouble. The correlation between education and income has weakened as labour unions successfully negotiate lucrative contracts for lower-skilled workers and social programs address income inequalities. In addition to the weakening correlation between education and income, there has been a change in the economy. Previously, industrial economies were limited by their labour supply and production constraints. In highly automated post-industrial societies, the limits on the economy are often set by the market. How many cars you can sell is tied to convincing each Canadian consumer that he or she needs two or three cars rather than one car. In addition, there is a need to compete for global export markets and consumers.

These changes have been tied to the increasing popularity of a view of social class as a system of values and practices linked to the idea of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1984). As income has become less of a predictor of social class, the other measures constructing socio-economic



status (SES) have been more closely scrutinized by researchers (see Cristina d'Addio, 2007; Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu argues that in a world where patterns of consumption rather than production are more important in distinguishing social class, a detailed examination of the mechanisms tied to different patterns of consumption is required. He analyzes descriptive data from a national survey of French tastes and consumption using a statistical technique (correspondence analysis) that reveals clusters of associated behaviours. An example of the patterns Bourdieu found is that those persons who like soft-ripened cheeses such as Camembert also like opera and new age classical music and read books. Those people who like beer and steak also like to watch sports on TV and tend not to read books but only magazines. Naturally, there was some correlation with income, but cultural patterns could be shared by lower-income groups such as artists and intellectuals as well as wealthy industrialists.

These associations prompted Bourdieu to theorize that “tastes” are important not only in announcing one’s social class but also in attaining and maintaining social class. He argued that children acquire basic habits early in life that become so ingrained that they will later seem “natural” or almost “inborn.” These early patterns and the situation in which they are acquired are called the **habitus**. The habitus equips the child with immediate reflexive behaviours such as saying “please” and “thank you” or using a tissue rather than a sleeve to blow one’s nose, and that these behaviours announce social class to teachers and peers. Later, the child is thrown in with peers and the child from an upper social class will understand the *rules of the game* for talking about art or music but perhaps be less able to relate to common knowledge. The upper-class child may be more comfortable with Chopin’s music yet readily believe that a “hockey pool” is what happens when an ice rink melts in the summer. Furthermore, the habitus is associated with early values about creativity and learning.

Other scholars across the developed world have given some credence to the perspective on social class argued by Bourdieu (1984). For example, Bernstein (1971) argues that speech patterns carry social class so that it can be distinguished by those who use restricted codes (such as demonstrative pronouns *this* or *that* rather than the elaborated codes used by higher classes that name the object). The difference between saying “could you close that?” and “would you please close the door?” announces one’s background or what Bourdieu would call one’s habitus. Similarly, Lareau’s (2003) study of 88 families and parenting practices documents how parenting practices are clearly structured and patterned by social class. Her work must be seen as an extension of the extensive theoretical and empirical work on this topic by the sociologist Melvin Kohn (1969). Kohn developed a detailed theoretical model of intergenerational social class transmission (see Figure 7.2).

Tracing through the steps in the model from left to right, we find that the model begins with the **social class** influence in the family of orientation. This influence includes what Bourdieu calls habitus along with the early socialization of the “rules of the game” and value orientation. The social class that the child exhibits is translated into the form and type of education. For example, those in the upper class are more likely to believe that education involves inquisitiveness and curiosity rather than being an onerous task required to get a job. Education combined with

social class background lead to an occupational status such as those tied to professions or trades.

The type of occupational status is related to the **occupational conditions**. Occupations in which people work to project production rather than to punch a time clock and that require problem solving at a high intellectual level will tend to emphasize independent thought, creativity, and intellectual flexibility. Some “jobs” will require obedience to union rules, punching a time clock, and doing what one is told and these are associated with low intellectual flexibility. Both the intellectual flexibility and the occupational conditions determine the **values** of the parent. If the parent perceives the rewards at work as being tied to a high value on obedience and following directions, that parent will likely choose techniques of discipline and parenting that emphasize those values. On the other hand, if the parent perceives that creativity and independence get one ahead in this world, those values would lead to adopting certain other parenting techniques. Kohn recognizes that over time the values articulated by the professional work world and social class may change, and his model is sufficiently dynamic to address this. Career Box 7.1 illustrates how Bourdieu’s and Kohn’s arguments about the intergenerational transmission of social class values and cultural consumption could affect one’s job interview skills.

