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ABSTRACT

The major thesis of this paper is that the stimulation of children's intellectual development may require greater intensity in the relationships between adults and children in preschool programs than is typically the case. The author separates two variables in adult-child relationships: warmth and intensity. Warmth is generally defined as positive, accepting, nurturing and giving friendly responses to children. Intensity is used to refer to the child's feeling that what he does or is really matters to the adults. The two variables are used in combination to yield a typology of preschool programs showing where each of four preschool program models falls. It is proposed that the optimum preschool environment is one in which the relationships between adults and children are characterized by high warmth and high intensity. Various factors impinging on teachers may make the optimum environment difficult to achieve. One of these factors is the adults' need to maintain an optimum emotional distance between themselves and the children. The risks of minimum distance are discussed as well as the difficult conditions under which preschool teachers and caregivers work, and the effects of these conditions on their ability to maintain optimum distance. Some recommendations for improving working conditions are outlined. (Author/BF)

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TEACHERS IN PRESCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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TEACHERS IN PRESCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS*

In this paper I want to share with you some of my concerns about the special problems of adults who work with children in preschools, day care centers, kindergarten and other child care settings. I shall attempt to make the case that specific aspects of the work engender types of programs which, in turn, may undermine some of the central goals of preschool education. I have organized the discussion under four interconnected headings: (1) overall observations of current developments in the field of early childhood education; (2) issues in child-adult relationships; (3) problems in adult-child relationships; (4) future prospects.

1. Overall Observations of Early Childhood Education

It is well known that the field of early childhood education has greatly expanded during the last decade. This expansion is most marked in the United States but is certainly not limited to it. Increasing interest in preschool children, often reflected in the development of programs for these children, seems to be world wide.

Changes in Terminology

One of the interesting signs of the times is that the term "nursery school" has gradually dropped out of use in the United States, and has been replaced by the terms "preschool" and "early childhood education." We can only speculate about the causes of such changes in terminology. Occasionally it seems that the change is due to the same root metaphor which results in terms like "precooked" and "preshrunk." Indeed, developments in the field over the last decade reflect much rationalization of today's pedagogy in terms of preparation for the next life!

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A more serious examination of recent trends (in the United States, at least) suggests several factors at work. First, the term nursery seems to emphasize the nurturant functions of early education, whereas preschool stresses the preparatory and preventative goals of so-called intervention programs like Head Start. Secondly, the term early childhood education captures more fully than nursery school the variety of age groups served by programs for young children, and the types of settings in which they occur. The rubric "early childhood education" usually encompasses all types of programs and classes for children up to the age of eight.

Conceptions of the Teacher's Role

Alongside changes in program terminology, some reluctance to use the term teacher can also be observed, especially in discussions of day care center staffing. Instead, terms like child care worker and caregiver are increasingly being used. The federally initiated program developed by the Office of Child Development (HEW) adopted the term Child Development Associate for adults working in Head Start and other preschool settings.

The causes of such reluctance to use the term teacher are not entirely clear. We can speculate that some believe that the term teacher implies conventional state teaching credentials or diplomas - an implication which would be incongruent with the so-called paraprofessional or assistant status of many adults working in early childhood programs. The reluctance may also reflect negative sentiments toward teachers in conventional public schools among both workers and clients of programs such as Head Start and other community-based early childhood centers. However, it may be that to a large extent, the

reluctance to use teacher stems from some of the complexities involved in conceptualizing the adult's role and functions in programs for very young children. What proportion of the role is educational? How much is health-related? How much emphasis should be put on care? Apparently in the old days before the large-scale expansion, people who worked with young children had a shared understanding of their role and functions. In a description of the ideal qualifications for nursery school teachers Jessie Stanton stated:

> She should have a fair education . . . By this I mean she should have a doctor's degree in psychology and medicine. Sociology as a background is advisable. She should be an experienced carpenter, mason, mechanic, plumber and a thoroughly trained musician and poet . . . Now at 83, she is ready! (In Beyer, 1968)

A more contemporary version of the ideal qualifications would most likely add linguistics, ethnic studies, anthropology and ecology, at least. Such all-encompassing qualifications reflect the broad range of functions adults working with children have to assume.

