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THE BOUNDARIES OF TOUCH: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH
CENTURY MAINSTREAM UNITED STATES IDEOLOGIES OF ADULT-CHILD
TOUCH

by

JEAN HALLEY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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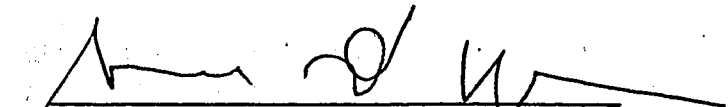
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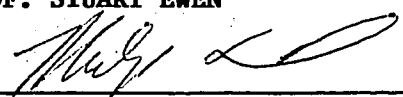
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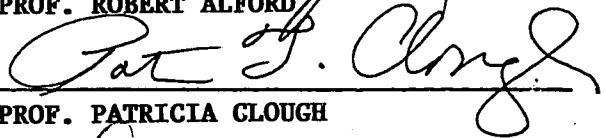
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Abstract

THE BOUNDARIES OF TOUCH: TWENTIETH CENTURY MAINSTREAM
UNITED STATES IDEOLOGIES OF ADULT-CHILD TOUCH

by

JEAN HALLEY

Adviser: Professor Stuart Ewen

In my dissertation, I explore changing ideologies of touch through the twentieth century in the United States, focusing on ideologies surrounding the touching of children by adults. By ideologies of adult-child touch, I mean how people interpret and understand the meaning of adults touching children at different moments in time. I am interested in how ideological interpretations of touch reveal the structures of power in the modern United States. Touch is understood as central to the experience of being human. An interpretative social history of ideologies of adult-child touch will illustrate how the meanings made of this experience, and the social power embedded in the meanings, have changed. Through the twentieth century, controversies have raged over questions of how, when and where it is “appropriate” to touch children. These controversies include debates over sleeping with babies and children, breastfeeding, and the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. As the authoritative voices and thought on adult-child physical contact changed three times through the twentieth century, I will examine these three ideological periods. The three periods are: one, in the first half of the century, psychological and other social scientific theories of touch, in particular as represented in child rearing literature; two, in the 1960s and 1970s, feminist thought with its radical feminist emphasis on issues of “violent” touch such as child sexual abuse; and three, in

the 1980s and 1990s, changes in the social scientific theories of touch as represented in the child rearing literature.

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Preface

Several years ago, during lunch with my advisor, I told him of my concern about a very sweet young student who persisted in hugging me whenever she saw me. I had attempted to avoid her hugs like the plague, ducking into doorways, bathrooms and offices when I saw her coming. Yet, usually, she spotted me anyhow and came rushing over, smiling sweetly, friendly and as pleased as ever to see me. Her arms were inevitably outstretched for a hug. She had no shame; she hugged me in front of other students, in front of faculty and staff, in front of the college daycare children out on a field trip across campus. I liked this student immensely. She was very bright, enthusiastic, friendly and kind-hearted. Her hugging involved no weird overtones, nothing sexual, nothing but a friendly, happy-to-see-you greeting. Nonetheless, her hugging made me extremely uncomfortable. This was not because I have anything against hugging, whether it be friendly or sexual, greeting or supportive-you-have-bad-news hugging, or any of the other myriad forms in which hugging may come. Actually, I quite like hugging.

The reason this student's hugs bothered me involved the increasing vigilance in the school where I currently taught about "wrong" or "inappropriate" touch. Indeed, I had been recently trained in a required sexual harassment seminar with other faculty and staff about what we should do to avoid being sued. Surprisingly, the training had very little to do with gender, power or violation. In a nutshell, in the seminar, we were told *not to touch* our students. We should not touch them publicly. And, we were told not to touch them privately. Indeed, we were never, ever, to touch them, if it could be helped, anywhere, in any way at all.

A 1996 episode of a popular television series called “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” reflected my experience. In it, Buffy, a high school girl speaks with her school principal in the hallway about a traumatic event. She had seen her teacher’s beheaded body hanging in the cafeteria refrigerator. In response to this unquestionably upsetting experience, the principal told Buffy that if she *ever* needed a hug she could come to him. Yet, he continued, “Not a real hug, of course, because there is no touching in this school. We are sensitive to wrong touching” (Joss Whedon 1996, episode number four, “Teacher’s Pet”).

If Buffy’s principal could not make an exception and *really* hug her in that moment, then I certainly had better not be hugging my students in the midst of the very run-of-the-mill events making up our days. As my advisor and I discussed my concern, it became clear that this vigilance seemed to be everywhere, wherever I worked, or was myself a student, there was a surveillance about, a watchfulness against touching. Indeed, the more I looked into it, the more I realized it *was* everywhere. Touching had become dangerous. And it seemed dangerous in a way that had very little to do with the ways in which touching actually *can be* a violation. So, at the suggestion of my advisor (who had been rightly pushing me to give up on my old well-worn dissertation topic), I made touching, ways of thinking about touching, the topic of my thesis.

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Chapter one. Introduction

Two years ago, I came home from a stay at the hospital exhausted, pale after massive blood loss, and very afraid. Someone came home with me. He was noisy, demanding, easily dissatisfied, constantly hungry, and seemingly never tired, at least not at night. Where he came from and what I was to do with him seemed a complete mystery. I thought my life was over. And it was. At least, my life as I knew it.

Touching or not touching him seemed one of the biggest issues. I received advice from all quarters. “Put him down. Let him cry it out. That’s his exercise.” “Never leave a baby to cry alone. Pick him up, hold him and comfort him.” “Feed him on demand whenever he wants.” “Make him learn to wait. Don’t feed him every time he cries. You’ll spoil him.” “Keeping him in the bed with you is very dangerous. You could roll over on him and crush him. And besides, if you let him stay in your bed now, you will never get him out.” “Of course, he doesn’t sleep well. He’s in a crib. He needs to be with you in your bed at night. No one likes to sleep alone.”

This study explores these conflicting types of child-rearing advice as well as the ideologies underlying the advice concerning when, where and how to touch children. I examine the ambiguities of ideologies of adult-child touch and the ways in which these ideologies are bound up with larger cultural issues. My study of mainstream ways of thinking about the touching of children in the twentieth century United States sheds light on why it is that touch is often understood to be both fundamentally necessary to human well-being and potentially deeply harmful. I argue that ideologies of adult-child touch expose social power “in action,” and also that social power *happens* through these ideologies.

Dissertation overview

The relevance of this work is evident as issues of adult-child touch lie beneath many current debates about child rearing, such as breastfeeding versus bottlefeeding and sleeping with the baby versus cribs. In my research, I examine touch in terms of “ideologies of touch.” By “ideologies of touch” I mean ways of thinking about adult-child physical contact, and when it is interpreted as good or bad, helpful or harmful to children. I explore mainstream *ideologies* rather than practices or behaviors. Here, the term, “ideology,” refers to taken-for-granted practices and normalizing belief systems. I argue that ideologies in any particular historical moment do not evolve by themselves. Rather they are rooted in the social conditions within which people live. I focus on mainstream - white middle class - cultural ideologies because they are the ideas of any particular time period that legitimize the interests of the more powerful groups in society. Mainstream ideologies are one important place that social power happens.

Ways of thinking about the touching of children differ. In some bodies of thought, the mainstream culture in the United States understands touching children to be dangerous, and in others, touching is seen as necessary to the health and well-being of children. In my study, I do not argue that at different historical moments, different ideologies are more or less prominent. This may be true, but it is an assertion that, given my current research, I am unable to prove. Instead, I show that different ideological positions about adult-child touch exist and, over time, they vary in force and significance.

In the spectrum of touching ideologies, “good” touching might be no touching or unlimited touching. “Bad” touching might be all forms of physical contact or just forms

defined as “violent” as in the case of child sexual abuse, or finally, no form of touch might be seen as problematic. Mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch act as a window into the dominant culture, exposing ways of thinking about bodies and what it means to be human, and making visible more pervasive structures of social power. Indeed, in part, social power happens through these theories about adult-child touch. Ideologies of touch both reveal and reproduce social power in forms patterned by gender, race/ethnicity and class.

In the sociological literature, ways of thinking about touch have received scant attention. Extensive work has been done on related subjects including violence against women and children by feminist scholars such as Diana E.H. Russell, and on child-rearing methods by popular writers such as Benjamin Spock. Human sexuality, and the development thereof, has been explored by many thinkers including Sigmund Freud, Alfred C. Kinsey, and numerous feminist and contemporary cultural studies scholars. However, while there is extensive scholarship related to my theme, my research to date has not located other studies that evaluate the mainstream twentieth century voices about adult-child touch as discrete sets of assumptions and ideologies. As a result, this research project is necessarily somewhat exploratory and preliminary. With my thesis, I hope to open up this topic for further investigation.

In my work, I emulate social historian, Stuart Ewen. Among other works, Ewen wrote a social history of style, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (1988). Ewen describes style as being both about the individual expression of particular people, and at the same time, something that is linked inextricably to consumption and “to the power of the mass media to convey, magnify,

refract, and influence popular notions of style.” (Ewen 1988: 10) Like Ewen, in my research, I hope to trace the connections between particular ideologies of touch and larger cultural values, gender identities and relations, and social and economic power.

White middle class ways of thinking about adult-child touch in the twentieth century United States reveal the dualistic thinking embedded in western thought and culture. The mind-body dichotomy is basic in western thought, and it informs all the dualistic patterns apparent in mainstream ideologies of touch. Throughout the twentieth century, for instance, child-rearing advice exhibits a split between being pro-touch and anti-touch. Because women are associated with the body and men with the mind, during pro-touch periods, where touch was understood to be “necessary” to the health and well-being of children, it was women’s physical presence that was considered most important. Then experts typically focused on the importance of mothers - rather than fathers or other caretakers - touching children. During anti-touch periods, such as discussed in chapter two, when touch was taboo and understood to be dangerous, dirty and threatening to children’s healthy development, it was women’s touch that was most dangerous and in need of surveillance. Then experts focused on the dangers of mothers touching children. In this dissertation, I address other dualistic variations on the mind-body split shaping ways of thinking about the touching of children including: the masculinist versus related, science versus nature, “bad mother” versus “good mother,” and savage body versus pure body dichotomies.

Dualisms demand that individuals conform to limited models of what it means to be human and of how to live. My argument throughout is that they are dangerous because they act out ideologies of power, and both distort and distract from the actualities

of how people live and their real struggles with poverty, the time constraints of the gendered second shift, and violence in the lives of many women and children. Through examining the binary nature of ideologies of adult-child touch, my dissertation challenges the power of dualisms in our lives.

The slippery boundaries surrounding touch are especially important to explore if we are to see the dualisms as constructed not natural. Certain kinds of adult-child touch are considered bad in one historical moment and good in another. In the same time period, a particular way of touching children is sometimes considered necessary and healthy by one child-rearing school and dangerous and abusive by another. Throughout my study, I examine these shifts in understanding as, for instance, in the question of child sexual abuse. Whether or not a certain kind of touch is sexual and whether adult-child sexual contact is abusive are questions that bubble up again and again. For example, chapter three shows that, depending on the age of the child, certain child-rearing schools understand breastfeeding to be sexual and thus abusive of the child. Other schools advocate breastfeeding until the child, whatever its age, initiates weaning. For them, extended breastfeeding is good for children - and never sexual - even for children as old as five or six years.

Because of the way gender happened, and continues to happen, in the modern American middle class, experts almost always assume primary caretakers to be mothers. Later in the century, if experts do not assume primary caretakers to be mothers, they often argue that primary caretakers *should* be mothers. That mothers are seen to be the “natural” parents has much to do with the mind-body split and the association of women

with the body, and the body - for good (pro-touch) or for evil (anti-touch) - with child rearing.

My intention in this study is not to take sides with one or another child-rearing expert. Rather I hope to show how the various experts use science, or at least the rhetoric of science if not actual scientific research, *or* the rhetoric of instincts and the natural, to make their arguments. With enough good scientific research, we often do come closer to a kind of truth. For example, much scientific research has concluded that “breast is best” when it comes to infant feeding. Many scientific studies have found that infants stay healthier when breastfed, and breastfed infants become adults with lower rates of cancer among other illnesses and generally better health. Some studies have even argued that breastfed infants score better on intelligence tests. Indeed, a recent Danish study found that the “longer infants are breast-fed the higher they are likely to score on intelligence tests as adults” (*The New York Times*, May 12, 2002: A27).

However, social and financial power clearly play a role in science. For example, some scientific studies, particularly those sponsored by the powerful formula industry, have shown that formula is *also* good for infants, better than the breast in certain circumstances. Further, the widespread use of formula is due, in no small part, to formula’s endorsement by a component of the scientific community - the American Academy of Pediatrics. The formula industry has even involved itself with *breastfeeding* research. Ross Laboratories collects and publishes national breastfeeding statistics. Indeed they are the “only group that tracks national breastfeeding statistics - via a survey generated by their Marketing Department and subsequently presented as unbiased research” (Coburn in *Mothering*, July/August 2000: 61). My point here is merely that

science, as much as any other truth-telling endeavor, springs from a socio-cultural and historical moment. It is never value-free, never purely objective, never separate from questions of power.

Rhetoric of the “natural” and natural truths are also grounded in a particular context. In some ways this rhetoric is more dangerous; it has no official community like the scientific community from which it must gain approval. Yet on the other hand, the very cultural association of science with truth more than makes up for problem with the “natural” and its calls to truth. Nonetheless, the “natural” catches people’s attention in our cultural moment in the white middle class. One’s “instincts,” common sense, feelings, all are commonly used in the white middle class to legitimize ideas of the “truth.” This is not to say that we don’t simply know things based on common sense or gut reactions. Where this knowledge comes from is debatable. I claim that it is socio-cultural knowledge, in the air so to speak, of one’s social context. We know these common sense things because we simply live and breath in our society’s “truths.” Nonetheless, these social “truths,” this “instinctual” knowledge can be useful and informative. It can also be wrong-headed and dangerous. For the past couple of centuries, we have understood women as “natural” parents. On the one hand, this social understanding has been, in a certain sense, correct. Women were understood to be naturally nurturing so they were raised to be nurturing. On the other hand, of course, this thinking is incorrect and deeply limiting to both men and women. As we begin to think of men as nurturing, the culture has begun to raise and socialize men to *be* nurturing.

Again, this is all to say that my study is not about taking sides with one or another child-rearing expert. Rather I hope to show how the various experts use different

rhetorics, different truth-telling mechanisms such as science, or the “natural,” to make their arguments. I want to explore the arguments to better understand the larger ideologies in which they are grounded, and the ways in which power is acted out through the ideologies. I am also not so interested in “truths,” facts, or reality, as I am interested in socio-cultural ideologies, and ways of thinking about “reality,” and in how these ways of thinking are bound up with power.

Among other data sources, I use popular child-rearing books as evidence of the different ways of thinking about the touching of children. I order my dissertation chronologically, and through the use of case studies. After the introductory chapter, in chapter two, I examine the first half of the century, the prominent behaviorist ideologies of the time, early “naturalist” experts such as Dr. Benjamin Spock and mainstream thinking on adult-child touch in the child-rearing literature. My third chapter investigates the contemporary behaviorist and “naturalist” schools of thought on breastfeeding versus bottlefeeding and adult-child touch. My fourth chapter explores the thinking of these two schools about sharing sleep versus the crib.¹

The fifth chapter focuses on the socio-historical moment when adult-child touch, particularly sexual touch, became an issue of social power. In the 1960s and 1970s, the

¹ I do not examine the practice of spanking children as none of the popular child-rearing experts I study advocate spanking. This makes sense given the ideologies of science, rationality and control within which the experts write. Spanking may still be a popular practice but it is no longer a “given” in mainstream child-rearing ideology. It went the way of other physical, pain-producing - “cruel and unusual” - punishments with the Enlightenment. People may still spank their children; however, in the United States white middle class, spanking is not considered a “civilized” child-rearing method. Indeed due to this anti-spanking ethos, a turn-of-the-century Italian immigrant to the United States claimed, “I came to learn that I have almost no power over my own children...Oh, how often I know too well, that a good spanking can cure the bad habits of my children. Yet I must think twice before I do this. Here in America I may be taken to court for having administered punishment on my own son” (quoted in Julia Grant 1998: 73).

radical feminist movement raised the question of violence against women and girls. One of their primary concerns was “violent” touch. Under the rubric of violence, the radical feminists included father-daughter incest and child sexual abuse. In raising the issues of incest and child sexual abuse, radical feminists implicitly - although never explicitly - challenged the dominant ideologies of adult-child touch. And whereas feminists implicitly opposed the mainstream thinking on touch, they do not fully break away from its binary thinking. The sixth and concluding chapter examines the 1980s conservative backlash to the feminist movement and its understandings of child sexual abuse and touch.

On women, children and child-rearing/advice

Culturally constructed ideas about the roles of men and women are a fundamental part of the larger dualistic discourse that I have been describing. These ideas about gender are vital to understand if we are to gain a greater awareness of the relationship between ideologies of adult-child touch and social power. Integral to this discussion is an exploration of the effect these ideologies have on mothers, who are generally considered the primary caretakers of children. Many mothers expend an enormous amount of energy worrying about their child-rearing choices. In my study, I address a focal point of this “mother-worry,” child-rearing advice and ideologies of adult-child touch. Because I myself have a small child, I have experienced the intense pressure women often feel.

In the very beginning of my son’s life, for a moment at least, I was less concerned with what I *should* do and more concerned with what I could do to get him to calm down, be quiet, and sleep. That passed quickly. Soon, I was as caught up with the “best” way

to do things as were all the other new mothers I knew. For advice and support, I joined a question-and-answer group, led by the popular child-rearing expert, Arlene Eisenberg. We met once a week at the synagogue down the street from my apartment. Also, I started a new mothers' group that met weekly in our homes. In the beginning the women came from my birthing class. Yet over time, the group grew to include many women with babies the same age from around the neighborhood. More and more women, who had babies born within a month of February 2000 when my son arrived, appeared seemingly out of nowhere. In what was supposed to be one of the biggest, coldest, loneliest cities in the world, women exchanged telephone numbers with me before they even knew my name.

The way that women connected with one another was one of the best things about the social world I entered when I became a mother. Women did as women often do: they offered each other friendship and support, a chance to talk, and time together easing the sometimes unbearable loneliness of caring for a baby. On the other hand, all of the adult parents that I met in my two, and later three, new parents' groups *were* women. There was no rule specifying that one had to be female to join any of the groups. I simply did not know any male parents who were the primary caretakers of their small children. Apparently the other women in the groups did not either.

To date, I can name only one single male primary caretaker. My own partner does a large amount of our childcare but it is certainly not equal. Of course, this is anecdotal. Unfortunately, it is also reflective of the larger social world. Women do the lion share of childcare in the United States, and in most other places in the world, today. The child-rearing books that I examine for this study reflect this reality. They almost all,

explicitly, address *mothers* - not fathers, not parents, but mothers. Economics journalist Ann Crittenden writes, “Despite the media’s fondness for Mr. Mom, he remains an aberration. Of the 20.5 million American children under the age of five, only about 320,000 have fathers as their primary guardian - a minuscule 1.5 percent” (Crittenden 2001: 26). Women are the primary caretakers of children and they do most other domestic work as well.²

Maybe the gendered nature of childcare does not have to be a problem. But for all kinds of reasons, it *is* a problem. As a culture, we think *mothers* individually responsible for the well-being of their children. Rather than understanding children as the responsibility of society, we hold the individual women accountable. This is not a new phenomenon. In 1831, popular writer, Lydia Maria Child argued that each mother must “take the entire care of her own child” (quoted in Margolis 2000: 24). “Children whose mothers did not “take the entire care of them,” opined the author of an 1841 *Parents* magazine article, faced real danger; a mother “cannot be long relieved without hazard or exchanged without loss”” (ibid). And for this responsibility, women pay a price. The price entails money and time, but it also involves a kind of personal angst. Many mothers, and particularly the focus of this study, white middle class mothers, *worry*

² Crittenden writes, “Even when a wife earns more than half of the family income, the husband will typically contribute no more than 30 percent of the domestic services and child care. And that estimate comes from surveys based on men’s own statements about their family contributions, surveys that experts agree are biased on the upside... In families with preschool children, mothers appear to be putting in roughly three to four *times* as many hours as fathers. One study of thirty-seven families of young children, representing various classes, races, and work patterns, found that the man rarely had primary responsibility for any *single* child-rearing duty. In no household did a father take responsibility for *all* child-rearing tasks” (Crittenden 2001: 24-25).

endlessly about their children. A large part of that worry involves wondering if they are doing the right thing in every child-rearing choice that they make.

Most child-rearing questions women deal with, and worry over, are laid out in either/or terms. Women are told there is a right way and a wrong way to mother. And in fact, the ideologies about correct parenting tend to frame themselves in dichotomies of right versus wrong. There are two primary ideological child-rearing schools, the behaviorist and the naturalist, and they are inclined to offer opposing advice. One school argues that mothers should breastfeed but stop at one year, the other claims mothers should breastfeed indefinitely letting the child wean at her own pace whenever she is ready. One school says mothers should have the children in bed with them, the other argues mothers should never bring the children into their bed. Within these oppositions, women often do not feel they have a choice. Many women feel constrained to buy into one or the other of the ideologies; they do not feel there are multiple possibilities, many of which are good ones. Indeed, they feel judged no matter what they do. Given the gendered nature of childcare, women feel responsible for the child-rearing method and ideology they choose, and are told and often believe themselves to be completely responsible for the outcome. How their child “turns out” will depend almost entirely on them.

The kind of adults a culture’s children become is influenced by a variety of factors. The culture’s belief about the “good life” and what it means to be human, male and female, of color and white, rich and poor, as well as the child’s experience of those beliefs based on her or his own gender, ethnicity, class, etcetera play an enormous role in who that child will be. And there are the actual resources the child will or will not have

access to. A child who has enough to eat, a good school system and a safe place to live will become a different adult than a child who does not have access to these things. This has nothing to do with whether or not the child is a “good” or a “bad” person but how the child thinks about his world and how the world thinks about him, and what the child is able to do and what he is not able to do based on his surroundings, resources, etcetera.

This may seem boringly self-evident. In spite of this, women in our society are told, and many believe, that the kind of adult their child becomes results from the child-rearing choices they make. A “good mother” - whatever that might mean - will have a “good child.” Indeed, women become very anxious, very concerned with their child-rearing decisions, whether to breastfeed or not, to use a crib or not, and so on. In turn, women’s incredible anxiety is fed by the proliferation of child-rearing books and advice available.

I argue that child-rearing advice functions, in part, to nourish this “mother-worry.” Both the worry and the child-rearing advice act as distractions from the reality that is women’s, and children’s, lives. The way children are raised in the United States today is not necessarily the way it has to be. It is not “natural” to leave the care of children - financial, time, worry and otherwise - to individual mothers. This contemporary reality is the outcome of a particular social order. Some people benefit from this order. Others - many women and children - do not. We worry and act as though if only we pick the right method, our children will grow up right. Yet contra popular mythology, child-rearing advice does not, cannot, protect a child from the consequences of growing up in a world where many children do not have enough to eat, a safe place to live, nor access to a good education.

Women doing nearly all our childcare is problematic, in part, because women are working themselves to the bone. Child rearing and homemaking are hard work.³ Even so many women with children do not want or cannot afford to put paid work aside. “Almost 18 million, roughly half of all women with children under eighteen, do work full-time; that is, at least thirty-five hours a week” (ibid: 18). Mothers who work outside the home toil longer hours than nearly anyone else in our economy. “On average, they are estimated to work more than eighty hours a week. Time-use surveys confirm that as women enter the workplace, they take on the equivalent of two full-time jobs, forcing them to cut back on everything in their lives but paid work and children” (ibid: 22).⁴

Besides being overworked and squeezed for time, contemporary United States mothers have money problems. Single mothers, in particular, work extensive hours for little money, and yet, their whole family has to live on what little they bring in. There are many reasons why women in the United States today make less money than men. One is that women do “at least twice as much of the world’s unpaid labor as men. This is the

³ Many women give up or do not have their own careers outside of the home in order to focus fully on these jobs. Indeed “homemaking, the fundamental task associated with raising the young, is still the largest single occupation in the United States...Even among women in their thirties, by far the most common occupation is full-time housekeeping and caregiving...The persistence of traditional family patterns cuts across economic, class, and racial lines” (ibid: 17).