Overall, Kohn’s model proposes an explanation for the long-term association between physical discipline of children, with its emphasis on obedience and compliance, and homes with lower socio-economic status. Kohn’s theory states that the replication of social class is complex and involves aspects of Bourdieu’s habitus, but that occupational conditions and the tacit values on intellectual flexibility are more proximally related to parenting techniques. There is certainly an impressive array of research on this theory spanning more than 40 years (e.g., Luster, Rhoades, & Hass, 1989; Ritchie, 1997). Kohn’s model identifies the links between how we are raised, school, work, and the values that parents transmit to their children.

### Career Box 7.1

#### The Real Interview and Cultural Capital

The board of directors had spent the afternoon interviewing Ray for the job. Now it was time to relax. The directors took Ray to a very fancy restaurant, and he was a little uncomfortable with the array of eating implements that confronted him once he was seated. As the company’s directors chatted about the new surrealism exhibit, Ray noticed that his hosts had all placed their napkins on their laps. However, before Ray could follow their lead, the waiter elegantly whisked the napkin from the table and placed it on Ray’s lap. Ray cringed slightly at the attention this garnered from his hosts.

One of the directors asked if Ray had decided on any menu items and recommended the clams on the half shell. Ray said that he didn’t like “live food” and continued to look over the

menu.

Later, Ray laughingly said to one of the directors that his menu must have been misprinted because the restaurant had left the prices off.

Will had been looking forward to chatting with members of the board after a long job interview.

The “arsenal” of forks and utensils at the restaurant did not intimidate him since he had been raised with such place settings at home. He was completely comfortable.

Will was happy when the topic of conversation turned to the surrealism exhibit and talked knowledgeably about the impact of Max Ernst’s work in establishing surrealism as a viable school of art. As it turned out, many of the directors had an interest in art and several were involved in painting and collecting.

One of the directors suggested the clams on the half shell but Will pointed out that they were littleneck clams and said he would rather have the Nova Scotia Digby scallops as an appetizer. Later, Will ordered the osso buco and noted how difficult it is to find on menus due to the length of cooking time required.

Days later, Will was offered the job and told that the board was especially pleased with his social skills and intellectual flexibility. The directors felt that Will could serve as an outstanding representative of the company in almost any context.

## Conclusion

Although the previous discussion assists us in understanding the social mechanisms for the transmission of social class, it should be obvious that the availability of occupations, the financial security tied to these forms of employment, and the climate of independence and creativity in such professions are all linked to economic and social structures outside of the control of individuals and families. Regardless of the fact that the 2007 OECD report places Canada near the top of the list of countries with high rates of social mobility, other data are more troubling regarding our country’s future. In a recent report by the Vanier Institute of the Family (2010, p. 112), a disturbing trend for families is noted:

The 20% of families with the lowest adjusted after-tax income saw an increase of 14.2% from \$14,100 in 1989 to \$16,100 in 2007, while families in the second quintile experienced a gain of 14.1% from \$23,400 to \$26,700. Families in the third and fourth quintiles saw their after tax incomes increase by 17.5% and 20.5%, respectively, between 1989 and 2007. Stated in another way, the incomes of families in the top 20% were increasing twice as fast as those in the bottom two quintiles (at 31%).

It should be obvious that the individual family and the school system may fully prepare people for intellectually flexible careers, but it is critical that economic and social structures continue to maintain equality of opportunity and well-being. The data cited in the Vanier Institute of the Family (2010) report suggest that Canada may be becoming increasingly like the more rigid class-structured societies and have less social class mobility than we have formerly enjoyed.

We have seen that parent–child relationships are very complex. The infant comes equipped with his or her own personality and characteristics as well as with a species calendar for ontogenetic development. Each parent also has these characteristics as well as his or her own family history, values, and integration into the adult world of work. The ideas and values of the parent will be expressed in numerous ways, such as choices favouring experience over readiness of the child and forms of discipline to achieve the child’s compliance, social success, and academic success. The child’s success will depend on subtle characteristics of family background and values but also on the social and economic structures that the adult child confronts.