The terms used today, like child care worker and child development associate may have consciousness-raising effects on those among our clients, the general public as well as government officials, whose frame of reference is conventional elementary school teaching. In addition, the new names may, in a sense, be rewordings of the concept of the whole child, which outsiders often ridicule as a cliché. But, as Millie Almy has pointed out, whatever we are doing with a child, we are always affecting the whole person (1975, p. 50). Another way to state the problem of "wholeness," or the variety of functions, is to say that the younger the child, the greater is the range of his functioning for which adults must assume responsibility. And it is precisely this formulation of the role of adults who work with young children which causes me to

worry about the working lives of teachers, child care workers and other adults who work daily with the young. These worries are discussed in two parts: first, in terms of child-adult relationships, and then in terms of adult-child relationships, although, as can be readily seen, the two parts are not easily separated.

2. Issues in Child-Adult Relationships

My concerns about specific aspects of child-adult relationships stem from impressions drawn from observing preschool programs around the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and other countries. In general the programs I see fall into two categories or types which I shall call Type C and Type D. Types A and B are discussed later. I shall present somewhat exaggerated characterizations of the two types in order to communicate my concerns as fully as possible. But keep it in mind that there are no pure types in the real world!

Typology of Programs

Many programs fit into the category I have called Type C. These are the well equipped, amply spaced programs with attractive play areas and an abundance of apparatus. One sees the full range of traditional materials and activities. Whether Type C is seen in Illinois, California, Cleveland or Canberra, Gloucestershire or the West Indies, one sees a housekeeping corner, dress-up clothes, puzzles, blocks, paints, swings, etc. Beyond reasonable doubt, the children in Type C programs must see the adults as warm, friendly, helpful and supportive - all qualities we have emphasized in our literature and training. The children in Type C programs seem to be having fun in a pleasant environment and a congenial atmosphere. All of these qualities seem highly desirable and do not

evoke concern. My concern stems from an uneasy hunch that if I were a child in such a program I might say to myself (so-to-speak) "These adults are nice and pleasant, but (inside them) there is nobody home!". In other words, I wonder if the children can perceive these warm and friendly adults as thinking, responsive, genuine or self-respecting persons.

No doubt you have all observed Type C-like programs. One teacher in such a program reported that at "clean-up time" she habitually broke into a song to the effect that "we are galloping horses" etc. The business of clean-up was softened and sweetened in this way. I hasten to add that my reporter pointed out that she had learned this approach in the laboratory nursery classes at her training institution. Surely you are familiar with the kind but empty phrases pronounced in unvaried sweet tones, usually with the non-specific pronoun "we," as in "we don't throw sand" (when, in fact "we" just did!). Why do we seem to think that such soft, sweet ambiguity is necessary? When we use these patterns of communication can we be perceived by children as real, thinking adults? Can we be seen as models of those intellectual qualities we wish to engender in them? I shall explore below some possible explanations underlying these patterns.

I have classified as Type D programs the kind one sees more and more frequently, especially in the United States, in which children are engaged in routine tasks or lessons, sometimes called "structured" or mislabelled "cognitive" activities. In Type D programs, children are engaged in academic or pre-academic routines, learning to identify and classify circles, squares, sets of animals, vehicles, etc. They are often marking workbooks or dittoed sheets or engaged in other prespecified "lessons." The Type D programs, of which the curriculum materials

are the central feature, are designed or intended to be teacher proof. To the extent that Type D program and curriculum developers succeed in designing teacher proof curricula, one can assume, beyond reasonable doubt, that the children could also look at the adults and ask "Is there anybody home?" The more teacher proof, the more likely the answer would seem to be "No."

Granted that the two types are overdrawn, they both concern me for some reasons which are obvious, and other reasons about which I am as yet unclear. Parenthetically, we should keep in mind that there is no reliable evidence that either Type C or Type D programs are harmful to children. A recent report of the results of Project Follow Through suggests that each type may be producing different, although worthwhile, outcomes (Stallings, 1975). Neverthcless, I have two major concerns with both types which are related to the hypothesized "nobody home" phenomenon.