⁴ In spite of conservative hype, mothers who work outside the home do not seem to spend less time with their children. Regardless of the huge movement of women into the workforce, studies show that mothers spend as much if not more time with their children today than they did in the 1960s. As far back as the 1920s, research reports that mothers in the 1980s spend as much if not more time with their children than did mothers in the 1920s (see W.K. Bryant and C.D. Zick, “Are we investing less in the next generation? Historical trends in time spent caring for children,” *Journal of family and economic issues* 17, number ¾ (winter 1996): 365-91). Their time is crunched but the time they spend with their children is not. Instead, working mothers cut back on sleep and housework (see Crittenden 2001; Anita Garey 1999).

principle distinction between “women’s work” and “men’s work”: men are paid for most of the work they do and women aren’t.” United Nations statistics show that in industrialized countries, “women spend roughly one-third of their total working time on paid work and two-thirds on work that is unpaid and unrecognized. For men, the proportions are reversed” (Crittenden 2001: 77).

The United States is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. And yet, we have almost no social assistance for mothers and children. And not only do we *not* offer assistance, women’s work caring for children is uncounted and unpaid, even though female caring labor is both at the center of families and the heart of the national economy. Recent studies have shown “that the amount of work involved in unpaid child care is far greater than economists ever imagined. Indeed, it rivals in size the largest industries of the visible economy. By some estimates, even in the most industrialized countries the total hours spent on unpaid household work - much of it associated with child-rearing - amount to at least half of the hours of paid work in the market. Up to 80 percent of this unpaid labor is contributed by women” (ibid: 8). Because women work so many hours for free, they are significantly poorer than men. Indeed, women suffer from poverty much more than men “even though they work longer hours than men in almost every country in the world” (ibid).

Because women with children spend so many hours doing unpaid work, they have less time to do paid work and the paid work is more likely to be part-time. Women with children often do not take - or do not get offered - positions that demand a childfree schedule such as those with excessively long hours. These are the positions that tend to entail more responsibility, more power, and higher pay. Further, many women take time

off from their careers to mother which means a longer term loss in pay, pensions and other benefits.

Women with children suffer most from the gendered wage gap. Childless women, whose work patterns are more likely to be similar to men, have a much smaller wage gap than mothers. In 1991, Jane Waldfogel found that women who were thirty and had no children were making 90 percent of men's wages. In contrast thirty-year-old women with children were making only 70 percent (see Jane Waldfogel, "Understanding the 'family gap' in pay for women with children," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12, number 1 (winter 1998): 137-56). Waldfogel found that all factors being equal, the more children a woman had, the lower her earnings.

Women do most of our childcare, and they pay for it in money, time and endless anxiety. Yet instead of agitating, resisting, demanding pay and recognition for their labor, many women spend a lot of time and energy worrying over child-rearing advice and methods. Child-rearing advice acts as a kind of mirage that disappears when we get close to it. It keeps us busy looking in the wrong direction. Child-rearing advice keeps us focused on ourselves, our individual child-rearing situation and choices rather than the social world within which we rear our children. Of course, this is not *all* that child-rearing advice does - distract and produce anxiety. Child-rearing advice offers women, and ideally, men, some good ideas about child rearing. These various and diverse ideas are best when offered as possibilities, options, for parents to choose, reject or do only partially.

The argument I am making here is similar to that made by Stuart Ewen in *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*

(1976/2001). Ewen argues that advertising played a role in “civilizing the self.” In part, advertising was the response of big business to labor agitation for a more fair and equitable world. Advertising argued that the way to the “good life” was through consumption. Advertising encouraged workers to look to their own consumptive practices - buying this soap versus that, this brand of clothing versus that - to solve their problems, rather than fighting for an altered socio-economic situation. Yet beyond simply consuming, advertising also pushed workers to define themselves - “civilize” themselves - and their “desires in terms of the good of capitalist production.” This way, workers would not only support big business through buying its mass-produced goods, but would also “implicitly accept the foundations of modern industrial life” (Ewen 1976/2002: 42). Ewen writes:

By transforming the notion of “class” into “mass,” business hoped to create an “individual” who could locate his needs and frustrations in terms of the consumption of goods rather than the quality and content of his life (work)...Advertisements aimed at transforming pockets of resistance contained the double purpose of sales and “civilization.” (ibid: 42-43)

In part, child-rearing advice functions like advertising. It urges us to focus on ourselves as the locus of solutions to most child-rearing problems. Instead of demanding a different social order, subsidized child care, pay for women’s domestic labor, etcetera. The advice calls us to try a different child-rearing method much like, as Ewen argues, using a new toothpaste was offered as the individual solution to social dissatisfaction. Thinking in terms of individual solutions is born from a larger tradition in American political thought that advocates individual answers to most problems, including social problems. If only the individual mother, mothers well, the children will grow up right,

even though she may not have access to the resources necessary to feed and house her children or to protect them from violence.

In the above, I discuss the situation of women and children in the United States because I am interested in how the reality (of women and children's situation) strays from the ideological focus on women and children. In this, I hope to show that the *real* problems faced by women and children - poverty, being over-worked, lack of social or other support financial and otherwise, lack of childcare - are not the issues we in the white middle class focus on. We focus on ideologies of adult-child touch that are bound up with larger socio-cultural concerns with gender, the body and what it means to be human. We make touching or not touching the issue, rather than I would argue the "real" issues such as poverty. And we hold women responsible for children's well-being without giving them the assistance they need for children to grow up healthy and well.

Needless to say, insofar as I argue there are "real" issues like the feminization of poverty in the United States, I am making claims about the truth. And of course, I have a perspective, a socialist feminist perspective, from which I make my claims. My claims are, as all claims are, suspect: reader, beware.

Insofar as I am not exploring "reality" in the body of my thesis, I am also not exploring behavior. I focus on ideologies, or ways of thinking about the touching of children, by examining popular expert child-rearing advice (along with some other well-known scientific literature in chapter two). In other words, I look at what experts say women *should* be doing and not at what women actually are doing. My dissertation is about mainstream, white middle class ways of thinking - as prescribed by experts to the white middle class - rather than how the white middle class actually behaves. Now we

turn from the socio-economic reality of women's lives to the focus of this study, the mirage: child-rearing advice and ideologies of adult-child touch.

On bodies, women and adult-child touch

a. Dualisms, the body and gender

Ideologies of adult-child touch are grounded in dualistic ways of thinking about the world, human beings, and in particular, the body. Historically, western culture has split its conception of the human being into two parts. A dualism made up on the one hand of the body, and the other of the soul or mind, where the mind is linked with the "spirit," God and the heavens, "civilization," rationality and control. The body is identified with the earth, other animals and the "primitive." About this heritage, feminist scholar Susan Bordo writes, "Disdain for the body, the conception of it as an alien force and impediment to the soul, is very old in our Greco-Christian traditions" (Bordo 1993: 149). The body is understood to be that which one is not. The body is alien and confining to the soul-self. It is like an enemy cage from which one struggles to escape. Whereas the mind is rational, the body is wildly passionate. In its animalistic nature, the body perpetually verges on losing control.

Given this split, Bordo notes that as a culture we are obsessed with our bodies. She cites a study in which 500 people were asked what they feared most in the world. 190 replied, "Getting fat" (ibid: 140). It is interesting to consider why we experience this obsession, and why in particular, our culture is so preoccupied with our bodies being slim, thin, tight and young. Bordo writes, "In an age when our children regularly have nightmares of nuclear holocaust, that as adults we should give this answer - that we most

fear “getting fat” - is [truly] bizarre.” Bordo argues, “The nightmares of nuclear holocaust and our desperate fixation on our bodies as arenas of control - perhaps one of the few available arenas of control we have left in the twentieth century - are not unconnected of course” (ibid: 140-141). Whereas many people experience the modern world as deeply out of control, one’s body offer the possibility of gaining concrete control over something/one.

We fixate on our bodies as a literal territory to be controlled in an out-of-control world. Gender cements this connection, playing an essential role in the mind-body split. Women are understood to be/like the body, and men, the mind. This association carries a big cost for women. “For if, whatever the specific historical content of the duality, *the body* is the negative term, and if woman *is* the body, then women *are* that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death” (ibid: 5). And for women of color there is a double burden of bodily associations. Besides being female, they are by virtue of their race understood in the dominant culture to be animalistic and of the body.

In western thought, particularly within the Judeo-Christian tradition, one version of the body-as-female duality portrays women as sexual/evil temptresses. Biblical figures such as Eve, Salome and Delilah, play out this temptress theme. The female temptress lives on in innumerable contemporary secular stories. The *Fatal Attraction* temptress is common in television and films. Not only women, but girls are suspect as various versions of the novel *Lolita* demonstrate. Soap operas have a “Best Villainess” category in their Soap Opera Awards Show. Bordo argues, “These depictions of women

as continually and actively luring men to arousal (and, often evil) work to disclaim male ownership of the body and its desires. The arousal of those desires is the result of female manipulation and therefore is the woman's fault. This construction is so powerful that rapists and child abusers have been believed when they claimed that five-year-old female children "led them on" (ibid: 6). Girls and women often internalize this thinking, believing themselves to be responsible for undesired advances and even sexual assault. This "guilt" plays into a deep discomfort with femaleness, self-hate of female bodies, and shame.

Women live with the daily threat of body violence, of rape, battering and harassment. Nonetheless, living in the midst of so much that is out of control, the body is not only a site for violation, it is also a place of female power, a sphere, albeit contested, of control. In their female body, women cannot ignore a world that demands the body be particular historically specific forms. Yet they may focus themselves on and in that form, and choose - in a sense - to make their life largely about it. By means of this focus, they gain a kind of control. Because the desired body form springs in large part from, and is controlled by, the dominant culture, does not mean that women cannot make that desire and that control in some part their own.

One way for women to focus on their bodies is through eating problems such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia (Thompson 1994). Other ways include believing in, concentrating on, attempting to live out and perpetuate the essentialized and gendered female roles associated with the body and the "natural." One of these contemporary roles is the "natural mother."

b. Women touching children

Ideologies of adult-child touch swing towards the pro-touch end of the continuum during times in which the body and the “natural” are seen as good and “wholesome.” Then, because women are associated with the body, it is women’s touch that matters most. During these times mothers are encouraged to touch their children – and child-rearing schools like the “naturalist” school called attachment parenting, urge mothers to touch their children as much as possible. Attachment “parents” – really, *mothers* – believe that bodies touching bodies, mothers touching babies, is central to good mothering. In this thinking, babies need to be touched as much if not more than any other need. Babies grow up to be physically and psychologically healthy, when they are touched a lot. And it is very important that it is their mother who does the touching.

At the other end of the touch continuum - the anti-touch end - the body and the “natural” are understood to be dangerous, unclean, uncivilized and potentially out of control. Because of their association with the body, women are especially dangerous. During these ideological moments, we must be vigilant of women’s bodies and women’s touch. There is to be less touching between parents - mothers - and children. John B. Watson of the behaviorist school takes this thinking to its extreme. In Watson’s view there should have been virtually no touching of children and babies by mothers. The ideal way to raise children was in a scientific laboratory. For dominant culture, and for Watson, science represented the opposite of the out-of-control female/body. Science, like the male mind, was understood to be rational, ordered and in control. Children raised by science/men would grow up to be science/male-like. They would be controlled/ing,

strong, rational and firm. In contrast, Watson believed that children, raised - as almost all children were - by women/bodies, were weak, emotional and out-of-control.

These two extremes at either end of the touch continuum run through the twentieth century. They correspond to the two child-rearing schools of thought that Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English (1978) call the “behaviorist” and the “permissive” schools. Behaviorists are more or less anti-touch. Permissivists, or what I call the “naturalists,” have been, and continue to be, fundamentally pro-touch.

Ideologies of adult-child touch

In exploring ways of thinking about the touching of children, my dissertation examines the two dominant schools of thought on child rearing in the twentieth century United States, the behaviorist and the naturalist. These two schools mirror the mind-body split. The behaviorists believe in the mind and the power of the rational scientific world; the naturalist school has faith in the body and the power of nature to teach us how to live. I contrast these two schools with the radical feminist analysis of touch, and its focus on violence. The behaviorist school begins with John B. Watson in the 1920s and threads through the century to the contemporary child-rearing expert, Richard Ferber. The naturalist school begins with Benjamin Spock in the 1940s and La Leche League International in the 1950s, and threads through to the contemporary child-rearing expert, William Sears. Each school has fundamentally different ways of thinking about child rearing and the touching of children.

Underlying the differences between behaviorist and naturalist child-rearing experts are two distinct ways of thinking about what it means to be human, human bodies

and the ideal goal of human development. Watson, the founder - and in many senses, the father - of behaviorism, argued that human beings begin life as blank slates or unmolded clay to be shaped by behaviorist training. Watson thought that a child could be raised - trained - to do or be anything. He did not believe in the influence of genetic disposition towards a particular characteristic or skill. And he argued against the possibility of “natural” or “instinctual” knowledge.

The behaviorists turned to science rather than “nature” or human “instinct” to learn how to live. For behaviorists, nature and its instincts were dangerous and not to be trusted. Nature and the natural body had the potential to run amok, out of control.

Nature - and what was associated with nature, the corporeal world of women, animals and bodies - was something to be contained and controlled by science. In terms of child rearing, behaviorists argued that only through science will we learn how to parent.

“Parenthood,” wrote Watson, “instead of being an instinctive art, is a science, the details of which must be worked out by patient laboratory methods” (Watson 1928: 12-13).

Watson argued, “*No one today knows enough to raise a child.* The world would be considerably better off if we were to stop having children for twenty years (except those reared for experimental purposes) and were then to start again with enough facts to do the job with some degree of skill and accuracy” (ibid: 12).

Both the behaviorists and the naturalists reproduced the connection of the feminine with the natural body. Watson thought that science taught us how to manage the body, and children and women who were associated with the body. In the first half of the century, behaviorists overtly believed that women were dangerous. “[M]other love,” Watson wrote, “is a dangerous instrument” (ibid: 87). Women were understood to be

particularly dangerous if they did not listen to science to learn how to live their lives and raise their children.

The behaviorist goal in child rearing was to train children to be “masculine” - independent, rational, individualized, controlled/ing, and non-emotional - adults. Here we learn as much from the positive desire of behaviorists *for* masculinity as from the *fear of* effeminacy. Watson wrote that an unfit mother will “inevitably bring up a weakling.” A weakling is the opposite of masculine; he is effeminate. Moreover, a weakling is “a petted, spoiled, sullen, shy youngster who [will] grow up a liar and a thief” (ibid: 6). In these goals for human development, and in their way of understanding what it means to be human, twentieth century behaviorists joined a larger mainstream United States and European masculine ideal (Mosse 1996). And in so far as behaviorist thinking springs from, and reproduces, a larger US ideology – an ideology that idealizes masculinity - behaviorists have been inextricably connected to mainstream white middle class American ways of thinking.

Insofar as behaviorists concern themselves with masculinity, they focus on boys. Early twentieth century behaviorist writing, in particular, is directed solely to boys and their masculine development to manhood. Reading Watson, one wonders what happened to all the girl babies. Watson concerns himself with females only when they are grown women, and then only in the role he considers appropriate for them, as mothers. Watson, like everyone in the 1920s, used masculine pronouns and nouns to refer to men and women, boys and girls, but in his use of the masculine pronoun, Watson clearly addressed boys, not boys and girls. Like most people in his world, Watson believed that men and women were fundamentally different creatures. He focused his discussion on

male characteristics and development. True to his culture, Watson valued the masculine traits ascribed to men, not the feminine ones ascribed to women.

In contrast to the behaviorists, who believed that children must be trained to become useful modern - masculine - adults, naturalists viewed human beings as perfect in their most “natural” state. As behaviorists overtly championed science over the “natural,” naturalists explicitly understood themselves as trusting in nature *instead of* science. Naturalists believed and continue to believe in and idealize “nature.” They assume that human beings are born “knowing” how to live. In respect to child rearing, naturalists trust the baby, who, they believe naturally knows what she or he needs, when and how. Yet in spite of their faith in nature, naturalists use science to back up their arguments. Though they claim to be skeptical of science and its experts, popular naturalist thinkers often *are* scientific experts.

Again, just like the larger culture both naturalists and behaviorists associate women with the body. They believe women are close to nature - closer than men. Because naturalists see parenting as a natural human activity and because women are understood to be closer to nature than men, naturalists understand women to be *the* natural parent. Naturalists argue that women naturally know how to mother, if only they trust their “instincts.” In other words, naturalists essentialize women.

There is another fundamental difference between behaviorists and naturalists and it involves their valuation of human relationships. Behaviorists understand individuating - becoming an independent individual - as the most important goal of human development. Behaviorists value separation from other human beings. In contrast, naturalists focus on the importance of human beings in connection to each other and of

human relationships. Naturalists hope to raise children who are attached in relationship to others yet feel and are also centered in themselves individually. In this focus on relationship, naturalists have an anti-materialist bent. In one of its slogans, La Leche League proposes what naturalists argue, “people before things.”

My dissertation examines naturalist and behaviorist explicit thinking about adult-child touch, as well as their implicit thinking about child sexual abuse and incest. I claim that behaviorists fear the body, and want to control and contain it through science. In contrast, naturalists celebrate and idealize the body, and that which they associate with the body - women and children. Behaviorists hint at the threat of the body being “savage” and out-of-control. I argue that behaviorist thought contains an underlying fear of the body’s potential sexuality-run-amok and of adults - particularly women - being sexual with children. Because of this anxiety, behaviorists of the first half of the twentieth century explicitly argued against the touching of children. In the later part of the twentieth century, they were implicitly anxious - if not, against - the touching of children. They argued that each person should have his or her own room, bed and physical space. They were unspoken, if not overt, proponents of the bottle and the crib. I claim that through mechanisms such as cribs and bottles, behaviorists hoped to prevent the body from behaving in a savage and out-of-control manner, such as by adults being sexual with children.

Especially for early behaviorists like Watson, women were always on the edge of being both out-of-control and sexual. Their touch was - as women were generally - dangerous. For behaviorists, women and the feminine threatened to engulf men, and the rational, steely, intellectual world of the masculine. Here the best body, always male,

was the most contained, controlled and strong (Mosse 1996). It was a body perfectly shaped, managed and maintained by the mind.

In contrast, naturalists see the body as “pure.” It is interesting that for the naturalists, the pure body mainly has meant the asexual body. Again, both behaviorists and naturalists associate women with the body, yet for behaviorists, the body is potentially savage and dangerous, whereas for naturalists, the body is noble, beautiful and to be trusted. These two frameworks represent the Madonna/whore complex or, in racialized/ist terms, the “noble savage” versus the “dirty Indian.” In both frameworks, the woman and the native person are associated with the body, and the so-called natural world (whereas of course, contra the dichotomy, all the world is “natural”). On one side of the split, women are pure, natural beings, and native people are noble “primitives” of the wild. On the other side, women and native people are dirty, out-of-control (which in this schema means) bodies. For naturalists, women are mothers, “pure” and “natural,” and their touch, too, is pure, natural *and* asexual.

These two parallel schools, the behaviorist and the naturalist, are intertwined, so to speak, by the mind/body split, the central dichotomy in the history of western thought. Where behaviorists used to abhor, and continue to fear, the body, naturalists glorify it. *Both* understand the body and the mind as separate parts that together make up the person. Behaviorists, implicitly if not explicitly, understand incest and child sexual abuse as cultural markers or signs of the body run amok. The possibility of incest means the possibility of the body out-of-control, the way many in our culture have come to understand weight gain or binge eating. Underlying the fear of incest is the fear of the body. Behaviorists take on the task of containing, controlling and shaping the body. In

contrast, naturalists do not fear the body but glorify the “natural” body in the same way as the does noble savage stereotype. Naturalists settle the child sexual abuse/incest question by, at times explicitly, arguing as did one of my informants: “it really never happens.”

In my dissertation, I argue that feminism, and in particular, “second wave” radical feminism, played a significant role in mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch. Second wave feminism burst into the scene of United States culture in the late 1960s. This movement is called the “second wave” because it is commonly understood to be the second prominent upsurge of United States feminism. In the late 1960s, the mainstream had no place for power in thinking about touch. Touch has been understood to be a core component of human relationships - a component to be avoided according to thinkers like Watson, and a component to be promoted according to others like the naturalists. Although they never explicitly addressed adult-child touch per se, implicitly for the radical feminists, touch was a medium for power. With feminism, suddenly intimate and everyday matters, like touching, became questionable subjects. Feminism viewed mainstream life through its popular slogan, “the personal is political.” And radical feminism, in particular, argued that intimate relationships, and the ways those relationships were lived in the everyday, were inextricably connected to larger gendered systems of power. Men and boys had power over women and girls.

Although some second wave feminists did examine these issues, radical feminists did not focus on overt child-rearing issues such as breastfeeding and children’s sleep.⁵

⁵ One place second wave feminists did clearly address adult-child touch was in the popular women’s health books, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1976; 1984; 1992; 1998), and *Ourselves and Our Children* by the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective.

Nonetheless, unequivocally, radical feminists made power a central concern in thinking about adult-child touch. They argued that through physical contact, and in particular violent physical contact, male power asserted and established itself. Radical feminists brought male violence against women and girls, including the violence of child sexual abuse and incest, into the mainstream public eye. Within a short time, incest and child sexual abuse seemed to be everywhere. And the mass media could not get enough.

For second wave radical feminists, incest and child sexual abuse were matters of injustice and social power. For the mass media, child sexual abuse was money. These stories sold. They tapped into a deep-seated social fear. And more sadistically, one might argue, they allowed the mainstream to “enjoy” the titillation of incest talk all the while righteously tracking down yet one more pedophile. In the early 1980s, the New Right responded to the child sexual abuse issue with its own agenda and hype. Ironically the New Right turned sexual abuse into an important component of its powerful backlash against feminism (Faludi 1991). Children, the New Right argued, were being abused because their negligent mothers were leaving in the hands of strangers, or even all alone. Because of feminism encouraging women to abandon the home and due to the selfishness of contemporary women, small children were increasingly left in daycare centers while their mothers went out into the public world to find personal fulfillment. With conservative thinking touch was dangerous, but not because of social injustice born from the patriarchy, rather because the patriarchal “traditional” family was being abandoned.

Methodology

a. Overview

In my research I employ both interpretative and historical modes of argument (Alford 1998). I use a variety of data sources with a particular focus on prescriptive child-rearing literature. Because one must position one's work in history to create a viable sociological argument, throughout my dissertation, I begin each chapter by grounding its theme and time period in its socio-historical context. Here sociologist Gaye Tuchman writes, "adequate social science includes a theoretical use of historical information. Any social phenomenon must be understood in its historical context." (Tuchman in Denzin and Lincoln, editors 1994: 306)

For chapter two, I primarily use the methods of historical sociology. I analyze a series of texts noting variations over time in order to disclose the differing ideological framework in which they are located. This part of my dissertation is a socio-cultural history of ideas about adult-child touch. I explore social scientific ideologies of adult-child touch in the first half of the century, when social scientists were the most prominent ideological voice on adult-child touch. I look at expert ideologies of touch primarily as represented in child-rearing manuals. Principally, I investigate the work of Luther Emmett Holt, John B. Watson, Benjamin Spock, Alfred C. Kinsey, and Harry F. Harlow. Among the texts I examine, due to their authority in mainstream United States ideology on adult-child touch, are the following: Luther Emmett Holt's *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses* (1894); John B. Watson's *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928); Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1945, 1957, 1968, 1976, 1985, 1992, 1998); Alfred C. Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual*

Behavior in the Human Female (1953); and Harry F. Harlow's "The Nature of Love," *American Psychologist*, 13, 673-685 (1958).