The parent–child relationship is so complex that only one major conclusion can be reached. Although social scientists may offer tentative generalizations about parent–child effects, there is simply no one way of disciplining that is correct for all children, no one way of motivating a child that is correct, and no one way of igniting a child’s creativity that is correct. Each child and each parent has his or her own personality. Each disciplinary technique interacts with a complex array of variables, such as age, gender, place, and type of act being disciplined, which make any answers about child discipline exceedingly complex. As we have seen, even success as measured by social mobility contains historical variables, parental variables, and variables outside of the control of parents and families.

## Summary of Key Points

- Parsons (1954) and Goode (1963) argue that children in agrarian societies supplied labour and were economic assets, whereas in industrial societies children are economic liabilities because of compulsory schooling and the lack of need for their unskilled labour.
- The goal for most North American parents is to raise children to be socially and economically independent.
- Empirical or experiential perspectives on learning believe that parents and society transfer their knowledge and skills to the “blank slate” of the child.
- Rational theories of learning believe that pre-existing structures or forms of analysis allow experience to occur.
- There are three dominant models of “effects” or causation between parents and children.
  - Unidirectional: Parent → Child
  - Unidirectional: Child → Parent
  - Bidirectional: Parent ↔ Child

- Development or maturation could be discussed in terms of the maturation of the social group (family), a dyad (husband–wife, father–daughter, mother–son), or the individual.
- Theories of development are conceptualized by how they deal with the following:
  - Ontogenesis versus sociogenesis
  - Sequential invariance versus variable sequential flexibility
  - Stages of development
- Psychoanalytic and psychological theories focus on ontogenesis and invariant stages of development rooted in the individual.
- Sociological theories of development focus on sociogenesis, sequential variation of stages rooted in the social system (norms, family, school).
- Among the sociogenic theories of development are G.H. Mead’s play and game stages, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, and Bowlby’s attachment theory.
- Belsky and attachment theorists argue that full-time institutionalized daycare before 3 years of age has detrimental effects on the children’s level of compliance in school and at home later in life.
- Child abandonment (see Box. 7.4) is a criminal offence in Canada.
- Most scholars studying parent–child relationships emphasize the child outcomes of compliance and achievement. Achievement is further divided into social achievement and academic achievement.
- Parent–child relationships are dynamic and numerous variables affect child outcomes (see Figure 7.1).
- Social scientists usually cannot use experimental designs to study effects of different forms of discipline on children but they can use correlational designs to study child outcomes.
- Discipline results in higher levels of child aggression, though it may be either prosocial aggression or anti-social aggression.
- The “spanking debate” is empirically unresolved by social scientists, who disagree on the role of child traits, complex interactions between factors (e.g., gender and type of discipline), definitions of spanking, and definitions of outcomes. The moral debate cannot be resolved by social science.
- Physical punishment is tied to the transmission of social class in that it does not reinforce values of creativity or intellectual flexibility in the child (see Kohn, 1969; Figure 7.2).

- Bourdieu's concept of habitus suggests that external conditions of social class (cultural capital) are socialized into the child so that, as an adult, his or her values and culture reconfigure a similar social structure in the next generation.

## Glossary

**achieved status** A level or strata in society attained by the individual's effort and training.

**anti-social aggression** Aggression (behaviour intended to injure or harm a person or property) that is antithetical to or fails to support the norms of society (e.g., butting in line, hitting).

**ascribed status** A level or strata in society attained by the individual based on characteristics outside the individual's control, such as race, gender, family status, and caste.

**attachment theory** Bowlby's theory that infants must securely attach to one principal caregiver for optimal psychosocial development.

**bidirectional parent-child model** A theoretical approach that recognizes that parents both affect and are simultaneously affected by their children. The same holds true for children (that is, they affect and are simultaneously affected by their parents).

**child achievement** Children are expected to achieve higher levels of competency in academics and socializing. Social achievement is often measured by the child's ability to work and play in groups as well as to maintain friendships. Academic achievement is often measured by school grades, test scores, and teacher reports.

**child compliance** The ability of the child to comply with the instructions of authorities such as parents, teachers, and other adults.

**child-to-parent unidirectional model** The child conditions (rewards and punishes) the parent to produce the behaviour he or she desires. The more modest version states that parenting responds to the temperament and desires of the child.

**correlational design** A field research design that measures two variables only and can show if they are related but cannot show if they are causally related.

**ecological theoretical model of development** Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory argued that a child's ontogenetic development always occurs in a social context. Humans begin their development in the context of the mother-child dyad and throughout the life course they enlarge their context to family members, school, community, and eventually major social institutions. In this perspective, ontogenesis is simply a part of a complex picture of interactions between the individual and the social and physical environments.