Development of the Intellect

Note that in the discussion above I have assumed a distinction between academic or preacademic activities and intellectual activities. The former involve routine "learning" tasks in which children acquire prespecified vocabulary, conventional concepts and some rudimentary pupil role behaviors and skills which are typically sampled in standardized tests of academic achievement. In contrast, intellectual activities involve exploration, experimentation and the engagement of the mind in thinking, analyzing, recording and, in a variety of ways, extending, deepening, refining and improving children's understandings of their environments and experiences.

My first concern is that neither of the two types of programs described above pays sufficient attention to the life of the mind or to the development

of the intellect. Children in Type C programs seem to be having fun, and in a sense, to be amused. In Type D programs, children seem to be acquiring some of the social skills associated with academic life or schooling.

Nevertheless, each of these two extremes overlooks, in its own way, what seems to be a primary goal of education: to engage the learner's mind and to help that mind as it attempts to improve and develop understandings of its experiences. I believe that when educators make the engagement of the learner's mind their primary goal, and succeed in doing so, then learners find their education enjoyable. But the enjoyment is a side effect, not a main effect of such education. If enjoyment were our main goal, then we would not have to know very much, we would not have to study and think, to observe, to worry about our knowledge and skills as teachers. For young children, an assortment of birthday parties, musical chairs, television cartoon shows would provide enjoyment. But when engagement of the learners' minds and the refinement of understandings constitute main goals, then alert, responsive, thinking and knowledgeable adults are required.

Another concern is that both Type C and D programs may be neglecting the development of children's capacities to be interested in worthwhile aspects of their own environments; they seem to ignore, if not jeopardize the development of the disposition to become intrigued and absorbed by the outer as well as inner world (see Katz, 1975).

To return to my second major concern about these two types of programs - my impressions that perhaps children view adults as though there is "nobody home" inside them. It is obvious that children are not likely to phrase the problem in just that way. Young children are unlikely to

be analytical with respect to adult functioning, and probably accept their perceptions at face value. Thus it is more likely that the young do not know what they are missing, so to speak. My concern about the hypothesized "nobody home" phenomenon stems from my hunch that if our programs are to have a real and enduring impact on children's intellectual development, the relationships between children and adults must be characterized by greater intensity than they typically appear to be.

Warmth and Intensity

I shall try to sketch first some ideas about how the development of the intellect and the attendant capacity to be absorbed, intrigued and interested in the environment may be related to what I shall call the intensity of the relationships between children and adults in our preschool programs. Secondly, I shall try to outline what characteristics of adult-child relationships seem to contribute to optimum intensity, and finally, I shall try to show that the typical working conditions of adults in preschool programs may make optimum intensity of child-adult relationships difficult to achieve.

As early childhood educators we have traditionally and persistently emphasized the child's need for warmth and nurturance for optimum development. As far as I know, no one is advocating the contrary. However, I would like you to consider that warmth and what I have called intensity may be thought of as separate dimensions of the relationships between children and adults.

Perhaps we can agree, for the purpose of discussion, at least, that when we use the term warmth we mean the extent to which children experience the adults as friendly, relaxed, accepting, affectionate and positive toward them. I am not sure how to define intensity. Rutter (1972; 1975) uses the term intensity in discussions of attachment, but offers no definition. He seems to use the term in contrast to the apathy (1972, pp. 18-19).

Perhaps intensity is implied in the term "connectedness" or "bonding" or "attachment." Ainsworth et al (1974) defined attachment as "an affectional tie that one person or animal forms between himself and another specific one - a tie that binds them together in space and endures over time (p. 100). However, this definition of attachment includes affection or warmth. For the sake of this discussion I want to use the term intensity to refer to the child's feeling or sensing that what he does or does not do, what he is or is not, really matters to specific others. I want to emphasize, at this point, the possibility, at least for the sake of exposition, that warmth and intensity could be thought of separately.