For chapters three and four, I employ an interpretative analysis of ways of thinking about adult-child touch in the mass media, in particular, in popular child-rearing books. In the first four decades of the century, only a few social scientists such as Holt and Watson wrote on the subject of adult-child touch. Yet, after Ben Spock wrote his famous child-rearing book in the 1940s, more and more people became child-rearing "specialists." As with the glut of other self-help books in the 1960s and 1970s, a plethora of child-rearing books were published. Due to time constraints, I examine only a limited number of the most popular child-rearing texts in the second half of the century. My method for choosing the most popular texts, was the following: first, for the first half of the century through the 1980s, I read all the secondary sources on child-rearing literature and expert advice to women that I could locate doing thorough searches in library and with the assistance of the Graduate Center head librarian. I then noted, got and read all of the child-rearing texts to which the secondary sources referred. I then used the child-rearing texts to lead me to more texts. Whenever they referred to another expert or text, I got and read that as well. The texts that came up numerous times, such as those by Luther Emmett Holt and John B. Watson, became the focus of this study. To confirm that these were the most popular texts, I combed through the complete century in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. I counted the number of articles by and about the authors I had found. Those that were never mentioned were dropped from the study.

For the contemporary texts, over the past three years, regularly (approximately every four months) I went to several major bookstores and explored their child-rearing

section. I bought and read all of the books prominently displayed on the child-rearing display tables. Second, I let these child-rearing books themselves lead me to other books. When they referred to other texts or experts, I got and read those as well. Third, I sat in on two weekly, almost completely white and middle class, mother-infant groups for one year (2000). Often, after the meeting, a group of women would gather at a nearby coffee shop (as one might imagine all the single people trying to get some work done quickly packed up and left as around ten women with small babies descended on the story). In informal conversation, I told the women about my study and discussed the issues involved with them. I also subscribed to and read one year (2000) of two of the most popular, and tellingly named, middle class parenting magazines, the behaviorist-leaning, *Parenting* and the solidly naturalist, *Mothering*. Whenever a child-rearing text or expert came up in either the groups or the magazines, I noted it, got it and read it. I used these magazines and the two groups as more informal research guides. They were not the focal evidence of my study, however, they did give me a better sense of the issues faced by parents and they helped me to track down the most central child-rearing literature.

In particular, in chapter three, I look at the thinking of the popular organization, La Leche League International, and the mainstream American Academy of Pediatrics on breastfeeding, and in chapter four, at the work of two extremely popular contemporary child-rearing specialists, Richard Ferber and William Sears on “sharing sleep” versus the crib. I discuss Richard Ferber’s *Solve Your Child’s Sleep Problems* (1985), and William Sears’s *Nighttime Parenting: How to Get Your Baby and Child to Sleep* (1985). Ferber and Sears are particularly interesting examples because of their contrasting advice on sleeping arrangements. For example, in terms of sleep issues, Ferber is an advocate of

what is now popularly known as “Ferberizing” your child in which, through a series of behavioral treatments, the child learns to sleep alone and through the night without waking (1985). Sears, on the other hand, is an advocate of a popular movement called “attachment parenting.” He argues for sleeping with children or what he calls “sleep sharing” in the “family bed.” One, among many reasons, Sears gives for “sleep sharing” is that it allows for more touching of the child (1985).

In my fifth chapter, I explore ideologies of adult-child touch in United States feminist thought with a particular focus on the 1960s and 1970s in second wave radical feminism with their concentration on gender, power and “violent” touch. I look at the conceptualization of adult-child touch as violent and linked to power in radical feminist literature. I explore the convergence of the social scientific ideological site, so prominent in the first half of the century with the feminist ideology about adult-child touch prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. I also do an interpretative examination of thinking about adult-child touch from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. In chapter six, I conclude with an examination of how the ideas of radical feminism were taken up by conservatives in the 1980s and I explore the conservative focus on child sexual abuse, including the day care scandals of the 1980s, and the “backlash” against feminism.

Finally, as I myself gave birth to a little boy in February 2002, I made use of my tiny new research assistant as a partner, literally, in arms, with whom I attended two new mothers’ groups that met weekly in my neighborhood, and a third new mothers’ email list on the internet. The women in these groups seemed to be solidly middle class and white, except for one African American woman who attended regularly. Although the groups were open to men, to my knowledge, no males ever attended.

b. Prescriptive literature

In my research on ideologies of adult-child touch, I examine prescriptive writings on child rearing. These texts include historical and contemporary popular texts that advise parents how to rear their children. In particular, I review the most popular child-rearing books throughout the twentieth century in the United States. Insofar as the texts advise parents about child rearing, they also advise parents about what constitutes the “appropriate” touching of children by adults.

I realize that the use of prescriptive texts in socio-historical work is problematic (Margolis 2000). Primary among the concerns involved are the following two: One cannot be sure who bought and read the literature. And, one cannot know how seriously the advice was taken and if it actually influenced anyone’s behavior. Clearly, the relationship between the ideologies expressed in the prescriptive literature and the behaviors of real people is complicated. Prescriptive literature tells us little about how people truly lived or thought. I do not argue that parents necessarily did what the child-rearing experts advised. Indeed the focus of my dissertation is not the behavior of parents but rather the ideological milieu in which they lived. Prescriptive literature can give a strong sense of the ideological trends in different historical moments and places. The child-rearing advice prescribed, and through that, the advice about adult-child touch, changes over time. By noting the changes in prescriptive literature, I track the shifts and movement of the ideologies of adult-child touch through the century.

For the purposes of my study, prescriptive texts hold a distinct advantage. I am particularly interested in mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch. As noted by other

social historians, the majority of prescriptive literature has a strong class bias. In her social history on advice to women, Maxine L. Margolis writes, “Most child-care manuals and household guides were written by, and intended for, the white urban middle class” (Margolis 2000: 6). It must be noted that child-rearing advice was also meant for those who aspired to be in, or *become* middle class. Indeed, child-rearing expert advice was one medium for the Americanization campaigns “conducted by middle-class, largely Protestant reformers to usher immigrants into mainstream society” (Grant 1998: 72). Due to this class bias, prescriptive writings are a particularly good place to find mainstream or “normative” ideological thought (Margolis 2000; Grant 1998; Degler 1980).

c. Mainstream white, middle class ideologies

In my study, I focus on mainstream white, middle class ideologies in the twentieth century United States. In part, this is because to look at other groups would have entailed time and resources I currently do not have. Yet more than that, the mainstream white middle class has often been a norm-setting group in the United States - albeit a prejudiced group, and not the only norm-setting one. Indeed, in my work I am interested in *ideological norms* rather than particular behaviors.

In *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (1992), sociologist Stephanie Coontz also focuses on the white middle class and its beliefs or “myths,” because as she argues, the white middle class is the predominant mythmaker in our society, and because the “media tends to project fragments of the white, middle-class experience into universal “trends” or “facts.”” Like Coontz, I am interested in

mainstream ideologies because they “distort the diverse experiences of other groups in America and...they don’t even describe most white, middle-class families accurately” (Coontz 1992: 6).

Of special use to my work is sociologist Arlene Skolnick’s explanation of *her* focus on the middle class family in *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (1991). Skolnick claims that this concentration is not because she is “unaware of the dissimilarities and distinctiveness of American families by race, class, region, religion, and gender preference.” Rather, Skolnick writes that she focuses on the middle class because “the mainstream middle-class family has defined the norms of family life in America” (Skolnick 1991: xix-xx). Over the twentieth century, deviations from middle class norms, like in the case of single parenthood, have been considered regrettable digressions. Indeed, a cause of the current feeling of crisis is that “the middle class has been engaging in practices formerly considered deviant. Mothers work outside the home, unmarried couples live together, single women give birth or adopt children” (ibid). Ironically, the middle class has also been “America’s most revolutionary class insofar as the family is concerned. Our major periods of family crisis have occurred when the middle class has redefined the meaning of the family” (Skolnick 1991: xix-xx).

To begin my exploration of middle class ideologies of adult-child touch and the connection of these ideologies to the meanings of family and other cultural phenomena, I now turn to the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter two. Mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch from the 1900s to the 1950s: Early scientific advise on touching in child-rearing books and scientific literature

Introduction

In this chapter, I offer a broad overview of the first half of the twentieth century United States mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch. Primarily, I explore the ideologies as prescribed by scientific experts through the mass media in the form of popular child-rearing books. Until the 1940s most child-rearing experts were adamantly opposed to the intimate touching of children. Many advised against breastfeeding, and they were certainly against children sleeping in bed with their parents. Of central importance in this anti-touching period is the mind-body split and the dominant culture's general fear of the body, and in particular, of touching the body.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, child-rearing experts were a relatively new form of authority. Their influence took hold simultaneous to industrialization. With industrialization and modern science came new ideals about what it meant to be modern parents (Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Grant 1998). Increasingly, and in particular for the Anglo-American middle class, being "modern" meant turning to science to learn how to live. Further, science and modernity were associated with the modern principles of masculinity; this encompassed being male, rational, controlled/ing, strong, firm, and as one might imagine, white, middle class, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Finally being masculine meant an avoidance of emotion, physicality and physical contact.

I argue that these ideologies expose underlying dualistic patterns of thought. As many dualisms are embedded in and born from the fundamental western mind-body split, in this chapter, I address several of these binary variants including the science versus

nature dichotomy, the bad mother-good mother split, and the masculinist versus related dualism.

As addressed in chapter one, in western history for centuries the body has been associated with that which is “savage,” and the mind with that which is “godly” and “rational.” Bordo writes, “The body as animal, as appetite, as deceiver, as prison of the soul and confounder of its projects: these are common images within Western philosophy” (Bordo 1993: 3). The body also became associated with that which is not male, and not middle class and not white. Bordo argues that the “scheme is frequently gendered, with woman cast in the role of the body, “weighed down,” in Beauvoir’s words, “by everything peculiar to it.” In contrast, man casts himself as the “inevitable, like a pure idea, like the One, the All, the Absolute Spirit” (ibid: 5). To touch the animalistic body, one risked awakening its ostensibly out-of-control passions. And thus for a period of time in Anglo-American middle class ideology, touching, including mothers touching their children, became taboo.

In the first half of the century, scientific experts on child rearing came largely from the mainstream medical fields of medicine and psychology, and in particular, the new behaviorist school of thought. I will briefly examine the thinking on adult-child touch of the following experts: medical doctor, Luther Emmett Holt; behaviorist psychologist, John B. Watson; pediatrician and psychoanalyst, Benjamin Spock; biologist, Alfred Kinsey; and psychologist, Harry F. Harlow. I will also succinctly consider the challenge offered the experts by early popular health movement organizations such as La Leche League International. (Please see the methodology

section in chapter one for further information as to how these experts and their texts were chosen.)

Socio-historical context

a. Scientific experts and mothers

In this section, I briefly examine the socio-historical context for the rise of the scientific experts. Scientific experts offering popular advice on child rearing are relatively new phenomena. Well into the nineteenth century, many if not most parents in the United States sought parenting advice from the Bible and religion, and from the families and communities in which they lived. With the advent of the twentieth century under the impact of industrialization, urbanization and the growing power of technology, the prestige of science increasingly competed with religion in offering guidance to people on how to live in the modern age. Eventually science, as well as the scientific expert, became the new god and authority on almost everything, including the newly recognized “work” of child rearing. The middle class, especially, looked to the scientific expert to learn how to raise their children (Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Grant 1998). And in turn, scientific experts disseminated their special knowledge via the mass mediated written word in books and magazines.

The rise of the scientific expert parallels the decline of the large family. Whereas in the past, religion, supported by the economic imperatives of farm life, sanctioned large families, now children were an expense rather than an asset. Given this, smaller families were increasingly common. As Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd wrote in their 1920s study done in Muncie, Indiana, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*,

“families of six to fourteen children, upon which the grandparents of the present generation prided themselves, are considered as somehow not as “nice” as families of two, three, or four children.” They continued, “in this urban life of alluring alternate choices...children are mouths instead of productive hands” (Lynd and Lynd 1929/1957: 131). The Lynds claimed that “with increasing regulation of the size of the family, emphasis has shifted somewhat from child-bearing to child rearing” (ibid). This new focus on child rearing opened up a special place for the advice of scientific experts.

In the United States, before the advance of industrialization in the 1830s, women worked alongside men in and around the home. Female and male adults, along with their children, took part in the productive labor necessary to live, as most people did, at a subsistence level. Work and life happened in the same place. And all took part. This did not mean that each person was valued equally, or that all were accorded the same rights. The fruits of free women’s work legally belonged to their husbands. In fact, until the mid-1800s, married women had no right to own property. Women entered marriage as dependents of their husbands. Free men owned the produce of their free wife’s and children’s labor. And outside of the enslaved, fathers had complete legal custody of their children. They could marry off or apprentice their children without the mother’s approval.

With industrialization in the nineteenth century, the new cash economy spread. More and more men, and some women, began to work for wages. However, most women still worked and lived primarily in the barter economy of the home and family. Slowly “work” became synonymous with the labor done by men for a wage. And usually

this work was done in the public “workplace” or factory away from the private sphere of the home. Economics journalist Ann Crittenden argues, “The stage was set for the assumption - still with us - that men “supported” their wives at home, as if unpaid work were not productive and not part of the “real” economy” (Crittenden 2001: 47).

Crittenden continues, “One of the first appearances of the monetary definition of “productive” is in Alexander Hamilton’s 1791 Report on Manufactures, an argument for national investment in manufacturing industries. Only goods that could be sold to create revenue were included in Hamilton’s definition of “the total produce” of society. He attributed a “superiority of...productiveness” to labor whose product was geared for exchange outside the household” (ibid).

As women’s work in the home sphere lost status as “labor,” it gained a new kind of sentimental status as that which upholds private morality and love in a cold and calculating world. Crittenden writes,

The emerging ideology of “separate spheres” thus served a dual purpose: it discouraged women from demanding greater participation in public and economic life, and it gave mothers license - and the moral authority - to rear their children as they saw fit. It ratified the withdrawal of fathers from the home and the expansion of mothers’ responsibilities within it. Women’s new assignment brought with it a significant strengthening of their domestic position. (Ibid: 48)

The new emphasis on motherhood worked to keep women out of the mainstream public sphere. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted, “American women never manage the outward concerns of the family or conduct a business or take part in political life...Nor have the Americans ever supposed that one consequence of democratic principles is the subversion of marital power” (quoted in Crittenden 2001: 49).

Yet the new focus on motherhood did not only keep women out of public life. Intensive mothering - and the huge investments of time increasingly deemed mandatory for child rearing - was believed necessary to the developing of the capitalist economy and to the growing middle class's survival within it. "By the late eighteenth century in France, England, and the United States, the countries with the most dynamic economies of the day, the rising bourgeoisie understood that their children would have to become educated, motivated little achievers if they were going to improve or even maintain their station in life" (Crittenden 2001: 49).

In a subsistence agrarian economy, even very young children supply valuable help in the family enterprise. People need not and cannot spend limited resources, including emotions and time, on their children. Rather their children "spend" themselves on their families. Yet, in the modern United States capitalist economy, children have ceased to provide economic value to their families. Instead, modern children in wealthy capitalist nations are an expense for their parents. This does not mean that children are "useless" for the modern economy. In fact they are - or they will be - essential, when they grow up. Crittenden writes,

This story has been left out of economic history. As the story of the family is conventionally told, virtually all serious economic activity had left the household by the mid-nineteenth century, as manufacturing migrated from farms into factories. The household evolved from a workplace, where most necessities were produced, into a place of leisure, consumption, and emotional replenishment; a "haven in a heartless world." Ostensibly, industrialization put families, and the women in them, "out of business." (Ibid: 51)

In fact, Crittenden continues, “the family remained an intrinsic part of the economy. There was simply a transformation of the type of goods and services produced in the home. The new domestic product was the intensively raised child” (ibid). During the socio-economic transformation from a preindustrial to an industrial society, United States families changed as labor units. Whereas in the preindustrial society, the family had produced food, in the industrial family produced educated laborers for the industrial labor market. Children were products-in-process.

Children were to be the future workers. Women’s job was to raise and prepare them for this. However, this was not either women’s or children’s only role. Both women and children were potential consumers. And in the early part of the twentieth century these consumer roles were increasingly important to business (Ewen 1976/2001).

Of course child rearing, and eventually consumption, were only a part of the work done at home by women. In the increasingly commercial economy, “women by default had to perform what had been men’s and even children’s domestic work” (Crittenden: 2001: 51). Men left the home to work and older children were leaving the home to go to school. “The family’s unpaid labor force was shrinking down to the adult women, who had to handle chores with animals, gardens, and repairs on top of the traditional work of cooking, cleaning, and child care. The angel of the hearth was increasingly on her own, up to her elbows in coal dust and soapsuds” (ibid).

Child-rearing expertise coupled with the new “domestic science” played several roles within the middle class. These new “fields” legitimized the work of white middle class women as they were pushed out of other forms of productive labor and relegated to

the private realm of the home. Yet as these areas of scientific study gave prestige to middle class women's work, they also delegitimized the "traditional" knowledge of women about child bearing and child rearing as unscientific and dangerous. Childbirth and child rearing entered the area of mainstream medicine. They became bodies of scientific knowledge that women must learn about or risk damaging the health and well-being of their children and families.

Along with its role in the middle class social construction of gender, child-rearing expertise played a part in the Americanization project of the white Protestant middle class. This was at a time when massive numbers of immigrants from Europe were surging into the United States. Furthermore, early in the twentieth century there was extensive working class resistance to industrial capitalism. Both of these factors played a role in making the middle class extremely nervous about the growing and noncompliant working class and the new immigrants generally. Through their "Americanization project," the middle class took on the task of turning the strange immigrant cultures, and the resistant working class into "civilized" - scientific - peoples. Raising one's children in a scientific manner, according to the advice of child-rearing experts, became a way of delineating class. "Scientific" meant "civilized." "Civilized" meant "American." And "American" meant middle class (Ewen 1976/2001; Blum 1999; Grant 1998).

b. Mothers, marriage and the "traditional" family

At the end of the nineteenth century, most women lived what sociologist Arlene Skolnick calls the "marriage plot" story line. The marriage plot is one of the two basic narratives commonly found in modern western culture. The other is the male story of

adventure and heroism (Skolnick 1991). In the marriage plot, the heroine looks for and finds love, marries, has children and lives “happily ever after” caring for her children and husband. In nineteenth century western culture, the marriage plot describes the reality of most women’s lives (with or without the happiness). In 1900 only 6 percent of married women worked outside of the home (Skolnick 1991). These 6 percent were mostly poor, immigrant and African American women. Marginalized from white middle class society already, these women working outside of the home, and thus rupturing mainstream norms, garnered little attention.

The early stages of modernization helped to develop the marriage plot story as a cultural ideal. The “traditional” family of the marriage plot consists of a mother who stays home and cares for her husband and children, and a father who works outside the home as the family “breadwinner.” This traditional marriage plot family might also be called the traditional “breadwinner” family, where it is husbands, not wives who are employed outside the home. Women stay at home and men work in the public sphere for a wage with which they - more or less - support their families. When New Right politicians and religious figures speak about “family values” and the “traditional family” this is the family structure to which they refer.

Yet as sociologist Kingsley Davis argues, this traditional breadwinner family is an “aberration that arose in a particular stage of development and tends to recur in countries now undergoing development” (cited in Skolnick 1991: 11). Many look to the 1950s for an example of the traditional family in the midst of its heyday and before its supposed decline began. Yet in reality, the 1950s were an oddity in the twentieth century. Over the course of the whole century, people have come to marry later and later in life, birth

rates have dropped and divorce rates have risen. In fact, divorce rates have been rising in a steady pattern since the mid-nineteenth century. Only one decade, the 1950s, diverged from this trend. It was a strange moment in the middle of fairly consistent patterns over the surrounding decades. In other words, the marriage plot cultural ideal is just that, an ideal. We have no authentic enchanted-family past to look back upon.

The breadwinner family developed in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. Before that work had been centered in the home with all members of the family taking part. With the Industrial Revolution and ensuing modernization, the workplace shifted to the new and separate public industrial sphere. And there developed the private sphere made up of women and children in the home. This new breadwinner family slowly spread with the process of modernization until it reached its apex in 1890 (Coontz 1992; Skolnick 1991).

Yet, as Skolnick argues, “the early stages of modernization helped to create the breadwinner/housewife family, [and] the later stages helped to undo it” (Skolnick 1991: 12). Slowly, over the course of the twentieth century, more and more women left the home and entered the separate public sphere of the workplace. Nonetheless in child-rearing literature throughout the century, and still today, most experts suppose that women do not work outside of the home, and that the 1950s enchanted-family ideal was and is reality. I now turn to the early scientific experts and their child-rearing advice.

Science and its experts

a. Luther Emmett Holt

In the early part of the century, many people's focus changed from having children to rearing children, and with this, the prevailing advice on child rearing began to come from the scientific lab more than the pulpit (Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Grant 1998). In a domestic parallel to the scientific management movement - an early twentieth-century movement that used scientific methods to attempt to control labor and increase efficiency in capitalistic production - scientific experts started telling middle class women how to raise their children and keep their homes. By the turn of the century, the most prominent child-rearing specialist was a doctor, Luther Emmett Holt. Dr. Holt first published his famous child-rearing book, *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses*, in 1894.

Besides his extremely well-received book, between 1903 and 1924, *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* cites thirteen articles by, and four written about Holt in popular magazines and other periodicals. In both social histories of the time and contemporary writing from the early part of the century, Holt comes up again and again as a prominent child-rearing expert (Ewen 1976/2001; Grant 1998; Blum 1999; Ehrenreich and English 1978). In their well-known social history of expert advice to women, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English describe Holt as the "Dr. Spock of his period" (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 200). Sociologist Linda M. Blum names Holt - along with Watson - the among the first influential child psychologists (Blum 1999: 31). In fact, Holt's training was as a medical doctor; at that time psychology a very new field, and behaviorism had yet to be developed. Nonetheless, when Watson founded behaviorism in the 1920s, in terms of child development, he saw himself following in the footsteps of Holt. Even the famous Dr. Spock's mother used Holt's book in raising

Spock and his five siblings. Decades later, when Spock challenges the child-rearing experts that come before him, Holt along with John B. Watson are the two he mentions.

Holt tipped his hat to the religious “experts” of the past by titling his book, *Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children’s Nurses*. Against ancient wisdoms, Holt argued the cause of science. He warned his readers that mothers’ knowledge was limited and that they should look to science for guidance rather than relying on misleading “motherly instincts.”

If a man wishes to raise the best grain or vegetables, or the finest cattle or horses, all admit that he must study the conditions under which alone such things are possible. If he is in doubt regarding these matters he may apply to the Agriculture Department at Washington, and be furnished with the reports of the best scientific work on these subjects by experts who make these matters their study under government supervision. But instinct and maternal love are too often assumed to be a sufficient guide for a mother.
(Quoted in Ehrenreich and English 1978: 200)

No longer were women seen as having an innate or “instinctual” ability to mother. Nor did they learn about the rearing of children from their parents and extended families. Women were told to turn to science rather than “intuition” - or other women - to learn about mothering.