**empiricism** Theories of learning that emphasize sensory data as the source of ideas and experience.

**experimental design** A research design aimed at controlling all relevant variables except the hypothesized cause to demonstrate its causal effect on an outcome variable. It commonly uses the state or level of the outcome variable before the introduction of the causal variable and then measures the change in the outcome after the introduction of the causal variable.

**factorial design** A design based on a statistical model known as the general linear model (see Table 7.2). More specifically, the general linear model identifies independent causal or associative factors (independent variables) related to some dependent variable (in Table 7.2, the child's success with toilet training). The design is a way of thinking about research and cause and effect. The joint level of two factors (such as the combined effect of toilet training and being 18 months or older) is called an interaction effect. The direct or main effects are simply the independent effect of toilet training regardless of age and the independent effect of age regardless of toilet training. For further information and explanation, see [www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/expfact.php](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/expfact.php).

**habitus** Bourdieu's term for the early habits an individual acquires that are part of and express the values of the social class structure. For example, saying "please" and "thank you" or using a handkerchief rather than a sleeve to blow one's nose.

**game stage** G.H. Mead's game stage is the time when the child learns that various social roles (such as batter or catcher in baseball) are meaningfully structured by social rules (norms) to construct a game. By playing a game, the child learns to take on various social roles and execute them based on the rules of the game. The child also learns that he or she may take on different roles, such as first being "it" or the "seeker" in a game of hide and go seek and later being one of the "hidiers." This is critical to learning the way in which roles and norms function in human societies.

**levels of analysis** Maturation and development occur at all levels of analysis. Societies develop, social groups develop, dyads and marriages develop, and individuals develop, though the processes for each level of analysis may be quite distinct and different.

**occupational conditions** Kohn argued that the work conditions of an occupation relate to the values that parents try to instill in their children. Work conditions that are inflexible and have routinized time demands (punching a time clock) tend to emphasize a high value on obedience. Work conditions that are oriented to project completion and require creativity (software producer, lawyer) emphasize time flexibility, internal motivation, and intellectual flexibility.

**ontogenetic development** Development in which the progression is set by species-specific genes. All humans (in a normal range) progress through the same stages of development at about the same ages.

**parent-to-child unidirectional model** The parent transfers knowledge and skills to the child.

**play stage** G.H. Mead's stage of child development in which the child learns that social roles are constructed by norms and sanctions by playing "mommy" or playing "doctor." If a child beats his or her doll, an adult might say, "That is no way to treat your baby!"

**prosocial aggression** Aggression (behaviour intended to injure or harm a person or property) that enforces or supports the norms of society (e.g., defending the helpless, standing up to bullies, reporting a crime).

**rationalism** The view that there are pre-existing structures in the mind (ideas) that allow us to channel and form sensory data into "experience."

**social class** The idea of social class is based on the view that all societies are hierarchically stratified into groups (classes) and that these groups are distinguished by differentials in opportunity, background, culture, and material wealth.

**sociogenic development** The view that maturation and development are affected mainly by cultural learning and socialization within social groups as opposed to being inherent to the species in the form of a necessary timetable.

**values** The worth or valuation of an act, thing, or person relative to other elements being evaluated. Parental values have to do with the importance (value) that parents place on elements such as obedience, moral behaviour, and creativity.

## Connections

<http://www.andosociology.net/resources/Davis%2C+Kingsley+-+A+Final+Note+on+a+Case+of+Extreme+Isolation.pdf> (Link expired)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEnkY2iaKis> (Video unavailable)

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3119812/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1419949/pdf/gut00400-0056.pdf>

<https://www.mottchildren.org/posts/your-child/developmental-milestones>

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/cchs/growth\\_approp](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/cchs/growth_approp) (Link expired)

<https://conjointly.com/kb/factorial-designs/>

<https://people.ucsc.edu/~brogoff/William%20James%20Award.pdf>

[https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/BelskyANGxp\\_rev-Child\\_care.pdf](https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/BelskyANGxp_rev-Child_care.pdf) (Link Not Found)

[https://www.tldm.org/news6/child\\_discipline.htm](https://www.tldm.org/news6/child_discipline.htm)

<https://www.oecd.org/social/family/38335410.pdf>