To illustrate the possible distinctions between warmth and intensity let us imagine a very young child who might vary his behavior, e.g. engage in a variety of charming tricks, just in order to keep someone to whom he is warmly and strongly attached in his company. In such a case, the child experiences the adult as someone warm. Wishing to maintain contact implies attachment - as in Ainsworth's et al definition quoted above.

But consider also that a young child could vary his behavior in order to avoid, reduce or otherwise minimize the contact with a specific other. In this case, the other is not experienced as warm, but is nevertheless experienced intensely... the child feels or senses that what he does or does not do, what he is or is not, really matters to that other; the child is not indifferent to the other's responses. Rutter (1972) has suggested that under some conditions, children may actually develop attachments to people or objects who cause them distress. In such cases there may be an intense relationship, but not a warm or affectionate one.

I am not, of course, advocating such intense, hostile or fearful relationships. I simply want to make the point that children may be able to experience

adults more or less intensely, or as more or less powerful, perhaps, independently of their warmth or coldness. In Figure 1 the two variables, warmth and intensity, are combined into a typology in order to show where the two types of preschool programs I have described might fit. If you will accept the separation of warmth and intensity in this way, I will now focus on the way this particular aspect of child-adult relationships may help to inform us about preschool teaching and programs.

Intensity and Intentionality

A central thesis here is that our traditional emphasis on warmth, and our underemphasis on intensity, indicated in Figure 1 as Type C programs, may help to account for the general observation that such programs have had a weaker impact on intellectual development than we had hoped. (It should be noted, however, that statements about intellectual developmental outcomes of programs are at best impressionistic since they are not evaluated. Rather, evaluations typically include reports of academic outcomes.) The low emphasis on warmth and intensity of the Type D programs may not have affected children's academic development, but may have similarly failed to stimulate and strengthen intellectual development.

Some academic or preacademic preschool programs (like the Engelmann-Becker Model from the University of Oregon) could fit into the Type B combination of the two variables. In pure form, Type B resembles a military academy. In such programs of low warmth and high intensity, academic progress is likely to be satisfactory (see Smith, 1975). Their effects upon intellectual development have not been reported. However, the typology presented here suggests that Type A, characterized by both high warmth and intensity may provide an optimum preschool environment which fosters both intellectual and personal development.