Holt’s text represented the beginning of decades of scientific experts telling women how to raise their children. Yet Holt offered no evidence or studies to back his claims. Indeed, the only scientific evidence readers received was on the title page where Holt’s name was shown. Here readers saw the following credentials: “By L. Emmett Holt, M.D.” and “Professor of diseases of children in the New York Polyclinic; attending physician to the Babies’ Hospital and The Nursery and Child’s Hospital, New York” (Holt 1901). Holt himself was trained as a scientist and this seemed to be all the

scientific proof Holt needed; at any rate, it was all he offered. His lack of scientific grounds for his supposedly scientific conclusions is itself evidence of the ideological nature of his thinking.

Nonetheless, increasingly at this time, people wanted to learn from science how to rear their children. Indeed, the Lynds found that in both working class and middle class families there was an “attitude that child rearing is something not to be taken for granted but to be studied.” They claimed, “One cannot talk with Middletown mothers without being continually impressed by the eagerness of many to lay hold of every available resource for help in training their children” (Lynd and Lynd 1929/1957: 149). Along with women’s magazines, many women looked to such ““baby books” as Holt’s *Care and Feeding of Infants*” which was “supplanting the family “recipe book” of 1890” (ibid: 151). Lynd and Lynd found that although families were now smaller, nonetheless, many parents were overwhelmed by the plethora of scientific child-rearing information. One woman they interviewed claimed, ““Life was simpler for my mother...In those days one did not realize that there was so much to be known about the care of children” (ibid).

This new scientific approach to child rearing sprang in part from the larger movement of modernity into people’s everyday lives. The modern and its scientific approach to life were both frightening and exciting. The unfamiliarity of modern science engendered confusion. Yet it also brought hope. People understood science as offering them the possibility of freedom from the age-old terrifying human problems of hunger and disease. This mixture of anxiety and hope was the emotional backdrop for much of the child-rearing ideologies of the early twentieth century.

Avoiding disease through sanitary environments and through controlling even the most everyday details of children's behavior was a core component of turn-of-the-century child-rearing advice to the middle class. The fear of disease was not an idle anxiety. In fact, disease lurked as a deadly reality for everyone. Women in particular shared special vulnerabilities. Women across the social classes repeatedly risked death, and often died, in childbirth. The first year that national statistics are available is 1915. In that year "61 women died for every 10,000 live babies born, compared to 2 per 10,000" in recent decades (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 112). In all likelihood this is already an improvement from prior years. And of course, this number does not account for women's lives lost during childbirth when the baby did not survive. Tuberculosis, TB or "the white plague" presented another special threat to women, especially young women. In the mid-nineteenth century TB spread at epidemic rates, and it continued to be a major problem affecting everyone well into the twentieth century. Yet young women were especially vulnerable. They often died "at rates twice as high as men of their own age groups" (ibid). And, of course, poor women were especially vulnerable to the hazards of childbearing and TB. Contagious diseases have always attack the poor hardest of all. Further, poor women also contended with the dangers and diseases of industrial work.

Given the omnipresence of disease, it makes sense that science became a kind of religion. Yet as Ehrenreich and English, among others, argue, scientism, or science worship, grew from something more than just pragmatics. Scientific ideology held and engendered special qualities that were very appealing in the early twentieth century United States and Europe. Science appeared to be "tough and yet transcendent – hardheaded and masculine, yet at the same time able to "soar above" commercial reality"

(ibid: 76). In other words, scientific ideology fulfilled and reinforced a larger modern western masculine social ideal. Science like the model man was understood to have will power, honor and courage; it never shrank from the Truth (Mosse 1996). Much like perfected masculinity, science had an image of “uncompromising disinterestedness and objectivity” (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 77). This masculine aura gave “science its great moral force in the mind of the public” (ibid). And, this very association between masculinity and science both promoted and reinforced the deep misogyny of early twentieth century child-rearing advice (Mosse 1996).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the development of domestic science as an area of expertise coincided with that of “Germ Theory,” the new bacteriologists’ theory that diseases are spread through contagious bacteria germs, and also with the arrival of immense numbers of immigrants into the United States. “Germ Theory, which became known to the public in the eighteen nineties...set off a wave of public anxiety about contagion” (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 157). These fears were not unrelated to middle class fears of “contagion” from the “lower orders.” For example, an author warned readers in her household hygiene book, *Women, Plumbers and Doctors, or Household Sanitation*, “A man may live on the splendid “avenue,” in a mansion plumbed in the latest and costliest style, but if, half a mile away, in range with his open window, there is a “slum,” or even a neglected tenement house, the zephyrs will come along and pick up the disease germs and bear them onward, distributing them to whomsoever it meets, whether he be a millionaire or a shillingaire...” (quoted in Ehrenreich and English 1978: 157-158). And as Ehrenreich and English argue,

When domestic science leaders...spoke of the endangered home, their first concern was with the middle class home. It had to be rationalized, sanitized, and, above all, stabilized through the efforts of its resident domestic "scientist," the scientific homemaker. But anyone with a minimum of social awareness could see that the gravest threat to the home, and hence to "civilization," lay in the urban slums. (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 170)

Immigrants, along with African Americans and other people of color, were seen as deeply threatening to the white middle class. Not only were they believed to carry "germs," they threatened what was understood to be the very nature of middle class Americans. The middle class was invested in "converting" or Americanizing those who could be converted - those with white skin - and drawing strict boundaries between themselves and the rest.

Holt argued implicitly against touching children although he never explicitly addressed touch per se. At that time, middle class people's positive belief in breastfeeding was only beginning to shift. Holt did recommend breastfeeding but he did not oppose bottlefeeding. In terms of other touch issues, his anti-touch stance was more clear. For example, even when being fed from a bottle or taken out for a walk, a baby should not be carried in arms; it should be placed in its carriage. Indeed, Holt argued that generally babies should not be played with or held but instead kept still and alone in their cribs. To the question as to what age may playing with babies begin, Holt answered, "Never until four months, and better not until six months. The less of it at any time the better for the infant" (Holt 1901: 91). In answer to the question as to whether a child should sleep in the same bed with its mother or nurse, Holt did not waver. Interestingly, a component of his opposition is that sharing sleep *allows for* unrestricted breastfeeding.

“Under no circumstances [should children sleep with caretakers], if this can be avoided. Very young infants have often been smothered by their mothers, by overlying during sleep. If the infant sleeps with the mother, there is always the temptation to frequent nursing at night, which is injurious to both mother and child” (ibid: 84). Holt made clear his middle class bias when he continued by claiming that each child should have their own bed. “Older children also should, if possible, have separate beds; many contagious diseases and bad habits are contracted by children sleeping together” (ibid).

In his book, Holt focused on the development of “good habits” - white middle class habits - rather than messing about with children’s emotional issues. “Children were to be trained swiftly and decisively to go on the toilet. Similar promptness was advised for thumb-sucking, weaning, sleeping schedules, and feeding patterns” (Maier 1998: 87). Two special obsessions of the scientific approach to child rearing included thumb-sucking and regular bowel movements.

Holt wrote that a child may “be trained to be regular in its bowels...[B]y endeavoring to have them move at exactly the same time every day” (Holt 1901: 82). And as to what age an infant may be trained in this way, he continued, “Usually by the second month if training is begun early” (ibid: 83). Holt described his training method in detail:

A small chamber, about the size of a pint bowl, is placed between the nurse’s knees, and upon this the infant is held, its back being against the nurse’s chest and its body firmly supported. This should be done twice a day, after the morning and afternoon feedings, and always at the same hour. At first there may be necessary some local irritation, like that produced by tickling the anus or introducing just inside the rectum a small cone of oiled paper or a piece of soap, as a suggestion of the purpose for which the baby is placed upon the chamber; but in a surprisingly short time

the position is all that is required. With most infants, after a few weeks the bowels will move as soon as the infant is placed on the chamber. (Ibid.)

These two scientific interests throw light on my question of touch as they exemplify the ethos of the time. For the white middle class, “acceptable” touching entailed adults touching children for the purpose of controlling them. The aim was to control even the child’s most mundane behavior. For example, medical professionals went to great lengths to stop an infant from thumb sucking, which was believed to cause disease. “As a matter of routine, supervising doctors and nurses insisted that parents put white cloth mitts on the baby’s hands, or dab a little acid-tasting glue or iodine on the thumb. If these deterrents didn’t solve the problem, the baby’s wrists were tied to opposite sides of the crib” (ibid: 86). For the middle class, touching outside of adult touch meant to control children was essentially unacceptable. Children were not to be touched or allowed to touch themselves.

b. John B. Watson

In midst of the scientific ethos, touching was considered dangerous both to children’s physical well-being, and their character development. In the 1920s, with the invention of behaviorism by psychologist John B. Watson, how, when and where to touch was thoroughly incorporated into the scientific approach to child rearing. Watson developed the psychological complement, *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928), to Holt’s more practical child-rearing guide. Along with his extremely well-received book, between 1904 and 1936, *the Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature* cites Watson as having written twenty four articles himself, and having six written about him,

in popular magazines and other periodicals. His wife, Rosalie Rayner Watson also wrote an article for *Parents Magazine* in December of 1930 called “I Am the Mother of a Behaviorist’s Sons.” As Holt’s counterpart, in both social histories of the time and contemporary writing from the early part of the century, Watson like Holt comes up again and again as a prominent child-rearing expert (Ewen 1976/2001; Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Grant 1998; Ehrenreich and English 1978). Indeed, Margolis writes, about Watson and his best-selling child-rearing text, “No advice giver of the day was untouched by his theories” (Margolis 2000: 33).

Watson himself explained his expertise in reference to Holt, “Ever since my first glimpse of Dr. Holt’s “The Care and Feeding of Children,” I hoped some day to be able to write a book on the psychological care of the infant. I believed then that psychological care was just as necessary as physiological care. Today I believe it is in some ways more important” (Watson 1928: 3).

Watson believed there were no intrinsic human instincts. Children, he argued, become who they become purely due to their parental upbringing and childhood environment. “There are no instincts. We build in at an early age everything that is later to appear” (ibid: 38). In this argument, Watson represents one of two major ideological strands about child rearing running through the twentieth century, “behaviorism.” The behaviorists believed children should be systematically trained to enter the human community. For them, nurture, not nature, was everything. Through training, children become useful members of society. The behaviorists argued that *only* they, in their role as scientific experts, could tell women how to raise their children and mother. The

behaviorists claimed that if women were left to their own inclinations, they would harm their children.

Unlike Holt, Watson did refer to his own scientific research as the basis for his claim to being “scientific.” Indeed, he began his book with the following acknowledgments:

The scientific material, upon which the convictions set forth in this small book are based, has been gathered in the Maternity Ward of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Harriet Lane Home for Crippled Children, at the Heckscher Foundation, and in many private homes. (Ibid: 1)

Further, Watson devoted a full chapter to discussing “How the behaviorist studies infants and children” (ibid: 11). However, as one might imagine, Watson made giant leaps between his behavioral scientific evidence garnered in laboratory studies of infants and children and his anti-touching theories.

Watson explicitly focused on *touching* as a locus of parental - motherly - harm to children. Watson argued strongly against touching children, “Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning” (ibid: 81-82). He argued that children do not love naturally or instinctively rather they love in response to being touched. “Our laboratory studies show that we can bring out a love response in a new born child by just one stimulus - *by stroking its skin*. The more sensitive the skin area, the more marked the response” (ibid: 71). This adult-child exchange of love in response to physical contact, is a deeply dangerous phenomenon: “Love reactions soon dominate the child. It requires no instinct, no “intelligence,” no “reasoning” on the child’s part for such responses to grow up” (ibid: 75). The effects of too much touching show

themselves in, interestingly, non-masculine traits such as whining, sickness and frailty. “It shows as invalidism” (ibid: 76). Tellingly, included under Watson’s rubric of “invalidism” is the following: “Mother fights our battles for us and stands between us the things we try to avoid doing” (ibid: 77).

Indeed, Watson was not concerned with just any touch. Watson worried about feminine touch. In his child-rearing book Watson stressed the danger presented by mothers. He asked his readers, “won’t you then remember when you are tempted to pet your child that mother love is a dangerous instrument? An instrument which may inflict a never healing wound, a wound which may make infancy unhappy, adolescence a nightmare, an instrument which may wreck your adult son or daughter’s vocational future and their chances for marital happiness” (ibid: 87).

Whereas Watson particularly feared the danger presented by women, his fear was not unusual. Anxiety about women and feminization was an ongoing theme of modernity. This fear of femininity counteracted the modern celebration of the masculine. Much as women represented “femininity,” religion and the traditional past, men represented masculinity, science and the modern future. Historian George L. Mosse writes, “the male body...was thought to symbolize society’s need for order and progress, as well as middle-class virtues such as self-control and moderation. Woman as a public symbol was a reminder of the past, of innocence and chastity” (Mosse 1996: 9). Indeed modern masculinity played both a central part in upholding the sharp boundary between men and women that is so essential to modernity, and the masculine ideal was itself supported by that boundary.

Mosse claims, “At the beginning of the nineteenth century women lost whatever small gains they had made during the eighteenth century Enlightenment and were confined to a sphere clearly distinct from that assigned to men; their task was governing the household and educating the children...women as individuals had no place in public life” (ibid). This did not mean that men were superior to women so much as that each had different social roles. People believed that women and men complemented one another. “This difference was all-important in the construction of modern masculinity, which...defined itself against a countertype but also in connection with the differences between the sexes. For example, the word *effeminate* came into general usage during the eighteenth century indicating an unmanly softness and delicacy” (ibid). The gendered separation between men and women and the separation’s meaning for the support of modern masculinity remained firmly in place through the twentieth century.

Mosse argues about the masculine ideal:

Distinct images of masculinity - the way men assert what they believe to be their manhood - have been all pervasive in Western culture. The ideal of masculinity was invoked on all sides as a symbol of personal and national regeneration, but also as basic to the self-definition of modern society. Manliness was supposed to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, but it was also regarded as an indispensable attribute of those who wanted change. Indeed, the exhortation “to be a man” became commonplace...during the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth. (Ibid: 3)

Mosse continues, “And though modern masculinity must be analyzed as a historical phenomenon in its own right, it was nevertheless closely tied to the fears and hopes of modern society. Examining the manly ideal means dealing [with]...the ideals and functions of normative society” (ibid: 4).

Watson himself was deeply embedded in the highly restrictive “masculine” world of science and industry. In fact, along with being a child-rearing expert, Watson was also an industrial psychologist who worked for early big business public relations projects. The overlap between Watson’s worlds was clear. His behaviorist method of child rearing held that raising children ought to be done much like a scientific experiment. Children were to be reared in a very controlled, time and cost-effective manner. Similar to the new “scientific management” of workers in industry, the behaviorist method of child rearing was part of scientific management’s domestic counterpart called, not coincidentally, “domestic science.”

For middle class women who attempted to follow behaviorist dictates, mothering became an all-consuming job, leaving no time for outside employment. Indeed women’s work in the home began to be truly understood as *work*. In this schema, women were seen as *workers*, or even managers of the homework and worker (the worker and the manager being one and the same person). This new framing of women’s “job” entailed more than cleaning and child rearing. As American business understood well, and pushed for, housewives were also responsible for the move from home production to the home consumption of industries’ new mass-produced goods. Stuart Ewen writes, “Although according to the ideology of American business, the American woman was to remain identified with the home, it was a home whose definition had been severely altered by the explosion in production and distribution. No longer the repository of craft and self-sustaining values, the home of the 1920s saw the massive influx of industrial goods and values which made most of those crafts superfluous” (Ewen 1976/2001: 161). Ewen continues,

Women's work had traditionally been viewed as home-production, set apart from the world of industry. The entry of industrial goods into the home, however, tended to integrate the acceptable conception of woman with the conception of worker that prevailed in the factory... Though the home-centeredness of women still separated them from the external world of men, the industrially fabricated content of the home was defined and demarcated, more and more, by the external priorities of capitalism... As the housewife assumed more of a factory-operative status, the home became a place where the values of factory production, and the conditions if not the pay of the wage worker, were replicated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. (Ibid: 164)

For the child-rearing component of this work, behaviorists such as Watson insisted on a time-depleting structure of regularity and scheduling. This excessively scheduled system made sense within the larger context of scientific management. About scientific management, Ewen writes, "Work, once a repository of skill and social interaction, [had] become a series of preordained gestures" (ibid: 193-194). In the scientific management of the production process, time-motion experts like Frederick W. Taylor broke production down to its smallest components. Then each individual worker did one tiny part of the whole process of making something. This deskilling of the labor, disempowered workers because now any particular worker's job took little or no training. Each worker was easily replaced. "The power of know-how [became] firmly implanted in the safe confines of management, while obedience [became] the most desired category that industry [expected] of its workers" (ibid: 194). With scientific management, by systemizing the production process, production increased. And at the same time, workers were "dequalified" and thus, disempowered (ibid: 195).

In this ethos, Watson claimed the goal of his child-rearing method was to train children to be independent, yet a more likely goal of the "industrial model of child care

was the rearing of individuals who fit into a working world that demanded regularity, discipline, and conformity to outside direction” (Margolis 2000: 36). Indeed, Watson himself worked for big business by advertising for the marketplace and its goods. In fact, in 1922, he left the scholarly world of John Hopkins to become a vice president of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency (Ewen 1976/2001: 83). Watson’s commitment to big business was clear. For him the industrial world with its orderly scientific management was the centerpiece and hope of modernity.

However, for big business proponents like Watson, obedience and order were not the only characteristics desirable in children, or for that matter, in workers or in mothers. Business and its foot soldiers, like Watson, emphasized consumption as the way to the modern “good life.” Ewen writes, “Through consumption, women could procure for their children the kind of life-long security and happiness that was associated with perpetual youth. Protecting and educating children was tantamount to training them from infancy in beneficial patterns of consumption” (ibid: 175).

Given that children were no longer a productive asset to their families - they were actually an expense - there was an incentive to have fewer children. Fewer children meant even more free time for middle class women. Yet raising children with the behaviorist child-rearing methods more than filled up the newly freed time. This fact was not only okay with behaviorists; it was a good thing. Indeed, ultimately, behaviorist child-rearing methods took up every minute of middle class mothers’ time. And in doing so, behaviorism gave middle class women a highly controlled role in a newly industrialized society where their productive labor was no longer needed except insofar as they produced the next generation of workers. Margolis argues,

If Watson's scientific principles were molding children to the requirements of industrial capitalism, they were doing so at the expense of their mothers' time and energy. Watson was unconcerned about the impact his advice had on a mother's workload. After all, maternal convenience was hardly worthy of consideration when so much was at stake. Mother was to spend hours chauffeuring her children to music and dance lessons, sports events, and other activities meant to nurture independence; in her leisure time, she was expected to study the child-care manuals to find out what she was doing wrong. Watson's methods, in fact, increased women's work. (Margolis 2000: 36)

Both Watson and Holt spoke primarily to a middle class audience. This is clear from dictates such as Watson's not to have children unless one can afford a separate room for each child, and that mothers must make children their full-time work. Watson explicitly acknowledges his focus on a middle class audience.

...I have written principally to mothers who have leisure to devote to the study of their children. The reason I have chosen these more fortunate mothers as my audience, grows out of the hope I have that some day the importance of the first two years of infancy will be fully realized. When it is faced, every woman will seriously question whether she is in a proper situation to have a child...No mother has a right to have a child who cannot give it a room to itself for the first two years of infancy. I would make this a *conditio sine qua non*. (Watson 1928: 7-8)

Again, part of what it meant to be middle class was to look to science for advice in such everyday matters as how to raise one's children. As discussed earlier, no longer did mothers look to their own mothers and grandmothers, other women, for advice. Nor were mothers told to trust their own common sense or "intuition." Rather, middle class women were advised to look to science in all matters of homemaking and child-rearing

(Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Grant 1998). To be “civilized” - i.e. to be middle class - meant being scientific.

This focus on the middle class is not unrelated to the eugenics movement. Eugenics was the white and racist study of hereditary “improvement” through genetic control. From the beginning of the movement to bring child rearing into the scientific fold, eugenics influenced child-rearing experts and interested mothers. Indeed “child study” organizations such as the National Congress of Mothers (later to be renamed the PTA), “put the rhetoric of eugenics in the service of educational and environmental reform” (Grant 1998: 56). At their 1905 annual meeting a conference speaker deplored “the unpropitious conditions which environ much of the childhood of the race, and from which only a dwarfed humanity can come forth” (quoted in Grant 1998: 56).

Nonetheless, historian Julia Grant argues that by the 1920s, “Social and behavioral scientists...were increasingly rejecting eugenics as either a fruitful line of inquiry or a means of reform” (ibid: 117).

Touch was a defining marker of the white middle class. And, it was through scientific areas of expertise such as domestic science and scientific child-rearing that the rules around adult-child touch were laid out. Not only fundamentally classist and racist, there was also a deeply misogynist element to the new domestic science. It took away contemporary middle class women’s last vestige of expertise. No longer were women to be understood as the “natural” keepers of home and children. Rather, women needed to be suspicious of their mothers’ and grandmothers’ knowledge and of their own “instincts,” and to turn instead to science. Not only was the ethos of the movement implicitly misogynist, certain practitioners were explicitly so. Watson himself made no

attempt to veil his negative feelings about women, dedicating his child-rearing book to “the first mother who brings up a happy child” (Watson 1928). According to Watson, bringing up a happy child was something women seemed incapable of doing.

In the 1920s with the work of Watson, the childcare literature “raised a new and frightening spectre: the dangerous mother” (Margolis 2000: 33). Watson and others argued that mothers were potentially hazardous to the health and well-being of their children. Insofar as mothers were dangerous to children, they were also dangerous to society at large. “While it had long been thought that improper mothering could inflict damage on the child, incompetent mothers were seen as the exceptions, not the rule. But under the hegemony of behaviorism, the dominant school of psychology in the United States in the early twentieth century, mothers were assumed guilty of damaging their children unless proven innocent” (ibid). The primary figure in this school of thought was Watson. And all the child-rearing experts of the time were influenced by his misogynist theories.

Watson argued that irrational “mother love” was at the core of the mother problem. According to scholar Maxine L. Margolis, Watson claimed that mother love “led to weak, dependent children, children with “crippled personalities” who would never make it in the tough competitive world of industrial capitalism” (ibid: 33-34). Watson never explicitly defined what he meant by “mother love.” Yet when he referred to it, he described women *touching* their children. In other words, women expressed Watson’s “mother love” by touching. In fact, he went as far as to say that when touched - and only when touched - do children give out a “love response.” Here Watson asked the rhetorical question, “Do you mean to say the child doesn’t “*instinctively*” love its mother?”

(Watson 1928: 43) He continued, "Only one thing will bring out a love response in the child - stroking and touching its skin, lips, sex organs and the like. It does not matter at first who strokes it. It will "love" the stroker. This is the clay out of which all love - maternal, paternal, wifely or husbandly - is made" (ibid).

Watson argued that the touching of children, "mother love," was deeply detrimental to the child. In fact, he devoted one complete chapter to this danger, "Chapter three: The danger of too much mother love" (ibid: 69). Watson believed that if mothers listened to the advice of experts and took that advice to heart, they might be able to stop touching their children and thus raise happier, healthier human beings. He writes,

A certain amount of affectionate response is socially necessary but few parents realize how easily they can overtrain the child in this direction. It may tear the heart strings a bit, this thought of stopping the tender outward demonstration of love for your children or of their love for you. But if you are convinced that this is best for the child, aren't you willing to stifle a few pangs? Mothers just don't know, when they kiss their children and pick them up and rock them, caress them and jiggle them upon their knee, that they are slowly building up a human being totally unable to cope with the world it must later live in. (Ibid: 43-44)

Because of the serious problem of "mother love" - mothers touching their children - Watson believed that children could be reared better - more scientifically - away from home and parents. About this, he wrote, "It is a serious question in my mind whether there should be individual homes for children - or even whether children should know their own parents. There are undoubtedly much more scientific ways of bringing up children which will probably mean finer and happier children" (ibid: 5-6). Yet he reconciled himself to the reality that the home was probably here for good. Instead he

focused on getting mothers to do a better job, in other words, to stop touching their offspring. “The home we have with us - inevitably and inexorably with us. Even though it is proven unsuccessful, we shall always have it. The behaviorist has to accept the home and make the best of it. His task is to try to get the mother to take a new view of what constitutes the care of an infant - of her responsibility for her experiment in child bearing” (ibid: 6-7). Women lacked expertise in mothering. So the solution was for mothers to “rigorously follow the dicta of the experts of the day, a regimen that recommended a highly scheduled, almost military approach to raising children” (Margolis 2000: 33).