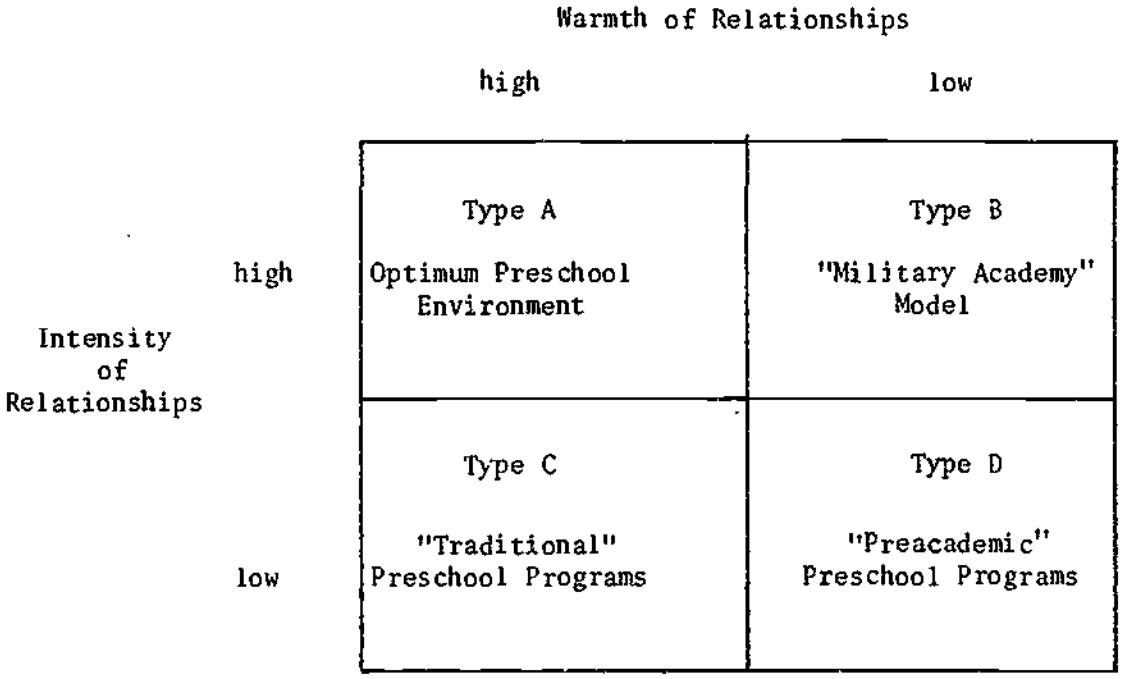

Figure 1. Typology showing the location of preschool programs on two levels of warmth and two levels of intensity of relationships.

A central thesis of this paper is that optimum intensity of relationships between children and specific adults causes young children to develop their capacities for intentional behavior. A related hypothesis is that the exercise of the capacity for intentionality throughout early childhood is related to the growing child's ability to organize his own behavior, to set, pursue, realize and achieve his own purposes.

Let us look again at the simple example of the young child who wants to keep a loved one in his company. When we say "wants" in this example, we are implying that the child has intentions. Escalona suggested that, as early as 8 months, babies can and do "direct responses toward other persons as a means of obtaining an effect..." (1973, p. 56). Thus, during the first year, the capacity for intentional behavior emerges. (The same capacity for intentional behavior is also at work when a baby wants to avoid another). It is reasonable to assume that it is not only in the case of warm bonds or relationships that the capacity for intentional behavior is developed. There is probably some kind of optimum intensity (and warmth) in the responses of adults to young children, so that either extremely weak or strong intensity of response to a child might equally, though via different mechanisms, disturb the development of the child's capacity for intentional behavior.

I am suggesting then that the intensely (and hopefully warmly) felt relationships between young children and specific adults may be the contexts in which their ultimate capacities for purposeful living are shaped, strengthened and cultivated. What seems especially relevant to our field however, is the possibility that the very young child's emerging and developing capacity for intentional behavior also serves as the rudimentary forms of hypothesis formulating and testing which characterize the life of the mind. The very young child who intends to cause an effect (such as "stay with me" or "stay

away" in our earlier example) engages in an early form of if-then thinking, or perhaps this behavior is related to that effect thinking. These possiblities seem to be supported by recent reports of research on mother-infant attachment. (Remember, however, that definitions of attachment usually include both intensity and affection; i.e., warmth.)

Ainsworth reported differences in the quality of mothers' behavior for those infants in their first year whose attachments were what she labeled "secure" (n. d.) Among the differences Ainsworth reported were: greater frequency of face to-face vocalization and greater intensity of response in mothers of securely attached infants. Ainsworth indicated that the quality of maternal behavior she called "sensitivity" involved tailoring of responses to match in a highly differentiated way the baby's signals. (Ainsworth, n. d.). These findings are hardly surprising. The picture I get as I look at this research is that in the case of the securely attached child, there is somebody there, someone who responds, who is home, who follows through (and is also warm), and engages the young child in sequences of connected interactions. M. P. M. Richards captured this quality in First Steps in Becoming Social:

> One of the first things that is required... is for you to be sure that your partner is actually attending to you and is involved in communication with you... within weeks of birth.. There are long sequences of interaction where the first fumbling links of intersubjectivity are made. The infant looks at the caretaker's face. The caretaker looks back into the eyes of the infant. A smile moves on the infant's face. The adult responds with a vocal greeting and a smile. There is mutual acknowledgment. The 'meaning' of this exchange does not simply depend on the action patterns employed by the two participants. Each must fit his sequence of actions with that of the other; if this is not done, the exchange may well become meaningless. An important means of knowing that a message is intended for you is that it follows an alternating sequence with yours (1974).