Neither Watson nor the other experts of his day ever considered sending mothers to work outside the home as a solution to the crippling effects of too much “mother love.” Sending mothers to the workplace full-time would certainly help to cut back on their excessive touching of their children. In fact, some experts felt that women, and even married women, could pursue careers as long as they had no children. And it was all right for married women with children to have hobbies, as long as they were not too serious and did not take up too much time. Yet ultimately, as Margolis writes, “The general consensus was that mothers already had a profession.” And in fact, during the 1920s, there was a very low rate of employment among married women. “In 1920, only 7 percent of married women had jobs, and by 1930 that figure had increased to just under 12 percent” (ibid: 37-38). As in other prescriptive writings, child-rearing experts such as Watson addressed middle class women. These women were more likely to be able to afford to follow the experts’ advice and stay home with their children. Most married women who worked outside the home did so out of economic need. These working class

and poor women were employed primarily in low-paying, menial positions. It was not until the 1960s feminist movement that the assumption that women should and did stay home to rear their children began to be challenged. In the meanwhile, both behaviorist and permissive child-rearing experts still had a lot to say to their presumed parenting audience, women.

c. Benjamin Spock

The other twentieth century ideological child-rearing thread, the so-called permissivists or naturalists, believed children arrive ready to take part in human culture. In this the naturalists offered a - albeit limited - challenge to scientific hegemony. Instead of science, or the pre-modern god, the naturalists believed in “nature.” The naturalists argued that children have “natural” inclinations that will direct them to behave well in the world. If loved and cared for adequately, human beings are naturally good. Parents - mothers - must trust in their children to know what they need, when and how. And to the extent that children cannot or do not express themselves clearly, mothers must listen to their *own* instincts. Women are “natural” parents and by trusting their “instincts,” their intuition, they will know how to parent well. About the behaviorist and naturalist (or permissive) schools of thought, Ehrenreich and English write,

The behaviorists had seen the child as a piece of raw material to be hammered into shape. Its natural impulses - to eat when and what it liked, to play, etc. - had to be suppressed as firmly as bed-wetting and thumb-sucking. On the contrary, the permissivist proclaimed that the child’s spontaneous impulses were good and sensible and that the child, instead of being a *tabula rasa*, actually *knew*, in some sense, what was right for itself. (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 214)

The still popular child-rearing naturalist specialist, Benjamin Spock, was raised on behaviorist child-rearing advice, such as Watson's discussed above. Indeed, when he entered medical school to become a pediatrician in the 1920s, he and other students were trained in the thinking of scientists like Holt and Watson. The touching of children at this time was almost taboo. In his training, Spock faithfully followed the behaviorist dictates. Yet simultaneously, he began to question the underlying premises of these scientific methods of child rearing. He slowly realized that many of the scientific beliefs were based on unproven assumptions. For example, "the practice of tying up a baby's wrists to stop thumb-sucking remained unquestioned by doctors and nurses, mainly because experts like Holt and Watson assured them that thumb-sucking was wrong. "Nobody had proved it was a bad habit, it was just a general assumption,"" Spock told his biographer Thomas Maier (Spock quoted in Maier 1998: 91).

Along with the unproven assumptions that Spock questioned, he also began to realize that doctoring children involved more than caring for mere physical needs. As he started to explore ways of getting psychological training in pediatrics, he discovered that in the early 1930s it did not exist. Consequently, Ben Spock became the first pediatrician to have dual training in pediatrics and psychiatry. At that time, much like today, psychoanalysis existed at the fringes of United States medicine. Spock, however, found himself increasingly interested in Sigmund Freud's methods. And, eventually, Spock went on to be trained in psychoanalysis, attending seminars and entering into his own psychoanalysis. By the time Spock wrote his famous book, first published in 1946, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, he was a thorough believer in the thinking of Sigmund Freud. In fact, some people argue that it was Spock's book that first

successfully popularized Freud for the American public. Maier writes, “In many ways, the book’s embrace of Freudian theory was extraordinarily radical, eventually pushing American family life in a whole new direction, but his manual remained so neighborly and reasonable that readers never felt threatened” (ibid: 153).

Freud aside, Spock himself is one of, if not the most famous child-rearing expert to date. His book is probably the best-known child-rearing text ever. Indeed, inside the front cover of the seventh and final edition of his book, that came out the same year he died in 1998, is the impressive claim that “*Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care* has been translated into thirty-nine languages and has sold fifty million copies worldwide since its first publication in 1946” (Spock 1998). Yet Spock’s popularity and fame took him beyond the private realm of child-rearing expertise. For much of his life he was deeply involved in the public world of political activism and politics, and he knew innumerable famous figures of his day including such legendary Americans as John F. and Jacqueline Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Martin Luther King, Junior. Indeed among his various honors, in 1990, *Life* magazine named Spock one of the hundred most important people of the century (Maier 1998).

Spock was not only a famous and popular figure. Like Watson before him, Spock was an established scientific researcher of child development and behavior. His career included working at the most prestigious scientific institutions of his time. In fact, shortly after his book came out in 1946, Spock became the first consultant in child psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic, which was considered one of the most esteemed medical establishments in the United States (Maier 1998: 153). Additionally, he taught at its school of medicine, which was affiliated with the University of Minnesota. And in 1949,

Spock became codirectors of the institute. For his work there, among other places, Spock would eventually be “recognized by the medical community for pioneering the subspecialty of “behavioral pediatrics”” (ibid: 171).

In contrast to child-rearing specialists like Holt and Watson, Spock’s book made a sharp turn on the issue of touch. Spock focused on the issue and importance of “nurturance.” And while he never concentrated on “touch” in particular, he did not like Watson or Holt refer to touching as dangerous and something to be avoided. In fact, Spock did go as far as to argue that each “baby needs to be smiled at, talked to, played with, *fondled* - gently and lovingly - just as much as he needs vitamins and calories, and the baby who doesn’t get any loving will grow up cold and unresponsive [my italics]” (Spock 1945: 19-20). In a section entitled “Kissing and germs,” Spock wrote, “Don’t be afraid to kiss your baby when you feel like it.” Tipping his hat to the decades of middle class fear of germs, Spock also claimed, “It’s better not to kiss him on the mouth or blow in his face” (ibid: 103-104).

Furthermore, a central component of his book is his pioneering discussion of breastfeeding, where Spock indirectly addressed touch as a positive need of children. In the 1940s and 1950s, breastfeeding was considered old-fashioned and vulgar, by the mainstream white middle class culture. Looking back from the first decade of the twenty first century, Spock is commonly credited with helping to start the contemporary middle class trend back to breastfeeding.

In line with the naturalist school of which he is a founding member, Spock “gave prominence to the “natural” benefits of breast-feeding.” (Maier 1998: 141). Spock wrote, “Breast feeding is natural. On general principle, it’s safer to do things the natural way

unless you are absolutely sure you have a better way” (Spock 1945: 33). Along with its “naturalness,” in *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1945), Spock gave several other reasons for breastfeeding.

Breast feeding has definite advantages that we know of, and it may have others that we aren't smart enough to see. It helps the mother physically. When the baby nurses, the muscle wall of the uterus contracts vigorously. This hastens its return to normal size and position. From the psychological point of view, it makes the mother feel close to her baby; she knows that she's giving him something real, something that no one else can give him. This feeling is good for her and for her relationship to the baby. Breast feeding probably gives the baby a feeling of closeness and security, too. (Ibid.)

Spock began a resurgence in the white middle class back to breastfeeding (Margolis 2000; Blum 1999; Maier 1998). However, unlike the more strident naturalists to follow, Spock did not see breastfeeding as necessarily more intimate than bottlefeeding. Later naturalists argued that breastfeeding - in other words, mouth to breast contact - somehow brought a mother closer to her baby than did holding a baby in a similar manner, yet feeding the child with a bottle. In contrast, in his 1945 child-rearing manual, Spock wrote,

Suppose you want to breast-feed your baby, but don't succeed. Will the baby suffer, physically or emotionally? No, you can't put it that strongly. If you make the formula carefully, and if you keep closely in touch with the doctor when the formula doesn't agree, the chances are great that the baby will prosper from a bodily point of view. And if, when you give him his bottle, you cuddle him in your arms, he will be nourished spiritually, much as if he were at the breast. Mothers who have read what psychologists and psychiatrists say about the importance of breast feeding sometimes get the idea that it has been shown that bottle-fed babies turn out to be less happy than breast-fed babies. Nobody has proved that. (Ibid: 34)

It is interesting to note that in this quote, Spock reiterated the cultural belief in the mind-body split. Here Spock indicated that the baby will “prosper from a bodily point of view” through formula and “spiritually” through being held. However, unlike the naturalists to come, Spock saw touching - being cuddled in the mother’s arms - as promoting only of the baby’s “spirit.” Later naturalists who also took for granted the mind-body split, such as William Sears and La Leche League International (to be discussed in chapters three and four), argue that touching aids in both components of the dualism, the child’s mind and body.

Spock was fundamentally pro-touch. In this, he made a radical break from the earlier child-rearing behaviorist experts who were explicitly anti-touching. Indeed, this pro- versus anti-touch split is at the core of the differences between behaviorists and naturalists. And, while Watson founded behaviorism, Spock is known as the father of the “permissive” or naturalist school of child rearing. Interestingly, a political analogy also exists here. While Watson and behaviorism tended to be proponents of the political right and big business, Spock challenged right-wing values, grounding himself firmly on the left. Actually, due to the popular understanding of Spock as “permissive,” many people blamed his child-rearing methods for starting the youth movements of the sixties and seventies. The thinking here was that children were spoiled by “permissive” child rearing, and so they became rebellious. “Critics called the youthful rebels the “Spock-marked generation,” as if they had been inflicted in infancy with a disfiguring disease” (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 261-262). To fuel conservative suspicions about Spock, he was very involved in the anti-war movement, and was a much loved figure for the sixties youth activists. Indeed, before Martin Luther King, Junior was assassinated, King

and Spock were considered for candidacy for a presidential election with Spock running for vice-president.

Even today, people commonly maintain this belief that permissive - pro-touch - child rearing caused the radical movements of the sixties and seventies. Here *Time* magazine quotes Wade Horn, a clinical child psychologist and President Bush's assistant secretary for family support at the Department of Healthy and Human Services, who claims that there are "good reasons" why the baby boomers are called the "Me generation." He states, "They spent the 1950s being spoiled [by Spock-inspired child rearing], spent the 1960s having a decade-long temper tantrum because the world was not precisely as they wanted it to be, spent the 1970s having the best sex and drugs they could find, the 1980s acquiring things and the 1990s trying to have the most perfect children. And not because they felt an obligation to the next generation to rear them to be healthy, well-adjusted adults, but because they wanted to have bragging rights." (Nancy Gibbs, *Time*, August 6, 2001) Here permissive (what I call "naturalist") child rearing produced "spoiled" children, children who challenge the system.

In spite of the Wade Horns of the world, Ben Spock and permissive (or naturalist) child rearing quickly became very popular. And while there has been a resurgence of behaviorist child rearing, naturalist theories of child rearing continue to be extremely common. With this new naturalist style, children were no longer to have their "natural" inclinations crushed, but were to be given free rein. Children were not to wait for their feedings until the proper time on the schedule. Mothers were told to feed their babies on demand and to let them sleep when the babies seemed tired. Moreover, women were not only to follow the "natural" inclinations of their children, Spock said women should

listen to their own “instincts.” Here, in a sense, he challenged the misogyny of the earlier experts such as Watson. He advised women to trust themselves. However, Spock’s pro-women turn in popular child-rearing advice was limited. As the second wave feminists were to eventually point out, Spock like Holt and Watson before him was still sexist.

For one, Spock admonished women to heed their “instincts” only insofar as they *also* read up on and followed the advice of the experts. Spock told mothers to “take the anxiety out of child care by following their own instincts...But maternal instincts could only go so far, and herein lay a mixed message in Spock’s advice. He gave mothers quite limited autonomy and, in fact, advised them to consult often with their pediatricians about even the most minor problems of child care” (Margolis 2000: 44). For example, before giving any instructions on feeding, Spock indicated that it is always best to consult a doctor before taking any steps. His instructions were to be followed only “if it’s impossible to consult a doctor” (Spock 1946: 61). It was the doctor who should be making not only the concrete decisions such as what kind of formula to use, but also the intimate decisions - including those involving the mother’s body - such as “how much nursing the mother’s nipples can stand” (ibid: 41). Spock was fairly up front about his faith in the scientific expert. Early in his book, in a section entitled “Trust Yourself,” Spock wrote, “Don’t be afraid to trust your own common sense. Bringing up your child won’t be a complicated job if you take it easy, trust your own instincts, *and follow the directions that your doctor gives you* [my italics]” (ibid: 3).

Further, Spock’s instructions were often so detailed and simplistic, they made a mockery out of his maxim that mothers should follow their own common sense. For example, in explaining to mothers how to give their baby a bath, Spock writes,

Test the temperature with your elbow or wrist. It should feel comfortably warm. You can use any kind of mild soap. Use only a small amount of water at first, until you get the knack of holding the baby securely... Wash his face first, with a soft washcloth, without soap. The scalp needs to be soaped only once or twice a week, if the baby doesn't spit up too much. Then soap and rinse the rest of the body. If you feel nervous at first about dropping him in the water, you can do all the first part of the washing while he is in your lap or on a table. If so, do it quickly, so that he won't get cold. Then rinse him off in the tub, holding him securely with both hands. Use a soft bath towel for drying him..." (Ibid: 90-91)

Of course, Spock himself was a pediatrician, and thus a scientific expert. As a pediatrician, he believed himself to be an authority to be trusted. His advice to trust yourself could be trusted because an expert told you to do so. And the rest of Spock's advice was so simplistic that it left no room for mothers to make their own decisions. Essentially, Spock told mothers to follow the directions of their doctor. Then if the doctor was not available, follow the directions of Spock's book. And only then, if there were further questions and a doctor could still not be reached, trust yourself.

Not only were women to trust the experts before all else; they were to trust themselves in a way that essentialized women, attaching what it meant to be women to biological understandings of femaleness. Much like the attachment parenting popular health movement that was to start in the 1950s, Spock believed in women's "motherly instincts." For Spock, women were "natural" mothers, and thus parents were naturally women. Spock's book was almost entirely addressed to women, and to middle class women at that. And as the "natural" parent, Spock believed proper parenting/mothering entailed a full-time commitment from women, which was often financially difficult for working class and poor women to do. Middle class women – good mothers - were to

make their children the center of their lives. The ideal Spockean mother was fulfilled by doing all the small and, often, dull tasks of childcare. Her satisfaction came “naturally” from her maternal instinct. She had few interests outside her motherly realm, the home.

Spock believed that decent mothers would not seriously consider working away from their babies. He did acknowledge that mothering could be difficult. However, he advised mothers who got depressed to “go to a movie or to the beauty parlor, or to get yourself a new hat or dress” (ibid: 17). Employment was not a solution to maternal melancholy. Here Spock wrote,

What about the mothers who don't absolutely have to work but would prefer to, either to supplement the family income, or because they think they will be more satisfied themselves and therefore get along better at home?...The important thing for a mother to realize is that the younger the child the more necessary it is for him to have a steady, loving person taking care of him. In most cases, the mother is the best one to give him this feeling of “belonging,” safely and surely. She doesn't quit on the job, she doesn't turn against him, she isn't indifferent to him, she takes care of him always in the same familiar house. If a mother realizes clearly how vital this kind of care is to a small child, it may make it easier for her to decide that the extra money she might earn, or the satisfaction she might receive from an outside job, is not so important after all. (Ibid: 484)

Understandably, this thinking led second wave feminists to critique Spock for his sexism, and feminists and others to critique him for his middle class bias.

Among the critics, Nancy Pottishman Weiss argued that Spock's child-rearing manual embodied a “world view.” She claimed that this “world...is free of dissonance or conflict, or the recognition of poverty or cultural difference. Such a world has invented a motherhood that excludes the experiences of many mothers” (Weiss 1977). Along with denying the cultural differences and the poverty in lots of women's lives, feminists

argued that in his book Spock covered up many middle class women's misery with the general assumption of their happiness. Further, as did and do most child-rearing experts, Spock used the pronoun "he" to refer to the child and "she" to the parent. However, to his credit, unlike other child-rearing experts Spock listened to his critics, took them seriously and attempted to challenge his own thinking. Indeed, in a November 1971 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, Spock wrote an apologetic essay entitled "Male Chauvinist Spock Recants - Well, Almost." Here and in other articles, interviews, and speeches, Spock apologized for the "underlying sexism" in his work and he "talked about his change of heart on traditional matters of sex and child rearing" (Maier 1998: 359).

d. Alfred C. Kinsey

Soon after Spock wrote his ground breaking book on child rearing, other developments occurred that reflected new American ideologies of adult-child touch. In particular, after Holt, Watson and Spock, Alfred Kinsey takes the question of incest and child sexual abuse to another level. In the late 1940s, Alfred Charles Kinsey published his famous book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). And five years later, nearly four decades after he began his research, he came out with *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). Kinsey was not a child-rearing expert. He was a human sexuality scientist. Although he has rarely been taken seriously as an intellectual, nonetheless, Paul Robinson argues that Kinsey's two books on human sexuality "remain the most reliable sources of information about American sexual behavior" (Robinson 1989: 43).

In respect to my research concerning diverse, mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch in twentieth century America, Kinsey's work is indicative. Before Kinsey - and before other thinkers such as Spock and Harlow in the late 1940s and 1950s - touching children was considered dangerous to the health and development of the child. Social scientists, and in particular medical experts like Holt and Watson, were the authorities on adult-child touch. They were the prominent voices arguing for the scientific, medicalized, anti-mother's "intuition" - behaviorist - method of child rearing. Within this thinking, touching children was very nearly taboo. Adults worked to control and contain children's bodies - as scientific experts worked to control women's traditional knowledge and "instincts." Adults touched children to regulate them. This controlling adult touch was the only acceptable form of touching children.

Kinsey used the scientific method and discourse to offer an entirely different way of thinking. His work presented a challenge to both past and future ideologies of adult-child touch. Even if Kinsey's work did not actually *influence* people's thinking about adult-child touch, I argue that, at the very least, Kinsey's ideas were an important indicator of the different ways that experts were thinking about the touching of children. As with the work of Holt and Watson, Kinsey's thinking was based on, and legitimated by, scientific research. However, in sharp contradiction to Holt and Watson, Kinsey argued that bodies - including the bodies of children - were *meant* to be touched. As with Spock and the soon-to-arrive attachment parenting movement, Kinsey believed in the "natural." In a sense, Kinsey's work advocated letting the body go, uncontrolled, to fill its "natural" desires. For Kinsey, bodies and their sexuality were to be celebrated and enjoyed. Not only was controlling them *not* necessary, it was impossible. Furthermore,

Kinsey believed in a continuum of normal behaviors. Some behaviors may happen more or less often than others, but no behavior is “abnormal” in the sense of morally bad.

Allowing for no morally wrong behavior, Kinsey’s thinking was particularly interesting, and potentially problematic, when considering adult-child sexual touch.

It is very interesting that for all of the controversy surrounding Kinsey’s work at the time of its publication (1948), almost nothing was said about his chapter “Early Sexual Growth and Activity.” This chapter gives detailed descriptions of child orgasms - in the context of an adult being sexual with a child - that sound very much like contemporary definitions of child sexual abuse. However, nobody raised concerns with this component of the book. I argue that this lack of response a very questionable part of Kinsey’s work was due to the then taken-for-granted way of thinking about children and children’s bodies. Children had long been understood as quite literally belonging to adults. Their bodies were adult property. This way of thinking about children as adult territory was so unquestioned that no one bothered - or rather realized to bother - to focus on this chapter. Yet there may also have been an element of readers actually not seeing what they were reading because taboo nature of adult-child sexual contact. Whatever the reason, it is fascinating that no one to date, even the radical feminists in the 1960s and 1970s who criticized Kinsey’s *thinking* on adult-child sexual contact, has ever discussed or taken issue with this aspect of Kinsey’s work and data.

Again, this lack of scrutiny over Kinsey’s data may point to something important regarding the way people thought about adult-child touch at that time. Up until, and at the time Kinsey’s books came out, children were considered the property of adults; their bodies were under adult control. Kinsey’s work came out just as the tide was beginning

to turn from a deeply anti-touch ideological ethos to one more accepting and even enthusiastic about the touching of children. As discussed earlier, prior to the 1950s, touching children was not in vogue. However, controlling children was the other side of the anti-touch ethos. Adults touched children to control them and their bodily functions. This kind of adult-child touch, touch meant to control children, was acceptable. For example, adults touched young children so as to tie their wrists to the sides of their crib to prevent them from masturbating or sucking their thumbs. And, adults touched new infants to insert objects in their rectum so as to induce a bowel movement at a desired time. Possibly Kinsey's data reflected this pro-control ethos. While probably few people *consciously* supported adult-child sex, nonetheless exercising detailed control over children and their bodies was acceptable. If this control, and often what might now be called violation, involved adult-child sexual touch that in some way benefited the adult than so be it. In other words, people did not criticize Kinsey's data source because people did not notice it as anything unusual. This was not because there was widespread acceptance of adult-child sexual contact. Rather, there was widespread acceptance of adult ownership and control over children's bodies. People took adult control over children for granted, so much so that they did not pay attention to the *sexual way* adults were controlling children in Kinsey's data.

Kinsey researched American sexuality in the 1930s and 1940s. His study explored sex just after what some call "the major cultural revolution of the twentieth century" (Skolnick 1991: 41). During the 1920s, mainstream United States culture witnessed a "momentous break with Victorian sexual norms and gender roles" (ibid).

Divorce rates offered one sure sign of massive social change. They rose rapidly. In fact, the total went from “7,000 in 1860 to 56, 000 in 1900, to 100,000 in 1914” (ibid). Yet along with increasing divorce rates, there were many other indicators of substantial transformation. In 1920, women had finally won the right to vote. The middle class was growing rapidly. A vast array of new and wonderful inventions including the radio, the automobile, the bicycle, electricity, X rays, anesthesia, the telegraph, the telephone and the movies were dislocating the previous familiar tools of everyday life. Everywhere it seemed that the old was giving way to the new. About the 1920s, Skolnick writes,

The upheaval had been preceded by transformation in the conditions of everyday life. White-collar work expanded with the ascendancy of the large corporation and opened new opportunities for women. Improvements in health care and living conditions reduced mortality rates and extended the life span by over six years between 1900 and 1920: from forty-eight to fifty-five for women, and from forty-six to fifty-four for men. Also, by the early 1900s there had already been a shift from a leisure class to mass leisure. Between the 1860s and the 1920s the work week shrank from six to five days, and the working day from twelve to eight hours. (Ibid: 41-42)

On the wake of decades of cultural, social and economic change, the 1920s were a time of challenge to older ways of understanding human sexuality. This was especially true for women. Not only were women divorcing and being divorced from their marriages. Not only were they, newly, full voting citizens. Women were beginning to explore their sexuality and understand themselves as sexual beings. The famous “flapper” of the 1920s was the symbol of this new sexual woman.