The significant aspect of the child-caretaker relationship here is that a sequence of responses is involved in which one party responds to the other in a sustained flow of what seem to be behavioral response conversations.

These behavior conversations, in which each party responds after taking into account information or meanings embedded in the other party's response, seem to be early experiences in child-adult relationships essential to the development of the intellect, and ultimately the capacity to think one's own thoughts as well as organize one's own purposes and behavior.

So many programs for very young children have implemented the research on early deprivation and stimulation by dangling colorful and varied objects in front of babies. Certainly such adult activities can be stimulating. I am suggesting that mere stimulation is not enough for the intellect to grow on, but that sequences of meaningful interactions - behavioral conversations - may be required.

In my own thinking, the latter concern is connected in some way to the development of a child's disposition to be interested in relevant and worthwhile phenomena. Getzels (1969) defined interest as a characteristic disposition... which impels an individual to seek out particular objects, activities, skills, understandings or goals for attention and acquisition. As I look at the research on infants, it seems that the earliest form of this capacity is what is called the "orienting response" (Cohen, 1973), or "attentional responsivity" (Porges, 1974) and later, "attention." The work of Porges suggests that very early in life infants have the capacity for two different kinds of responses to stimulation: one is an alarm or fright response characterized by cardiac acceleration; the other response seems to be cardiac deceleration and stability during information processing or attending. Optimum development implies cultivating the capacities for both types of responses. I doubt whether it is necessary to deliberately foster the capacity for alarm responding. But I suggest that among many, one criterion against which to evaluate programs for young children would be the extent to which

the actions of adults and other activities engage children's absorption, involvement or interest (i.e., attending without alarm) in a sustained way, over increasingly large segments of time, depending upon the maturity of the children.

In summary, these concerns about warmth and intensity seem to imply a heavy burden on preschool workers. A Type A program seems to require that teachers maintain optimum vigilance and concentration on the children's activities in order not to miss cues embedded in their behavior. These cues inform adults about children's intentions, meanings and potential interests, and thus inform their conversations. Factors which might be related to such child-adult relationships yield further concerns to which I now turn.

3. Adult-Child Relationships

Before we examine worrisome aspects of adult-child relationships, I would like to share some assumptions.

Reciprocity and Symmetry

The first assumption to keep in mind is that while relationships between adults and children may be reciprocal, they are not symmetrical. Perhaps the easiest illustration of reciprocal but assymetrical relationships are cases of unrequited love; for instance the early stages of the relationship between Cyrano de Bergerac and Roxanne in Rostand's drama. We are probably all familiar also with those cases in which young children in primary school "fall in love" with their teachers. In these illustrations, reciprocal relationships are asymmetrical on a dimension of certain kind of love. Similarly, the extent to which a child is dependent upon an adult might be reciprocated by the adult being dependable. But the distribution of dependency is asymmetrical in that a child experiences greater dependency than the adult.

The concept of asymmetry is relevant here, since young children may feel very attached (i.e., have warm and intense relationships) to adult caregivers, but the caregivers may not necessarily experience maternal attachment to each child in their care.

Particularism and Universalism

A second assumption is that symmetry in the attachments (i.e., warmth plus intensity) of adults to children may not be possible. Here I am using the Parsonian (Parsons, 1964) distinction between relationships which are particularistic versus those which are universalistic. According to this distinction, mothers are particularistic in the sense that they are deeply emotionally involved in the child's welfare, biased in favor of their children and tend to champion their child's needs, if necessary, at the expense of other children's needs. This irrational (hopefully optimum) attachment which gives rise to strong affection as well as impassioned anger, seems to be functional for parent-child relationships.

By contrast, teachers and child care workers are expected and duty-bound to apply all their skills and resources universalistically to each client without bias. It would be dysfunctional for a caregiver or teacher to yield to parental pressures to give their child "a break." As McPherson (1972) pointed out "Whatever the teacher's style, her universalistic relationship to the pupil is central to her role" (p. 122). McPherson also pointed out that even though the teacher seems to use love in her teaching, she still has the breaks on. If this were not so, according to Jules Henry (1963) "Children would have to be dragged shrieking from grade to grade and most teachers would flee teaching, for the mutual attachment would be so deep that its annual severing would be too much for either to bear."