However, women were not the only ones giving new attention to sex. Men were too. And particularly *young* men and women were increasingly obsessed with their emerging sexuality. This new way of understanding sex involved believing it to be

essential to personal happiness. And with this new meaning, thinking about sexuality began to be separated from reproduction. Kinsey's research happened at the end of this sexual revolution. Not only his data, but his very questions exhibit colossal cultural transformation.

Kinsey's thinking on the touching of children presented an important variation from the earlier, extremely popular thought of Holt and Watson. However, it also differed sharply from other well-known thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, *and* from contemporary popular thought generally. A point on which Kinsey diverged markedly from both Freud and popular thought was the issue of adult-child sexual interaction, or what would later be called "child sexual abuse" by the 1960s feminist movement. In his study, Kinsey found that one in four women reported childhood sexual contact with an adult. Unlike Freud, who came to believe that the majority of such claims were actually women's repressed childhood sexual desire for their fathers, Kinsey believed that these sexual interactions literally happened. Yet, he minimized the importance of the interaction. Kinsey believed, as did Freud, that children like all humans are sexual, embodied beings. And in sharp contrast to mainstream thought at the time, Kinsey felt strongly that there is nothing morally or physiologically wrong with children's sexuality. Kinsey argued that children are sexual from a very earlier age and that this is completely normal and appropriate. Yet unlike Freud, Kinsey claimed that if no physical harm is done to the child, adult sexual interaction with children is not harmful. He wrote, "It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed at having its genitalia touched, or disturbed at seeing the genitalia of other persons, or disturbed at even more specific sexual contacts" (Kinsey 1953: 121).

Indeed, in terms of adult-child touch, Kinsey believed that sexual attraction not only brought adults together, Kinsey claimed it was responsible for the connection between women and their children. “Labeling the mammalian breast “a sex organ,” he described how “the nerves in that breast are continuous with the nerves of the reproductive organs, and stimulation of that breast by the feeding babe brings a sexual response which is the basis of the thing that the poet calls ‘mother love’” (quoted in Jones 1997: 326).

Indeed, as will be discussed in the next chapter, later research seemed to confirm the connections Kinsey made here between women’s breasts and their sexual responses. Of course, it is more questionable whether, as Kinsey argued, that sexual response accounts for women’s love of and connection to their children. Nonetheless, it is fascinating that, essentially, Kinsey argued a sexual - incestuous - connection is responsible for parental love. Further, from the other end of the anti- to pro-touch continuum, interestingly Kinsey makes an argument not dissimilar from that made by Watson. Watson *also* argued that touching brings about a “love response.” However, Watson focused on children loving their mothers because they, children, are touched by them; in reverse, Kinsey focused on mothers loving their children because they, mothers, are touched by their children in the mouth to breast contact of breastfeeding. And of course, while for Watson this was a dangerous and worrisome event; for Kinsey, it was a right, good or natural event.

Given that Kinsey argued that mothers love their children because they are touched by them; in return, Kinsey felt that parents were responsible for teaching their children to enjoy sex and to feel good about their bodies. He believed that children



should be taught that it was as appropriate to touch the genitalia as any other part of the body. With his own children, Kinsey taught by example. In order to impart a positive outlook about the human body and sexuality, he both exercised and advocated nudity in his household. His daughter, Joan, recalled many mornings as a child when she would watch her father as he shaved in the bathroom. “She would sit on the toilet seat, and he would stand naked before the mirror, making up “silly sing-song rhymes” to entertain her while he shaved” (ibid: 261). The family often bathed together or hung around together naked on vacations and at home.

Of special interest here is the fact that Kinsey’s beliefs about adult-child sexual contact were not criticized for several decades despite the extraordinary attention his work received. Even then, the critique was minimal. Essentially, Kinsey’s thinking on adult-child sex received almost no response. This was true even though a good part of Kinsey’s research was clearly based on actual sexual contact between adults and children. In particular for his research on child sexuality, Kinsey relied heavily on one enterprising male pedophile.

Kinsey had a variety of contact people who connected him with many diversely sexually oriented and active individuals including the pedophile on whom much of Kinsey’s work is based. One of these contact people was Robert Latou Dickinson, “a retired New York gynecologist and pioneering sex researcher...At the same time that Margaret Sanger was fighting to make contraception both available and acceptable to the American public, Dickinson led the crusade to persuade physicians to make birth control available to their patients” (ibid: 503). Dickinson worked hard to advance Kinsey’s research. During his extensive career as a sex researcher, Dickinson had come to know

many noteworthy eccentrics with a diverse array of sexual histories. These were prizes he passed onto Kinsey. For simple perversity, the nugget of Dickinson's collection was a pedophile whom Kinsey's biographer, James H. Jones, refers to as "Mr. X." Mr. X's sexual behavior, Jones claims, was a family legacy. The product of a family full of cross-generational incest, "he had sex with his grandmother when he was still a young child, as well as with his father."

In the years that followed, the boy had sexual relations with *seventeen of the thirty-three relatives with whom he had contact*. And this was just the beginning. After he reached adulthood, Mr. X was obsessed with sex, a walking id with polymorphous erotic tastes. By the time Dickinson brought him to Kinsey's attention, wrote Pomeroy, "This man had had homosexual relations with 600 preadolescent males, heterosexual relations with 200 preadolescent females, intercourse with countless adults of both sexes, with animals of many species, and besides had employed elaborate techniques of masturbation." (Ibid: 507)

Mr. X also had collected a sizable number of erotic photographs. And as a pop scientist in his own right, he had made extensive notes on all his sexual activities, keeping track of not only his behavior and reactions but those of his partners/victims. These notes included a rich and full record of his life as voyeur.

Kinsey was very enthusiastic about his relationship with Mr. X. In part, Kinsey's enthusiasm was a way to gain Mr. X's assistance with Kinsey's research. Yet he was also intrigued by and admiring of Mr. X's elaborate sexual history. In fact, at one point in March 1945, Kinsey even tried to hire Mr. X. He offered to pay Mr. X's salary if Mr. X would take a leave from his job with the government to organize his sexual records and other "materials." While Mr. X declined this offer, over time Kinsey did obtain vast amounts of data from Mr. X. And Kinsey even roped Mr. X into reading and criticizing

those parts of his book that dealt with preadolescent development and behavior. While he could never acknowledge Mr. X's contribution publicly because of the illegal nature of his behavior, he wrote Mr. X that he wished he could. As Jones claims, "Kinsey's debt to Mr. X was indeed great. Chapter 5 of the finished book on males, "Early Sexual Growth and Activity," offered a finely graded discussion of preadolescent male sexuality, and much of this chapter was based on materials that Mr. X had provided" (ibid: 511). Kinsey asked for and received information about the "average age at which orgasm occurred in preadolescent boys, their capacity for multiple orgasms, and the earliest age at which orgasms have been observed in boys" (ibid: 510). Jones argues that science "would have been better served had Kinsey not allowed his lust for data to obscure his judgment. Viewed from any angle, his relationship with Mr. X was a cautionary tale. Whatever the putative value to science of Mr. X's experiences, the fact remains that he was a predatory pedophile. Over the course of his long career as a child molester, he masturbated infants, penetrated children, and performed a variety of other sexual acts on preadolescent boys and girls alike" (ibid: 510).

In his book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), Kinsey reported Mr. X's "data" in a forthright fashion. He indicated that the boys being discussed ranged in age from two-month-old infants to fifteen-year-old adolescents. He claimed that the data came from adults being questioned about their own childhood and from "older subjects who have had sexual contacts with younger boys" (Kinsey, et al. 1948: 160). "Further into the chapter, the text and charts suggested that infants less than a year old had been stimulated...and observed for as long as an hour at a stretch; four-year-olds for as many as twenty-four hours" (Jones 1997: 511).

In chapter five of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, “Early Sexual Growth and Activity,” Kinsey argues that there is great sexual variety among pre-adolescent boys, as with adult males. And Kinsey backs this up by discussing his data, data that he gets largely from Mr. X (Jones 1997). Kinsey never outright acknowledges Mr. X because he knows that Mr. X’s behavior is illegal. Yet, he hints about Mr. X, as he has to explain where this unusual data came from. For example, Kinsey writes,

One of our subjects, who has had contacts with certain males over long periods of years (as many as sixteen years in some cases), from their early pre-adolescence into their late teens and twenties, states that the particular type of orgasm experienced by a younger boy remains as his particular type into adult years. The variation in pattern of orgasmic response thus seems to depend, at least to some degree (and in the limited number of cases so far studied), on inherent differences in the biologic constitution of different individuals.

Our several thousand histories have included considerable detail on the nature of orgasm; and these data, together with the records supplied by some older subjects who have had sexual contacts with younger boys, provide material for describing the different sorts of reactions which may occur. In the pre-adolescent, orgasm is, of course, without ejaculation of semen. In the descriptions which follow, the data supplied by adult observers for 196 pre-adolescent boys are the sources of the percentage figures indicating the frequency of each type of orgasm among such young males. (Kinsey, et al. 1948: 160)

Kinsey describes the six types of reactions Mr. X observed boys to have when having an orgasm. In today’s mainstream ethos of dread and fascination with what is termed “child sexual abuse,” it is hard to imagine these six types not garnering extensive attention, particularly given their suspiciously violent nature. For example, type three entails extreme tension with violent convulsions. Kinsey describes this type of reaction by male children as including a “gradual, and sometimes prolonged, build-up to orgasm,

which involves still more violent convulsions of the whole body; heavy breathing, groaning, sobbing, or more violent cries, sometimes with an abundance of tears (especially among younger children), the orgasm or ejaculation often extended, in some individuals involving several minutes (in one case up to five minutes) of recurrent spasm.” About his reaction type five, Kinsey writes that it culminates “in extreme trembling, collapse, loss of color, and sometimes fainting of subject.” And in Kinsey’s reaction type six, the child is “[p]ained or frightened at approach of orgasm.” Here Kinsey continues, “The genitalia of many adult males become hypersensitive immediately at and after orgasm, and some males suffer excruciating pain and may scream if movement is continued or the penis even touched. The males in the present group become similarly hypersensitive before the arrival of actual orgasm, will fight away from the partner and may make violent attempts to avoid climax, although they derive definite pleasure from the situation. About 8 per cent of the younger boys are involved here, but it is a smaller percentage of older boys and adults which continues these reactions throughout life” (ibid: 161).

Later Kinsey refers to his thinking on adult-child sexual interaction. He writes, “Older persons are the teachers of younger people in all matters, including the sexual. The record includes some cases of pre-adolescent boys involved in sexual contacts with adult females, and still more cases of pre-adolescent boys involved with adult males. Data on this point were not systematically gathered from all histories, and consequently the frequency of contacts with adults cannot be calculated with precision” (ibid: 167). At one point in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey goes so far as to openly discuss

adult sexual contact with children. And again, much of this data almost certainly comes from Mr. X. Kinsey writes,

Better data on pre-adolescent climax come from the histories of adult males who have had sexual contacts with younger boys and who, with their adult backgrounds, are able to recognize and interpret the boys' experiences...9 of our adult male subjects have observed such orgasm. Some of these adults are technically trained persons who have kept diaries or other records which have been put at our disposal; and from them we have secured information on 317 pre-adolescents who were either observed in self masturbation, or who were observed in contacts with other boys or older adults...Orgasm has been observed in boys of every age from 5 months to adolescence (Table 31). Orgasm is in our records for a female babe of 4 months. There are observations of 16 males up to 11 months of age, with such typical orgasm reached in 7 cases. In 5 cases of young pre-adolescents, observations were continued over periods of months or years, until the individuals were old enough to make it certain that true orgasm was involved..." (Ibid: 176-177)

Kinsey almost brags of his vast data, saying that while other studies offer little to nothing in terms of data on the occurrence of the first ejaculation in boys, he has a quite a record. He writes, "This material is now augmented by a considerable record based on the memory of persons who have contributed to the present study, and on an important body of data from certain of our subjects who have observed first ejaculation in a list of several hundred boys" (ibid: 185). This "subject" is, without doubt, Mr. X.

Feminist psychiatrist and scholar, Judith Lewis Herman, points to Kinsey's conviction in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) that adult-child sexual contact may not be as harmful as is typically thought. In both his 1953 book on the human female, and his book on the human male, Kinsey devotes a chapter to "Pre-

Adolescent Sexual Development” (Kinsey, et al. 1953: 101). Yet interestingly, unlike the book on males, in the female book’s version of this chapter he has a subsection specifically focused on “Pre-Adolescent Contacts with Adult Males” (ibid: 116). Through the rest of this section in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey breaks down the data into the following smaller subsections: “Incidence and Frequency of Contacts with Adults” (ibid.); “Nature of Contacts with Adults” (ibid: 119); and “Significance of Adult Contacts” (ibid: 120). Under the “Significance of Adult Contacts,” Kinsey makes clear his thinking about adult-child sexual contact. This is the section cited by Judith Lewis Herman in her book, *Father-Daughter Incest* (1981). Kinsey wrote, “There is a growing concern in our culture over the sexual contacts that pre-adolescent children sometimes have with adults. Most persons feel that all such contacts are undesirable because of the immediate disturbance that may cause the child, and because of the conditioning and possibly traumatic effects which they may have on the child’s socio-sexual development and subsequent sexual adjustments in marriage” (ibid: 116). Kinsey noted that “there has hitherto been no opportunity to know what proportion of all children is ever involved.” And he continued, “We have data from 4441 of our female subjects which allow us to determine the incidence of pre-adolescent sexual contacts with adult males, and the frequency of such contacts...[W]e find that some 24 per cent (1075) of the females in the sample had been approached while they were pre-adolescent by adult males who appeared to be making sexual advances, or who had made sexual contacts with the child. Three-fourths of the females (76 per cent) had not recognized any such approach” (ibid: 117). And as quoted above about the significance of adult-child sexual contacts, Kinsey argued, “If a child were not culturally conditioned,

it is doubtful if it would be disturbed by sexual approaches of the sort which had usually been involved in these histories. It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed at having its genitalia touched, or disturbed at seeing the genitalia of other persons, or disturbed at even more specific sexual contacts” (ibid 121). Herman comments, “Kinsey himself, though he never denied the reality of child sexual abuse, did as much as he could to minimize its importance” (Herman 1981: 16).

According to Kinsey’s biographer, James H. Jones, Kinsey by the end of his life found nothing problematic about adult-child sexual contact. Kinsey publicly claimed “the state should penalize rape, exhibitionism, peeping, and adult-child sexual contacts. Privately...he was not so sure that adult-child contacts should be illegal” (Jones 1997: 751). Jones argues that while earlier in Kinsey’s life he did believe child molestation to be wrong, as he “neared life’s end...he was prepared to withhold moral judgment on incest and other adult-child sexual contacts” (ibid: 752). Jones quotes a friend of Kinsey’s, Wescott, as recalling, “He used to talk quite a lot about the feeling that the parent has a property right to children, as long as he’s brought them in to the world and supported them, he has the right to bring them up as he wants.” Here Jones notes, “Apparently, the child’s rights in this matter did not burden Kinsey’s thinking. It was as though he was blind to the power politics (both psychological and physical) within families” (ibid).

Kinsey passionately wished to free society from its Victorian restraints that he saw as deeply damaging. He was pro-touch and pro-sex of almost any and every kind. And by the end of his career, Kinsey came to believe that even adult-child sexuality was

not problematic, abusive or morally wrong. For Kinsey, the fact that some adults enjoy being sexual with children was fine. And he believed that in a sense adult-child sex benefited the children, who learned about sexuality through such contact. He felt that not only did the adults involved enjoy the sexual contact, but often the children did as well. In Kinsey's thinking, perhaps the only way in which a child could be harmed through such sexual contact with an adult is insofar as adult-child sexuality is socially taboo, society conditions children to be bothered or upset by it. Thus, it is the conditioning - the Victorianism - that is harmful, rather than the adult-child sexual contact.

From my research, and also according to Jones, no one noticed that Kinsey relied heavily on a pedophile for his data on child sexuality. Even the radical feminists do not seem to note the extent of Kinsey's use of Mr. X's data. This is true even though Kinsey's book was heavily criticized. Critiques include his poor use of statistics, his lack of "objectivity," his exposing the public to morally harmful information, and his use of "science" and scientific funding to examine "morally harmful" populations and behaviors. Given that his book has been heavily criticized in almost every possible way, it is fascinating that no one scrutinized his use of Mr. X's data.

Along with Kinsey's unnoted use of a pedophile for data, in terms of adult-child touch, Kinsey's research raised another relevant issue. Is adult-child touch dangerous as Watson indicated or something to celebrate as Kinsey implicitly argued? What about sexual touch between adults and children? Is it possible to fully separate nonsexual from sexual touch, and if not, is that problematic? In mainstream America, experts have argued strongly for their own positions in term of adult-child touch. Yet in spite of the

strong positions taken by the various experts, after Kinsey, it seemed less clear than anyone willingly acknowledged wherein lies the truth vis-à-vis touching children.

e. Harry F. Harlow

Around the same time Kinsey was publishing his extensive studies on human sexuality, another researcher, University of Wisconsin psychologist Harry F. Harlow, was exploring the issue of touch in child development. With Harlow, science took another big step in the pro-touching direction. That children may actually *need* to be touched by adults had become a concern of scientific inquiry. In terms of my focus on dominant ideological thought, Harlow's research may or may not have represented mainstream thinking. However, I argue that Harlow's research was and continues to be taken very seriously. In fact, it is hard to find an introduction to psychology college course that does not address Harlow's work. Given this, whether representative of mainstream ideology or not, Harlow's work – the very questions Harlow decided to ask – point to a variation in ideology about adult-child touch. Harlow explored the positive importance of adults touching children.

Harlow began his famous paper on touch, "The nature of love" (1958) with philosophical musings about love, and the lack of love, so to speak, in psychological research. Harlow's outlook was deeply modernist. For Harlow, love was an important piece of human life. He argued that it was the job of science, and in particular psychology, to study each and every element of human existence and to know all there was to be known about it. Harlow wrote,

Love is a wondrous state, deep, tender, and
rewarding. Because of its intimate and personal nature it is

regarded by some as an improper topic for experimental research. But, whatever our personal feelings may be, our assigned mission as psychologists is to analyze all facets of human and animal behavior into their component variables. So far as love or affection is concerned, psychologists have failed in this mission. The little we know about love does not transcend simple observation, and the little we write about it has been written better by poets and novelists. But of great concern is the fact that psychologists tend to give progressively less attention to a motive which pervades our entire lives. (Harlow 1958: 673)

The “children” Harlow worked with were baby rhesus monkeys. Like Kinsey, Harlow was not a child-rearing expert but a scientific researcher. Harlow wanted to better understand how love, attachment, and sexual activity develop, and he explored the behavior of monkeys in hope of explaining these phenomena among human beings. Importantly, Harlow, like John B. Watson, equated “love” with touching. In other words when Harlow looked for evidence of monkey “love,” he looked for touching. Given the immense importance of social interaction and love to normal development in primates, Harlow came up with a set of experiments to examine just what social interaction and love - touching - teaches monkeys.

Harlow’s study had several parts. In one component, he separated baby monkeys from their mothers while meeting all of the monkeys’ physical needs for food and shelter. Harlow studied the effect of isolation on the infants. The babies immediately showed signs of stress and disruption. They adapted by huddling, rocking, and stimulating themselves, apparently to make up for lost sensory input. After a long period of time living without touch, the babies became alienated and withdrawn from other animals, including their mothers.

In a second component of his study, Harlow gave motherless monkeys two kinds of mother-substitutes. One substitute the baby monkeys received was a wire mother that gave milk through a nipple, but had no place for the monkeys to cling and touch. In other words, this mother fed her baby, but did not touch and could not be touched by it. The other substitute was a terrycloth mother to which the baby monkeys could cling and touch but receive no milk. As one undergraduate psychology textbook puts it, "History was made when the babies spent far more time with the soft mother-substitute than the fast-food mother. Harlow had demonstrated that monkeys are born with a need for cuddling and closeness." (Luria, et al. 1987: 351) Harlow wrote, "It is apparent that the cloth mother is highly preferred over the wire one, and this differential selectivity is enhanced by age and experience. In this situation, the variable of nursing appears to be of absolutely no importance: the infant consistently seeks the soft mother surrogate regardless of nursing condition" (Harlow 1958: 678).

Given the monkeys deep need for physical contact at an early age, Harlow theorized about the development of adult sexual relationships in primates. He argued that monkeys go through three steps before they are ready for adult sexual "love." He claimed that the first two steps have to do with touching between mother and infant, and the third involves physical contact between the young monkey and its peers.

Once again, for Harlow, touch and love are the same thing. The first love happens with the first touch, adult-child touch. And perhaps more important, Harlow found that love/touch are not secondary needs but primary much like hunger and thirst.

We were not surprised to discover that contact comfort was an important basic affectional or love variable, but we did not expect it to overshadow so completely the variable of nursing; indeed, the disparity is

so great as to suggest that the primary function of nursing as an affectional variable is that of insuring frequent and intimate body contact of the infant with the mother. Certainly, man cannot live by milk alone. Love is an emotion that does not need to be bottle- or spoon-fed, and we may be sure that there is nothing to be gained by giving lip service to love. (Harlow 1958: 677)

In the middle of his paper, Harlow underlines his argument about adult-child touch with the use of bizarre little images and poems. He writes, “We believe that contact comfort has long served the animal kingdom as a motivating agent for affectional responses. Since at the present time we have no experimental data to substantiate this position, we supply information which must be accepted, if at all on the basis of face validity.” After this statement, Harlow offers six images including the following: a photograph seemingly of a mother hippopotamus rubbing her nose against her baby hippopotamus, a photograph of an adult and infant rhinoceros walking together, a sketch of bunches of snakes entangled with each other, a cartoon image of snakes, cats, dogs, birds, chickens, rabbits and mice each with one adult and many babies grouped together. Under five of the images there is a short poem and under the cartoon image merely the statement, “You see, all God’s chillun’s [sic] got skin” (ibid: 678). The poem under the hippopotamus image states:

The hippopotamus

This is the skin some babies feel
Replete with hippo love appeal.
Each contact, cuddle, push, and shove
Elicits tons of baby love. (Ibid: 677)

Harlow finishes his paper with theoretical musings. One, he tips his hat to John Bowlby who will be addressed further in the following chapters. Harlow’s

acknowledgement of Bowlby aligns him with the extremely pro-touch attachment parenting movement born with the founding of La Leche League International in the 1950s. Yet whereas La Leche League uses Bowlby's theories to argue that mothers must, physically, be with their children as much as possible, Harlow merely makes reference to Bowlby's studies of "affectional variables." Then Harlow makes a deeply feminist, and anti-breastfeeding argument, claiming that men as well as women can parent. He writes,

The socioeconomic demands of the present and the threatened socioeconomic demands of the future have led the American woman to displace, or threaten to displace, the American man in science and industry. If this process continues, the problem of proper child-rearing practices faces us with startling clarity. It is cheering in view of this trend to realize that the American male is physically endowed with all the really essential equipment to compete with the American female on equal terms in one essential activity: the rearing of infants. We now know that women in the working classes are not needed in the home because of their primary mammalian capabilities; and it is possible that in the foreseeable future neonatal nursing will not be regarded as a necessity, but as a luxury...a form of conspicuous consumption limited perhaps to the upper classes. (Ibid: 685)

In direct contradiction to La Leche League International and the soon-to-arrive attachment parenting movement, Harlow uses his pro-touch research analysis to argue that breastfeeding and mothers are less necessary rather than more. If nothing else, this profound contradiction between thinkers using similar evidence to assert very different arguments points to the ideological - rather than factual - nature of child-rearing advice. Neither Harlow, Watson, nor the Leche League have a corner on reality when it comes to rearing children. Each make arguments bound up with social ways of understanding

what it means to be human, to be worthwhile, to be successful, to be male and female, white and of color, poor and middle class.