Optimum Distance and Burn-out

While optimum attachment between mother and child seems essential to many aspects of early development, including early intellectual growth, the universalistic pattern for adults who work with the young in preschool settings implies that such adults must strive for an optimum distance between themselves and the children. Optimum distance is valuable in that it permits the adult to act on the basis of the principles and knowledge of the field, i.e., to maximize the rational aspects of the profession. Optimum distance can also serve to protect the teacher or caregiver from what otherwise would be an excessive emotional burden as indicated in the quotion from Jules Henry.

I have also implied that there may be situational and pragmatic reasons why deep involvement or minimum distance between themselves and children might not be feasible for child care workers. If child care workers were to become as intensely involved with the children as their mothers should, they could be expected to be emotionally burned out within a few months. Perhaps the teacher behavior patterns characterized as Type C can be explained as teachers' efforts to cope with the potential threat of becoming burned out. The nobody home phenomenon may result from having to routinize warmth and affection. The routinization may serve to achieve some kind of distance between the adults and their changes.

Another aspect of the distinction between patterns of mothering and of teaching is the degree of deliberateness, intentionality or cognitive control of behavior. It would seem wise to encourage parents to be spontaneous rather than clinical or analytical with their children. Excessive self-consciousness for parents may lead to what I call "analysis paralysis." It may be that when parents act in terms of cerebral or logically derived decision-making, their best resolutions break down under the weight of what is and should be the

emotionally-loaded nature of the relationship. In other words, the cognitive controls would not hold!

By contrast, it seems essential to encourage and train teachers to be intentional and deliberate; to plan and think through their activities on the basis of their knowledge of the underlying principles of child development and learning. Furthermore, optimum distance permits the teacher or child care worker to evaluate the child's progress realistically and thus to be in a stronger position to think and plan subsequent actions.

Now we seem to have a paradox: children's intellectual and personal development (program Type A) seems to require that their relationships with adults be both warm and intense, i.e., optimally attached. Conversly, teachers and child care workers seem to require optimum distance from the children, suggesting perhaps a need for asymmetry in attachment. Can intense relationships, so essentially particularistic, be universalized? Are we, in day centers especially, trying to professionalize motherhood? Is not the latter an inherent contradiction? These may be moot questions. Children enter preschool and day care centers in increasing numbers. The pressing question is: What is required of us to ensure that these settings provide the best possible quality of relationships for young children?

Implications for Teachers and Caregivers

I have suggested that in order for the optimum relationships between children and adults to develop, as in the Type A programs, the adults must be vigilant, attentive and in general, concentrate on the sequential flow of meanings of responses. The extent to which child care workers and teachers are able to do so seems to be undermined by various aspects of the working conditions generally characteristic of preschool and child care settings.

It seems to me that one fairly reliable and universal correlation describing preschool educators is that the younger the child you work with, the less training you have, the lower your prestige and status, the lower your pay and, often, the longer your hours!

In the United States working conditions in many child care centers are scandalously poor. Keyserling (1972) summarized some findings on working conditions and stated:

> ...the pay is so low that we are asking thousands of nonprofessional workers to subsidize the care of children of other women. We are also excluding from the day care field many women of intelligence and competence who cannot affort to accept salaries as low as some of those described, no matter how rewarding is work with youngsters, in human terms (p. 107).

The low pay is also related to high wastage or staff turnover which, in turn, may undermine the stability of child-adult relationships as well as nullify inservice training efforts.

Arvin and Sassen (1974) reported an investigation of the working conditions in corporation-based day care centers. Not only was the pay per hour low but "...teachers work through the day with no real break" (p. 15). During lunch they had staff meetings. The frequent absence of job security, of adequate benefits, plus the many extra hours of work without compensation common in the profit-making day care centers contribute to the generally dismal picture of the "profession." It must be remembered that often, when teachers complain about low wages, they are accused of not caring about children!