To conclude, Harlow ends his famous paper with a play on words. “But whatever course history may take, it is comforting to know that we are now in contact with the nature of love” (ibid: 685).

Child sexual abuse and incest

Incest and adult-child sexuality are themes that ran throughout the work of most of these popular thinkers. The possibility of incest was an underlying anxiety, or at least an issue as in the case of Kinsey, expressed more or less explicitly in their writing. With Kinsey, incest and adult-child sexuality (or “abuse” depending on one’s perspective) were very visibly and explicitly discussed. Nonetheless, interestingly given the mainstream’s fascination with this issue, this aspect of Kinsey’s work has only been commented by radical feminists, and then only in a limited fashion. Yet again, incest and adult-child sexuality are themes in the other thinkers’ work as well. For Holt and Watson, this anxiety was expressed through the persistent desire to control and contain the child’s body, and the parent’s - the mother’s - physical interaction with the child. Historically in western philosophy, both children and women represent the body out of control and uncivilized. I argue that Holt and Watson were interested in bringing that out-of-control, “savage” body, back into the domain of the rational.

Watson pushed women to listen to the rational scientific expert. Her instincts - the voice of the body - would only lead her astray. If left to go about her business without the intervention of the expert, the mother would love her children “to death.”

And this love was not only out of control and dangerous, it was an incestuous love. This frightening “mother love,” was the displaced romantic love of a woman for her husband.

Watson writes,

We have children to enjoy them. We need to express our love in some way. The honeymoon period doesn't last forever with all husbands and wives, and we eke it out in a way we think is harmless by loving our children to death. Isn't that true of the mother today? No matter how much she may love her husband, he is away all day; her heart is full of love which she must express in some way. She expresses it by showering love and kisses upon her children...(Watson 1928: 69-70)

Watson focused on the mother's incestuous love for her children. In contrast, Spock, who helped to popularize Sigmund Freud, concentrated on the children's incestuous love for their parents in his famous child-rearing book. And in doing this, he played a role in the popularization of the Oedipus Complex. Spock believed the Oedipus Complex for boys, and the Elektra Complex for girls, had to occur for children to be gendered properly as they develop. Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex proposed that little boys automatically come to have an erotic attachment to their mothers. Yet they were shaken from this incestuous desire by the reality of their father and their subconscious fear of castration by their father should they act on their fantasy. Due to this terrifying fear, boys gave up their wish to sleep with their mother and instead attempted to become like their father. Girls go through a parallel Elektra Complex in which they learn that they cannot be like the father and so, instead of being him, must settle for his love. About Oedipus, Spock wrote,

We believe that a boy's attraction to his mother in the three-to-six-year old period is vital in establishing an idealistic romantic pattern for his future life as an adult...[But in] the ordinary family he is prevented from

feeling that he can have her all to himself by three interrelated factors: his awe of this father, his realization that his mother's romantic love belongs to her husband, her tactful refusal to let the boy become too intensely affectionate toward her in a physical sense. (quoted in Ehrenreich and English 1978: 248)

It was the job of parents to insure that the proper gender role development occur.

Ehrenreich and English argued that it was felt that, if necessary, parents should “turn on a little heterosexual charm to coax along the kids' sex role development” (ibid). As Spock explained to parents, “I'm thinking of the little things [the father can do] like approving of her dress, or hair-do, or the cookies she's made” (Spock 1945: 255).

Right or wrong, healthy or harmful, adults and children touch one another and at times this touching entails multiple, even sexual, meanings. One way to address this issue, is like Kinsey, to argue that no harm is done when adults and children are sexual together. Another is to attempt, like Watson, to stop touching altogether. Or one might recognize the sexual undertones of adult-child relations, and like Spock, name them part of normal development. Another alternative is that taken by the organization, La Leche League International (to be discussed in the next chapter) and that is to ignore or even actively deny the existence of sexuality in adult-child touch.

A note about the “back to nature” movement

While the mainstream medical establishment was the primary contender in the realm of legitimized child-rearing experts, there were other experts challenging mainstream medicine's reign throughout the century. In particular there have been numerous branches to a large popular health movement in the twentieth century United States. These alternative experts had alternative medical schools and medicines. And

among them, women were relatively prominent. Whereas the mainstream medical establishment has been consistently dominated by mainstream, white, middle to upper middle class men, in contrast, women often took leadership roles in the various popular health movements. Among the positions filled by women were their - ancient and common well into the twentieth century - roles as midwives, healers and childbirth attendants.

One element of the popular health movements was a kind of “back to nature” movement within which women played a central role. Here women celebrated their “traditional” knowledge, along with their body’s capacity to give birth and raise children without the control of institutionalized medicine. These women presented a challenge to the mainstream scientific and medical establishment, particularly around issues of childbirth and child rearing. Yet they are not to be confused with the soon-to-arrive, 1960s - also known as the second wave - feminist movement. Most of what I call, for lack of a better term, the “back to nature” women were not explicitly feminist. In fact in many ways, their goals directly clashed with the 1960s feminists’ goals. These women were largely interested in a celebration of “traditional” women’s knowledge and women’s domestic role as the bearers and rearers of children. Insofar as they took power back from the mainstream medical establishment, they also essentialized women and women’s roles in society. In other words, the “back to nature” movement tended to believe that there was something inherent in women that differentiated them and their socio-biological roles from men. To the “back to nature” movement, women were *naturally* meant to be live in the domestic realm and care for their children, man and home.

The “back to nature” movement shared theoretical roots with other modern United States movements including a conservative branch of feminism. These theories shared an outlook about gender sometimes called the gender difference orientation (see Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992). And while the gender difference orientation garners little attention from contemporary feminism, it continues to be accepted in traditional scholarly fields such as sociology. The primary theme was that women’s psychic life was fundamentally different from men’s. Gender difference theorists argued that women are different from men in their interests and values, their manner of making value judgments, their achievement motives, their writing, their sexuality, their identity, and their general consciousness and self-understanding. Gender difference theorists claimed that the overall makeup of women’s and men’s relationships and life experiences are different. In this thinking, women relate to their children and others differently than do men. And women experience their own development and aging differently than do men. The gender difference orientation of feminist thought tended to recommend mutual respect as the “answer” to problems springing from gender difference (ibid).

The gender difference orientation included different ways to explain the differences between men and women. The most conservative and popular explanation was the biological. Here, gender differences are fundamental and unchangeable aspects of being either male or female. In this model, biology was destiny. One important “back to nature” group that believed men and women are biologically different - again, to be discussed further in the next chapter (chapter three) - was La Leche League International.

Chapter three. Breastfeeding versus the bottle and middle class ideologies of adult-child touch

Introduction

Yes, breast-feeding is natural and even wonderful. But so are a lot of bodily functions one doesn't draw attention to in public. Nevertheless, according to a recent report in the Associated Press, the activists continue to push lawsuits in many states that would guarantee all moms the "right" to nurse anytime, anywhere...Such legislation is unnecessary for those moms who simply want to nourish their infants as unnoticeably [sic] and without making a public statement...These laws are for women who think that personal really is the political, who want to use such laws to flagrantly display their "rights" - and often way too much of their breasts. (Betsy Hart, *Jewish World Review*, April 9, 2002)

If there is one activity in the contemporary mainstream United States at the ideological center of what it means to be a mother, it is breastfeeding. Because breastfeeding is gendered female by nature, it is a particularly interesting and weighted subject through which to look at mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch. For the American middle class, the meanings around breastfeeding have shifted several times over the past century. As with other forms of touching, breastfeeding and its requisite physical contact have become ways to both control, and maintain surveillance over women. Early in the century, as middle class mothers increasingly turned to scientific experts to learn how to parent, adults touching children was considered "dirty" in both senses of the word. With the new scientific awareness of germs, people realized that touching potentially brought about the spread of germs and could be unhealthy. And furthermore, touching involved the body, the always-bordering-on-being-out-of-control,

savage/passionate, sexual body. During this time breastfeeding fell out of favor only to return again in the 1960s and 1970s.

Through the past century, there have been enormous pressures on women to breastfeed, not to breastfeed, and then again, to breastfeed. And throughout, the middle class has been very anxious about the body and its potentially out-of-control sexuality. The anti-touching, anti-breastfeeding ethos of periods in the twentieth century were, in part, a response to this anxiety. The middle class continues to be at once deeply anxious about and infatuated with the body, but now the question is not whether to breastfeed, but for how long.

My concern here is not to promote one infant feeding option over another. Rather I am interested in the ways ideologies of adult-child touch express themselves through infant feeding. And in particular, in this chapter I am concerned with the ways social power expresses and reproduces itself through feeding related ideologies of adult-child touch.

Breastfeeding has been and continues to be an emotionally charged topic. It brings up multiple issues concerning mainstream beliefs about gender, race and class. These beliefs involve who should get to mother, what social assistance mothers ought to have, and which mothers are, and are not, deserving of help. Breastfeeding ignites concerns about women's bodies: are women maternal or sexual or both? Some breastfeeding women are considered polluted. They need to be controlled. Other women when breastfeeding are seen to be pure, maternal and asexual.

Here again, we see the mind-body dualism played out through ideologies of adult-child touch, and more broadly through gender. In other words, women fall on one side or

the other of an age-old dichotomy: they are either understood to be appropriately maternal “Madonnas,” or inappropriately sexual “whores.” The realities of women’s lives mirror the ideology in a distorted fashion. Some women get to mother their own children. Other women work by mothering someone else’s children. Some groups always breastfeed, other groups never do.

The issues surrounding breastfeeding are important because they help us to focus on and examine women’s lives. Ultimately, breastfeeding is not a private matter; it is central to many public issues involving child rearing and women’s experience. Breastfeeding, and motherhood more generally, have been and continue to be public concerns.

Sociologist Linda M. Blum argues that various understandings of breastfeeding coincide with diverse ways of seeing the body. Blum writes, “bodily practices - despite their undeniable physicality - are always historical. In other words, our meaning-making practices shape how we see, interpret, and treat the body (as well as external nature) and its *facts*; moreover, all ‘knowledge’ of the body develops in the context of particular power relations” (Blum 1999: 2). Blum continues,

It is sometimes hard to see this plasticity in our own culture, but think of the women who are able through rigorous training to pass the physical ability tests for police, fire-fighting, and military training, physical capabilities once thought *factually, biologically* impossible for women. This does not mean, however, that breasts or bodies are infinitely malleable or plastic. Bodies do get sick, suffer, and die. Yet the news stories about breastfeeding...ostensibly about such biological facts as brain development and HIV transmission, are also moral stories, cautionary tales, about maternal bodies and good or bad mothers, and the way they are ‘read’ in the late twentieth century. (Ibid.)

Popular anxiety about incest and child sexual abuse also plays an important role in mainstream ideas about breastfeeding. In the modern west, breasts are understood as sexual objects. While popular concern over pedophilia and the potential of child sexual abuse “out there” in the world is rampant, there is also significant concern over the possibly incestuous mother who is sexually abusing her child through activities such as breastfeeding. This mother breastfeeds “for herself” rather than to benefit the child. Interestingly, given the proliferation of concern about child sexual abuse, it is neither the focused-on pedophile stranger nor the breastfeeding mother that actually perpetuate most child sexual abuse in the contemporary United States. Popular concern does not look at the perpetrator of, statistically speaking, most child sexual abuse; that is, men who are related to the children whom they abuse (Herman 1981; Russell 1986).

Ideologies of adult-child touch - made manifest through breastfeeding and embedded in mainstream cultural definitions of “good mothering” - reproduce racial, gendered and class boundaries in given socio-historical moments. The white middle class way of mothering at any particular time defines for the mainstream culture what it means to be a good mother. Ways of mothering common outside of the white middle class are understood by the mainstream culture as bad mothering. Today, in the United States, white middle class women breastfeed, and so in the mainstream it is understood that good mothers breastfeed.

In this chapter, I describe the shifts in meaning surrounding breastfeeding within the United States middle class in the twentieth century. To begin, I explore the social history of breastfeeding in the United States using the work of scholars such as Blum (1999) and historian Julia Grant (1998). Next I examine the contemporary debate around

breastfeeding. In particular, I compare mainstream medical child-rearing texts on breastfeeding with literature springing from La Leche League International and the attachment parenting movement.

Socio-historical context

The child-rearing texts that I examine pay little to no attention to breastfeeding in the early part of the twentieth century. Holt does claim that breastfeeding - "Mother's milk" - is the best food for infants, but spends only a page discussing breastfeeding before he turns his attention to formula. In sharp contrast, Holt uses thirty four pages to write about formula feeding, carefully describing the making of "formula" from cow's milk, schedules for feeding and so on (Holt 1894: 33-68). Watson never even mentions breastfeeding, although he does briefly comment on bottlefeeding arguing that bottlefed babies can be weaned from the bottle at six to eight months (Watson 1928: 108). This lack of attention to breastfeeding in the early century child-rearing texts exemplifies the ideological turn away from breastfeeding.

Because my data sources - popular child-rearing books of the first part of the century - focus so little on breastfeeding, I now turn to secondary sources to briefly explore the socio-historical context of breastfeeding in the United States. Scholars like Blum (1999) and Grant (1998) argue that breastfeeding has long been promoted as central to good mothering. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States, mothers were criticized harshly if they did not breastfeed their young. Blum writes, "Maternal breastfeeding, moreover, became almost an emblem of new democratic ideals, as images of "nature" were linked with equality, the rejection of decadent, aristocratic

“culture,” and the rising health and wealth of the middle class of the young nation” (Blum 1999: 21). Nonetheless, some women were unable to fulfill this “civic duty.”

If a woman was not able or willing to breastfeed, she had two alternatives in feeding her child. One was to feed the child at the breast of another lactating woman. Another was “dry nursing” with an artificial food “usually diluted animal milk or a “pap” of flour, sugar, milk, water, or tea” (ibid: 20). People knew that infant mortality was high with either alternative, more especially with “dry nursing.” At the same time, there were deeply racialized class divisions between elite families and the wet nurses they hired. In the northern United States, wet nurses were usually poor or working class immigrants. In the South, they were African American slaves.

Given these divisions, wealthy families worried about the “fitness” of the wet nurses they hired. African American women were seen as “naturally” nurturant even though they were often denied their own mother-child bonds. Enslaved women routinely had their children taken from them to be sold. If, for a time the woman lived with her child, her time was taken up with working long hours for the slave owner leaving little to no time to care for her own children. While Black women were understood by elites to be nurturant, they were “also cast as primitively oversexed and thereby polluted...In the North, where the racial placement of European immigrant groups was only later established as “white,” wet nurses were seen as inferior and suspect” (ibid: 21-22). Given elite concerns about “pollution,” when maternal breastfeeding failed, affluent families increasingly turned to artificial feeding, renamed “scientific infant food” by the turn of the century. This way they avoided contact with supposedly unclean peoples, and simultaneously advanced the cause of science.

In the United States in the early twentieth century, mass immigration brought about intense anxiety in the Anglo American Protestant middle class. At this time, the state became more involved in infant-care and feeding, and the control of women's bodies. Blum writes that the state "made gendered, raced bodies public issues: the push for military "fitness" targeted white (and potentially white) male bodies, but the improvement of population quality, to be achieved through "higher," "Americanized" mothering, targeted female bodies" (ibid: 22-23).

State policies of "race betterment" and public health promotion emerged in this nation-building climate, but from an uneasy alliance between eugenics followers, who wanted to control immigrants and nonwhites and their immutable, biological inferiority, and "race liberals," who wanted to promote their cultural assimilation - at least, those who were potentially "white" and could be reshaped to Anglo-American, middle-class norms. (Ibid: 23)

As historian Julia Grant argues, it was largely middle-class Protestant reformers who worked with the state to "usher immigrants into mainstream society by teaching them the English language and American principles of citizenship." Grant writes, "The reformers also strove to disseminate American "family values" to ensure the acculturation of seemingly unassimilable southeast European immigrants" (Grant 1998: 72). A simultaneous and connected campaign, the parent education movement, worked to develop and disseminate expert - scientific - knowledge about child development and child rearing. This movement began around the turn of the century and developed through the first half of the twentieth century. It was committed to an odd mix of scientific motherhood and the more traditional maternalism. The ideology of maternalism held that "women had unique personal *and* civic responsibilities to children

and families that were based on their reproductive capacities” (ibid: 46). The several organizations included the National Congress of Mothers and the American Association of University Women.

Many middle-class women, labeled “maternalists” by historians, were deeply involved in these social welfare and Americanization campaigns. The maternalists used the language of gender difference, focusing on women as mothers who were to play a national role in “baby saving;” that is, reducing the rate of infant mortality and sickness. For the most part, maternalists believed that mothers should be home caring for children full-time. They argued against women with children working for a wage, and against child labor as well. “In contrast to European welfare states, U.S. maternalists did not strive for family or maternity allowances, fearing that such provisions, by removing the disciplining effect of the family’s dependency on the father, might encourage men to abandon their families (as well as cause labor unrest).” Blum notes, “U.S. maternalists strove to provide needy homemakers support from public funds, but only in selected, “worthy” cases of the father-provider’s absence: “deserving” mothers in the early twentieth century were primarily white widows.” Even with these severe limits, the “Mothers’ Pension programs never gained sufficient backing to fully fund the domestic ideal. Similar moral eligibility requirements, which disqualified most poor women of color and single or divorced mothers, continued under the enlarged federal New Deal program, Aid to Dependent Children” (Blum 1999: 23).

Maternalists understood the social causes of poverty. Even so, they tended to hold impoverished mothers responsible for their need to do wage work. They believed that poor mothers needed education to be persuaded to stop working for a wage. Other

nations had a vastly different tactic. In sharp contrast to this United States individualized approach, European “welfare states provided day nurseries and cash maternity benefits in response to fears of depopulation” (ibid: 24).

Besides protesting against wage earning, US maternalists focused on infant feeding. They were against artificial feeding and irregular breastfeeding. And they were correct to see feeding as a central concern. “Gastrointestinal ailments, easily prevented by breastfeeding and adequate sanitation, were responsible for as many as one-third of all infant deaths – and this figure was cut nearly in half by the campaign’s education efforts” (ibid). However, here again, the maternalists held the poor women responsible for infant feeding problems. “Reformers...regarded healthful breastfeeding as irreconcilable with wage work, in marked contrast to the European model of scheduling nursing breaks during the workday and putting nursing rooms in factories, as endorsed by the International Labor Organization” (ibid: 24-26). Reformers in the United States Children’s Bureau had a list of requirements for nursing that were difficult for even full-time homemakers, much less wage-working women to fulfill. They required that mothers sleep at least eight hours a night, take a nap midday, exercise and get fresh air for one hour in the morning and again in the evening, and to nurse on a very strict schedule.

This culturally biased advice directly addressed adult-child touch. It instructed nursing women to “eat a “bland,” i.e., American, diet, and to keep a physical distance from her baby.” Following the advice of the experts, maternalists stressed that mothers “must avoid “excessive” cuddling” (ibid: 26). Keeping a physical distance from one’s baby made no sense in many immigrant cultures. Essentially, Anglo American Protestant middle class maternalists raised the issues of who should mother, how mothering should

be done and with what resources. They fought to keep white poor and working class women at home with their children full-time, without supplying the financial assistance needed to stop their wage work.

In spite of their culturally and class biased advice, they did help immigrant families in one important way, with health care. Blum writes, “white-ethnic women did successfully extend preventive health services to many urban dwellers” (ibid). This made a vast difference because of the enormous problem of child disease and death among white poor and working class peoples.

Given a history of slavery, vehement white racism and enduring poverty, the problem of infant mortality was even bigger for African Americans. Access to health care, like most things in the United States, was – and remains – raced. Whereas Anglo American maternalists claimed to be “saving” all babies, they really worked only for white babies. However, within the small African American middle class, Black women organized to “save” Black babies. “Such Black maternalists subverted racialized meaning by labeling themselves “pure mothers for pure children.” And although they had less aversion to wage-earning mothers, their actions were similar to those of white reformers: they set up clinics for children, hygiene classes for mothers, and milk stations to distribute safe, low-cost cow’s milk” (ibid). In contrast to white maternalists, and in spite of their extensive efforts, Black maternalist reformers never gained the bit of state power that the white maternalists had garnered. The national baby-saving campaign blamed Black people for their own poverty and suffering. Ironically, one of the few sources of health care for the Black community, African American midwives who delivered most Black babies in the South, were faulted for the high Black infant death

rate. And African American mothers were faulted for turning to the Black midwives. The midwives were coded as dirty and “primitive” – the polar opposite of “scientific.” The 1925 meeting of the Southern Medical Association described them as “filthy and ignorant and not far removed from the jungles of Africa, laden with its atmosphere of weird superstition and voodooism” (cited in Blum 1999: 27).

In time, national legislation made training and licensing - supervised by public health nurses who were almost all white - mandatory for midwives. Many traditional practices such as standing or squatting during labor and delivery, now known to be beneficial while birthing, were prohibited. Supervisors regularly inspected the uniforms, bags, and even the homes of midwives. Blum and other scholars suggest that this fanatical attention to Black midwives’ personal appearance indicates their being symbolically “cleansed” of their race and sexuality.

Anglo American maternalist reformers seemed to want to clean sexuality from poor mothers as well as Black midwives with their instructions against cuddling and sensual, on demand, infant feeding. To be qualified for the Mothers’ Pension meant abstaining from sexual relations. “Since eligibility for the Mothers’ Pensions depended on the absence of a male breadwinner, recipients were required to refrain from sexual relationships, which were considered immoral by definition” (ibid). The enlarged program, Aid to Dependent Children, with its “man in the house” regulations, “justified such practices as midnight home “visits” and other invasions of privacy” (ibid). These practices disciplined maternal bodies, particularly, poor mother’s bodies.

By 1930, Black and white maternalists did contribute to big drops in infant death and disease rates. “And despite medical models nearly impossible to emulate, most

mothers in all groups continued to breastfeed their infants. Although national statistics were not collected, those available from limited community studies indicate that between 85 and 90 percent of mothers breastfed their babies at birth in the first three decades of the century.” Blum writes, “Rural women were slightly more likely to nurse than urban women, and, while all mothers were nursing for shorter durations, urban mothers weaned earliest” (ibid: 28). Before 1950, and in sharp contrast to the present, African American women seemed to be more likely to breastfeed than white women.

As discussed earlier, most scholars agree that breastfeeding in the United States has long been considered pivotal to good mothering. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Anglo American Protestant middle class and elite women were harshly criticized if they did not breastfeed their children. However, there is a period in US history when breastfeeding fell out of fashion. During the first half of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1930s to the 1950s, artificial feeding became popular among Anglo American Protestant middle class women and other women striving to enter the white middle class. These mothers opted for the sterile, measurable, “civilized” and scientific feeding method, that is, “formula” via the bottle. The very word “formula” speaks of a culture infatuated with science.

Coinciding with this shift to artificial infant food there developed a new understanding of the human breasts. Breasts have not always been sexualized in western culture, and are not sexualized in many parts of the world. Breasts have been eroticized. And as components of the sexual body, breasts have, in modern western culture, become dangerous, dirty, threatening, something to hide away. Offering one’s breast to the

hungry mouth of an infant became taboo, something done by savage or as yet uncivilized people.

With this sexualization of “natural” infant feeding practices, and with the middle class shift to “scientific” methods, new authorities in child rearing developed. As discussed in an earlier chapter, by the twentieth century, medical practitioners had become the new experts for the private realm. Middle-class mothers came to believe that healthy babies required the watchful eye of science. This included regular visits to the doctor. Within this new schema, doctors’ interests were complicated. On the one hand, doctors colluded with the rapidly growing formula industry. By the 1930s, formula producers regularly funded pediatric research. At the same time, like the maternalist reformers, doctors held humanitarian concerns for women. They responded to women’s expressed need. Blum argues, women “wanted freedom from the control biology extended over their lives, including pain-free, safe childbirth and birth control.” To some extent, middle class women “saw medical science as an ally” (ibid: 31).