Another aspect of working conditions in preschool settings, especially day care centers, seems to be an apparently dreadful sense of isolation reported by many child care workers. Many report feeling overwhelmed by the children's obvious needs. Others report experiencing frustration and anguish from the knowledge of individual client families' personal and

economic distress and the way much modern urban life impinges upon the lives of the families they serve. A caring child care worker could easily and quickly be burned out from such intense involvement in clients' troubles. My hunch is that many respond to their working situation by becoming depressed and perhaps indifferent.

Such psychological depression may result in low concentration, low vigilance and a generally low rate of responding to children. Certainly low staff morale can hardly be expected to support sensitivity in staff responses. Such conditions would seem to minimize the likelihood that adults would be alert enough to tailor their responses to children's signals and meanings. Often adults working in such situations seem to fall into the habit of talking to each other much of the time. Their occasional responses to the children may be warm and friendly but are unlikely to be marked by the intensity I have suggested as essential for intellectual development (see Weir, 1973).

Future Prospects

I have a strong hunch that we cannot have optimum environments for children unless the working conditions for their caretakers are also optimum. Obviously, the interacting forces and factors which influence the ultimate quality of children's experiences in preschool settings must be tackled on many levels and in many areas simultaneously.

Some recommend accelerating the trend toward genuine professionalization of child care workers. But along side this trend is some antiprofessional sentiment as well. Increasing professionalization seems somewhat unrealistic particularly in light of the typical compensation of child care workers.

Some advocate the unionization of early childhood workers. It is difficult to predict the outcomes of such a movement when, on the whole, the larger

community seems to be more interested in the availability rather than the quality of child care services.

Efforts to reduce the isolation of child care workers might be helpful. The provision of advisory services (see Katz, 1973) may be useful. Small and regular workshops for colleagues on site may also reduce the sense of isolation and strengthen mutual support among co-workers.

The development of parent cooperative day care centers seems to merit further investigation and experimentation. Faragher et al. (1975) have shown how parent cooperative group care can have positive effects on staff morale.

Increasing our efforts and programs for working with adolescents may also help the situation in several ways. First, because today's adolescents are tomorrow's child care and preschool clients. Activities which improve their understandings of young children may contribute to later caretaking competence. But the transmission of information and knowledge alone may not have much impact. Secondly, adolescents seem to me to lack sufficient direct experience themselves with caring, thinking, responsive self-respecting adults.

Efforts to enhance public understanding of what we are all trying to accomplish may be timely. By this I am not suggesting pressure groups, conventional public relations or other types of propaganda. Rather, I propose that we share insights and understandings so as to encourage the public to ask What can we do to help? rather than Who is at fault?

Summary

In summary, I have tried to show that the development of the young child's capacity to organize his own behavior and think his own thoughts may require difficult modifications in the relationships between adults and children. The issues raised seem especially urgent in societies in which individuals

must ultimately be able to make decisions and choices, must be able to select from among wide varieties of alternative ideas, options, beliefs, values and lifestyles. It may be that in order to function adequately in such societies it is necessary to have early experience with intense (as well as warm) relationships with one or more adults. At this point we do not know enough about the comparative effects of multiple caregivers who have homogeneous response patterns versus the single caregiver whose own patterns vary widely. The glowing reports of child care from visitors to modern China may cause us to overlook the point that in collective societies the development of the individual organization of behavior, ideas and intentions may not seem urgent. On the contrary, in collective societies individual purposes and intentions may be non-functional. Perhaps in individualistic societies, the price many pay for individuality is loneliness.

Many years ago C. Wright Mills (1959) made a distinction between urgent public issues as they are officially formulated and insistent human troubles as they are privately felt: "The human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles--and to the problems of the individual life" (p. 226).

I have tried to show that the personal troubles of the young as well as their caretakers in preschool settings are embedded in larger public issues. We seem to be in need of an officially formulated public policy aimed at improving the working conditions of caretakers and ultimately improving the quality of the day-to-day lives of the children with whom they work.

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