Not later than 1930, as middle-class women increasingly turned to formula, this kind of feeding became safer with new discoveries in bacteriology, physiology and nutrition. The proliferation of refrigeration in the first half of the century also played a central role in the spread of formula feeding. Before adequate refrigeration, cow’s milk (formula) quickly went bad. “Even if milk was bought in bottles, there was no way to keep it cold - in the summer it would go bad by mid-morning” (Ewen 1985: 138). This was especially problematic for working class and poor mothers. “Most immigrant mothers had small iceboxes that had to be supplied with ice bought daily from the iceman. Since a small amount of ice cost between five and ten cents, few women could

afford to buy more than small quantities” (ibid). With refrigeration, cow’s milk could be kept safely for a matter of days making formula a much safer alternative than it had been before refrigeration.

Slowly doctors took over the supervision of infant feeding and turned it into a major and lucrative aspect of family practice and pediatric medicine. Not only bottlefeeding, but breastfeeding as well, became thoroughly regulated. And in turn, this undermined the success of breastfeeding with the medical recommendation of feeding on a strict schedule, weighing infants before and after feeding, and giving supplemental bottles. Even hospitals – organized according to the findings of sponsored research – “sabotaged breastfeeding: They relied on strict feeding schedules, separated mothers and babies for long intervals, and regularly gave supplemental bottles” (ibid: 30).

To a lesser extent, the medical regulation of infant feeding is still a problem today. In the year 2000, I gave birth in an urban hospital rated as one of the top ten hospitals for labor and delivery in the United States. We went home from the hospital the “normal” - as mandated by health insurance companies - two days after delivery. Then the next day, my infant son was - unnecessarily it turns out - hospitalized. He was three days old. My breastmilk was slow to come in, my baby become mildly dehydrated and we had an unfortunate telephone encounter with a young, over-anxious pediatrician. Once back in the hospital, the medical model took over and sent my son through an immense number of unnecessary tests, pin pricks, weighings, and other medical examinations. The young pediatrician who had admitted my son, refused to give his approval to let my son go home for three days during which he tested and monitored my

new baby. And to make matters worse, hospital policy did not recognize my son and me as a unit; he was admitted. I was not. For all three days, along with the numerous and assorted tests, turned out to be completely uncalled for. Those three unnecessary days of separation nearly cost us my breastmilk.

Ironically, *I* did need to be hospitalized. I had lost an immense amount of blood during the delivery. Yet as most new mothers are quick to find out, once the baby is delivered the focus shifts from her, the mere container, to the new life. It took several days of my mother's persistent telephone calls to my obstetrician, my primary physician, and various other doctors, administrators, and bureaucrats in my health maintenance organization for me to be readmitted in the hospital for a blood transfusion. My family took turns spending days and nights with my son at the hospital. I was in no condition to stay with him myself. As no adult was admitted with my son, staying with him meant sleeping in a chair in his hospital room. My family reported back to me that the hospital staff insisted my son be fed on a strict schedule. He was fed – much the same as in the early twentieth century – every four hours. If he was asleep, he was woken for a feeding. If he was crying and seemingly hungry, he had to wait for the schedule to catch up with his need. At one point, my sister sneaked him a leftover bottle from the last feed. She was caught by an angry nurse who slapped one hand against the other several times, saying, “The schedule! The schedule! The schedule!”

In the first half of the century, most doctors did not - and many still do not - understand that a woman's breastmilk supply is produced in response to a baby's sucking, or demand (Blum 1999). Human milk is much more easily digested than cow's

milk so that breastfed babies are usually hungry more frequently. Supplemental bottles of formula fill the baby up so that she sucks at the breast less, starting a cycle of decline in the amount of breastmilk. As Blum writes, “Not surprisingly, “insufficient milk” quickly became the most prevalent reason for breastfeeding failure” (ibid: 30).

Middle class women’s “failure” at breastfeeding surprised no one. Physicians, who worked primarily with a middle class clientele, worried that their patients, “civilized” women who lived under unnatural strains and had “highly developed nervous system[s]” were not fit for nursing (cited in Blum 1999: 29). Physicians thought that, in contrast to “primitive” mothers who were “natural” breastfeeders, white middle class women’s bodies were not reliable. Though they were told that breastmilk was best for babies, they were also told that their bodies were unlikely to be dependable. The mainstream medical establishment told women that bottlefeeding was very nearly as good as the breast. By 1950, a bottlefed baby was not an object of pity - “and as L. Emmett Holt, Jr. wrote (in the revised edition of his father’s manual): “a bottle mother may still be a perfect mother”” (cited in Blum 1999: 32).

The formula industry played a central role in the middle class move to bottlefeeding. Formula was and continues to be a very lucrative business. “U.S. infant formula sales reached approximately \$2.59 billion in 1993 representing a six percent increase over 1992. Since 1989, when formula companies lifted their previous voluntary ban on marketing directly to consumers, the market has grown by 54%. The average bottle-feeding family in the United states spends between \$800 and \$2,000 per year on infant formula” (Granju 1999: 109). Formula companies target doctors and hospitals as well as individual consumers.

Almost all American hospitals with maternity services have a contract with one or another of the infant formula manufacturers through which the facility receives free infant formula, “educational grants” (seminars and literature in which hospital staff receive lactation science training from...employees of the formula company), and even cash gifts in return for the formula company’s exclusive right to market directly to that hospital’s patients...Nurses or doctors who formula-feed their own children can depend on their sales rep to provide them with a year’s supply of infant formula at absolutely no charge. Additionally, formula manufacturers routinely host lavish parties and receptions for pediatricians at AAP functions. (Ibid: 108)

Upon giving birth, women often receive as much as an entire case of infant formula delivered to their home, compliments of a formula company. Because of the finely tuned supply and demand nature of breastfeeding, using even small amounts of the formula can bring about a slow - or quick - end to breastfeeding. The formula industry is highly aware of this and even more aware that breastfeeding is their biggest competition. Formula companies spend millions of dollars every year on advertising and product giveaways. From their perspective, it is money well-spent. Their own research “has clearly demonstrated that advertising, “educational literature,” and especially product giveaways all make it statistically less likely that women will breastfeed without formula supplementation - or breastfeed at all” (ibid: 108).

“Every time a woman chooses to breastfeed instead of bottle-feed her baby, the formula [companies] lose *at least* one thousand dollars in sales” (ibid). Breastfeeding advocate, Katie Allison Granju argues, “Because pharmaceutical companies which produce formula also develop and market medications and medical supplies, you can be sure that they are acutely aware that the better health enjoyed by breastfed infants and

their mothers as a group also impacts their bottom line, possibly even more than the sale of the formula itself” (ibid).

Yet again, the success of formula and the medical establishment’s intervention in infant feeding was not due to capitalist-patriarchal complicity alone. The medical enterprise also acted in answer to women’s expressed needs. And in turn, the maternalists and other elite women worked to advance medicalization. They understood medicine as offering women some freedom from the dictates of biology. The medical world presented women with birth control, and mainstream medicine gave women increased safety and relief from pain during childbirth. With the option of artificial infant feeding, and the newly available refrigeration that made formula a longer-lasting, safer alternative, women gained more autonomy. As artificial feeding methods and formula became safer for babies, the bottle gradually became a symbol of progress and modernity. Advice literature implied this, encouraging mothers to “give “relief” bottles to relax and enjoy “freedom” from the “very confining duties of nursing” (cited in Blum 1999: 31).

The contemporary debate

a. Breastfeeding and mainstream medicine

Among the middle class, a kind of anti-breastfeeding ethos took hold in the 1930s and lasted well into the 1950s. Even a contemporary popular medical manual for parents recognizes this pro-bottlefeeding period in United States history. In *Taking Care of Your Child: A Parent’s Guide to Medical Care* (1990), the three doctors who author it write, “It is unfortunate that fashion is often responsible for making a mother feel she should choose one particular method. Bottle feeding became popular 50 years ago. The society

at the time wanted to do everything “scientifically,” women wanted to be free to leave the home, and the female breast was shifting from being a nursing object to being a sexual object.” Here it is important to note that in the 1940s “scientifically” meant bottlefeeding; in contrast, today “scientifically” means breastfeeding. Science discourages and encourages breastfeeding at different socio-historical moments because science is bound up with power and ideology. The authors continue, “Fortunately, social attitudes are constantly in movement. Currently, there is widespread acceptance of mothers nursing in public. Breast feeding is now gaining in popularity and is currently considered to have many “scientific advantages”” (Pantell, Fries, and Vickery 1990: 14).

Breastfeeding has more than “gained in popularity.” In the white middle class today there is a cultural imperative to breastfeed. This shift from the bottle back to the breast began around the time famous Dr. Benjamin Spock’s child-rearing book first came out in 1945. It was one of the revolutionary things about Spock’s book that it encouraged women to breastfeed. Subsequently, over the next two decades, white middle class women did slowly return to the breast as the optimum way both to feed and to nourish an infant. By the 1970s, “earlier sentiments in favor of “natural” mothering had resurged” (Blum 1999: 19).

There are few, if any, places in the contemporary United States where women are told *not* to breastfeed. Of course, this does not mean that all women breastfeed. Some groups almost never do. Various contemporary studies have found that white middle class women are among the most likely to breastfeed their children (see Blum 1999; Carter 1995; Department of Health and Human Services 2000). In contrast, African American working class women are among the least likely to breastfeed (ibid). This is a

flip from the first half of the century when Black women were more likely to breastfeed, and white women less likely than they are today. “Hospital birth records from 1948 show the Southeast, where most Blacks still resided, with the highest rates of maternal breastfeeding...and retrospective surveys confirm that more Black mothers breastfed in the 1940s and 1950s” (Blum 1999: 28).

There are many good reasons why Black women tend not to breastfeed today. In the history of racism and slavery, African American women’s bodies were owned and used for sexual exploitation, and their oppression was often justified by their supposed closeness to nature. Enslaved women’s “breasts, which sometimes suckled white babies, were examined like part of the livestock at auctions” (ibid: 13). Based on her in-depth interviews, Blum argues that one of the reasons why African American working class mothers rejected breastfeeding was the “exposure of sexuality and the physicality or animal-like qualities it represented to them” (ibid: 14). And like other working class mothers, Black working class women also “shared the stressful life circumstances that can make breastfeeding overwhelmingly burdensome or exhausting” (ibid). It is interesting and admirable that the African American mothers in Blum’s study were “much less likely to be pained by guilt or regret about their bottlefeeding than the white mothers” that she interviewed (ibid).

For the white middle class in particular, the question is no longer whether or not to breastfeed. Instead, the problem is *how long*. Without taking socio-economic class into account, the United States Department of Health and Human Services found that 68% of white women breastfeed their babies at birth (2000: 9). Studies such as Blum’s point out that if the Department of Health and Human Services had broken this statistic

down by class, the number would have increased significantly for the white middle class. Being in the white middle class in the United States means listening to expert advice. And today, child-rearing experts all argue for breastfeeding. Popular health movements, organizations such as La Leche League International and mainstream medical associations like the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), all argue that “breast is best” for human infants. The reasons given include the superior nutritional value of breastmilk compared with infant artificial formula, and the intimacy - in other words, *mother-child touching* - in breastfeeding. In a recent policy statement, the AAP claim,

Extensive research, especially in recent years, documents diverse and compelling advantages to infants, mothers, families, and society from breastfeeding and the use of human milk for infant feeding. These include health, nutritional, immunologic, developmental, psychological, social, economic, and environmental benefits...Human milk is uniquely superior for infant feeding and is species-specific; all substitute feeding options differ markedly from it. The breastfed infant is the reference or normative model against which all alternative feeding methods must be measured with regard to growth, health, development, and all other short- and long-term outcomes. (American Academy of Pediatrics, December 1997)

The AAP is today’s equivalent of the John B. Watsons of the 1920s and 1930s. This is not to say that the AAP speaks as one voice or that it is solidly behaviorist. It has behaviorist leanings, yet more importantly for the purposes of this study, the AAP is solidly grounded in the middle class. It is one - and probably the most - prominent voice of mainstream culture. Today doctors commonly advise new mothers to breastfeed their infants for the first year. The AAP recommends that breastfeeding continue “for at least 12 months, and thereafter for as long as mutually desired” (ibid). Interestingly, adult-child touch is not among the AAP’s long list of reasons to breastfeed. Nor does it cite the

advantages of added intimacy. This contrasts sharply with the broad attachment parenting movement where adult-child touch is a central – if not the central – reason to breastfeed. The AAP’s numerous reasons include health benefits to the infant.

“Epidemiologic research shows that human milk and breastfeeding of infants provides advantages with regard to general health, growth, and development, while significantly decreasing risk for a large number of acute and chronic diseases” (ibid). The AAP’s policy statement on breastfeeding claims that,

Research in the United States, Canada, Europe, and other *developed* countries, among predominantly middle-class populations, provides strong evidence that human milk feeding decreases the incidence and/or severity of diarrhea, lower respiratory infection, otitis media, bacteremia, bacterial meningitis, botulism, urinary tract infection, and necrotizing enterocolitis. There are a number of studies that show a possible protective effect of human milk feeding against sudden infant death syndrome, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis, lymphoma, allergic diseases, and other chronic digestive diseases. Breastfeeding has also been related to possible enhancement of cognitive development. (Ibid.)

The AAP also gives possible health benefits for mothers as further reason to breastfeed. Breastfeeding increases levels of oxytocin in women resulting in less postpartum bleeding and faster uterine involution. Breastfeeding postpones the return of women’s menstrual cycle. This delay, called lactational amenorrhea, means a delay in ovulation and increased child spacing. Research demonstrates that lactating women have a quicker return to prepregnancy weight, advanced bone remineralization postpartum with less hip fractures in the postmenopausal period. Women who breastfeed have a reduced risk of ovarian cancer and of premenopausal breast cancer (ibid).

In addition to individual health benefits, the AAP argues that, “breastfeeding provides significant social and economic benefits to the nation, including reduced health care costs and reduced employee absenteeism for care attributable to child illness.” Further, “The significantly lower incidence of illness in the breastfed infant allows the parents more time for attention to siblings and other family duties and reduces parental absence from work and lost income” (ibid). The AAP points out that there are significant direct economic benefits to the family. They claim that the 1993 cost of purchasing infant formula for the first year after birth was estimated at \$855 (ibid).

The AAP gives many persuasive reasons to breastfeed. It is fascinating that nowhere does it discuss adult-child touch. This “neutral” approach to touch resonates with the AAP’s history. The AAP is a central component of mainstream medicine in the United States. I argue that AAP, mainstream medicine, and science generally, are suspicious of touch because the dominant medical establishment is suspicious of “the body.” And more than the body, science is suspicious of “nature.” Science sees the body, and sees nature, as instruments to be used or misused. From the scientific vantage point, we can study the body and understand it better. Through understanding it, we increase our ability to control it. Through controlling the body, we foster our capacity to use it. This instrumental ideological framework has no place for enjoying the body as intrinsically valuable. At best, the body is to be used in life. Minimally, one uses the body to get through or survive life, maximally to gain the goods of life and to live the successful life. The body “itself” is neutral mass or, at the worst, dangerous, savage and out of control.

b. Breastfeeding and La Leche League International

The organization, La Leche League International exists within the broader popular parenting movement, and style, called “attachment parenting.” Attachment parenting, or in its broadest twentieth century form the “naturalist” school of child rearing, diverges from this mainstream scientific view of the body. The attachment parenting movement values the body – and the “natural” - for itself. “Being with” the “natural body” through touching is one of the most important components of parenting. Sleeping or feeding are not only means to maintain the growing infant body. The mother body sleeping and feeding *with* the infant body is purely valuable beyond any other particular usefulness.

The attachment parenting movement and the largest organization representing this movement, La Leche League International, believe that breastfeeding is fundamentally important. Yet unlike mainstream scientific ideology, where there is room for mothers to choose *not* to breastfeed, La Leche League offers no alternative to breastfeeding. Good parents, that is, good mothers breastfeed. Although La Leche League focuses on biological mothers and biological/“natural” mother-child connections, when addressed even adoptive mothers are encouraged to breastfeed using a special mechanism called a nursing supplementer. In sharp contrast to mainstream medicine and the AAP, the attachment parenting movement and La Leche League International believes breastfeeding to be important largely because it involves adult-child touch. For the attachment parenting movement adult-child touch is central to – perhaps *the* central component of - good parenting. And because touch, and the intimacy that springs from touch is so important, they argue that children should be breastfed indefinitely, until the

child is ready to wean itself. They call this “natural weaning” or “child-led weaning” (Bengson 1999; Sears 1985).

La Leche League International was one component of a larger popular health movement, running through the twentieth century United States, that I call the “back to nature” movement. La Leche League International was started in 1957 by seven stay-at-home Catholic, white, middle class mothers in Illinois. They met through their shared involvement in an ecumenical Christian social action and family organization (Blum 1999). These seven women were part of the post-World War II childbirth reform community. Like the larger childbirth reform community, these seven La Leche League International “Founding Mothers” believed in “natural” childbirth, breastfeeding with child-led weaning and large families cared for by stay-at-home mothers. The seven La Leche League founders wanted to support the few white middle class women in those days who wished to breastfeed their babies.

In the 1950s, as already discussed, not only did white middle class women tend to bottlefeed their infants, it was considered inappropriate to even talk about breastfeeding. So the seven women “had to come up with a name that would allow them to discreetly discuss their activities, as well as list their meetings in the local newspaper...The idea for the fledgling organization’s name came from a statue” (Granju 1999: 142). La Leche League International explains in their manual, “The name of our organization was inspired by a shrine in St. Augustine, Florida, dedicated to the Mother of Christ under the title “Nuestra Senora de la Leche y Buen Parto,” which translates freely, “Our Lady of

Happy Delivery and Plentiful Milk”” (La Leche League International 1991: 393). It is telling that the La Leche League name - like its founders - has Christian roots.

Within a traditional and Christian framework of women living and working in the home, these women wanted to take the rearing of children back from the scientific experts and return it to the sphere of women, women’s “instincts” and women’s “natural” expertise. According to La Leche League a mother can achieve “natural” mothering by listening to her “instincts.” La Leche League offered this challenge to the mainstream medical establishment that insists on telling women how to raise their children. For La Leche League, women did not need science to tell them how to raise their children. Women “naturally” know how to be mothers. On the other hand, La Leche League did not challenge traditional and Christian mainstream gender roles. Its philosophy maintains that women *should* stay home and raise their children. This is what women are “meant” to do and this is what women “naturally” do best. In this way, La Leche League International was, and continues to be both empowering and disempowering for women.

La Leche League was interested in celebrating women’s knowledge and its connection to their “nature” and “instincts.” La Leche League believed that women *instinctually* knew how to raise children. Women simply needed to stop listening to the mainstream medical experts and start listening to their “intuition.” According to La Leche League, women trusting their own intuition or instincts would lead to a number of clear outcomes: One, mothers who heeded their instincts would breastfeed their infants. Two, intuitive mothers would respond to their babies cries quickly. Three, intuitive mothers would *touch* their babies and children a lot. In sharp contrast with the 1950s medical model that espoused the contemporary mainstream ideologies of child rearing

and adult-child touch, La Leche League maintained - and still maintains today - that the physical contact of adult with child was one of the most important elements of raising a child. And it cannot be just any adult. La Leche League argues that babies need extensive physical contact with their *mothers*.

One of my informal interviewees, an active La Leche League International member called Myra, made clear her, and La Leche League's focus on the mother. Fathers are secondary parents during the child's first three years. Myra talked about a basic biological link between the mother and child that is developed and maintained through breastfeeding. According to Myra, mothers should be prepared to focus primarily on their baby for the first three years of its life. When asked about the sacrifices in terms of women's careers and other interests and activities, Myra made the traditional argument: True, it is a sacrifice, but a worthwhile one. Mothers are *meant* to be with their babies. And she added that nothing could be more important than raising a child.

Myra granted that this practice excludes fathers, but she believes that is, biologically, what is "meant" to happen. In other words, in their very nature, fathers are not meant to be central to a child's life for the first three years. Myra implied that after the first three years, fathers can become a more equal partner in childrearing. Myra was vague as to whether this meant equal but different roles for fathers. In their literature, La Leche League implies that after the first three years, the role of fathers is still less important or at least less central than that of mothers. And like much of the child-rearing literature but especially La Leche League's, they do not even consider the possibility of single mothers, gay or lesbian parents, or other increasingly common forms of family in

the United States. In their popular manual, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding: Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Edition* (1991) in a section titled, “Dads Can Help,” La Leche League offers a fairly traditionally gendered place to fathers. He can “help” when he is not at work. And, his way of helping mostly entails roughhousing.

An understanding husband is one of a nursing mother’s most treasured assets. He can step in to provide you with a welcome respite when he is home, and your older one will thrive on the extra attention.

Dads are often masters at keeping toddler minds and hands busy when mother needs some time alone with the baby, or when she decides to take advantage of baby’s nap time for a relaxing bath or some much needed rest. Father and toddler will both enjoy toddler-size roughhousing, and who buy daddy can add such excitement to stories by putting in all of those low, rumbling noises? (La Leche League International 1991: 214-215)

Based on its belief in the central importance of the mother-child relationship, La Leche League developed what has come to be an extremely popular philosophy of parenting/movement called “attachment parenting.” Initially, La Leche League drew on the psychiatrist John Bowlby’s “attachment theory.” Bowlby argued that any separation of the young child from its mother brings lasting harm. He believed that the absence of working mothers from their children was a form of maternal deprivation that caused deep and extensive psychological damage. Bowlby likened this form of deprivation to the experience of orphaned children during wartime. Components of Bowlby’s work continue to dominate developmental psychology in the United States. In the United Kingdom, Blum writes that, ““Bowlbyism” became synonymous with a host of state policies enacted to keep mothers at home and out of waged-work” (Blum 1999: 33).

La Leche League was interested in Bowlby's use of breastfeeding as a metaphor for good mothering. La Leche League believes breastfeeding to be the central and most important component of good mothering. Using John Bowlby's book *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, La Leche League argues that women should devote themselves fully to their children in the early years - the first three - of the child's life. And breastfeeding should be at the center of a woman's relationship with her child.

La Leche League grew quickly in size and popularity. By 1991, the organization claimed to be second in size only to Alcoholics Anonymous among United States self-help groups. The group's manual, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* was first published as a book in 1958 selling 17,000 copies. The second edition sold over one million copies between 1963 and 1981. By 1981, La Leche League had a central office with paid staff, around 4,000 active groups, and approximately 60,000 subscribers to their bimonthly newsletter.

La Leche League challenges mainstream science and, at the same time, uses scientific experts to make and support its case. In telling the history of the League, its founders include experts as central players. "It was at a church picnic that Mary White and Marian Tompson decided there had to be a way to help their friends who wanted to breastfeed their babies but found only frustration and failure when they tried...We had no grandiose plans about how to go about helping our friends, but we were willing to try. Two local physicians, Drs. Herbert Ratner and Gregory White, advised us on those aspects of breastfeeding and mothering that were commonly associated with the medical community" (La Leche League International 1991: 392). And in their dedication, the League founders write, "This book could not have been written and the basic principles

underlying the work of La Leche League would not have withstood the test of time, had it not been for the unfailing counsel of Doctors Herbert Ratner and Gregory White, who have wholeheartedly supported us from the earliest days of the League” (La Leche League International 1991).

La Leche League argued that breastfeeding was good for infants because it involves touching. La Leche League advised mothers to breastfeed their infants while both mother and baby were nude, to allow for maximum skin-to-skin contact. For La Leche League, breastfeeding - and the touching it entails - was the centerpiece of a healthy mother-child relationship. Because of the centrality of breastfeeding in their philosophy, La Leche League has always advocated what it calls “complete” breastfeeding, “a relational process, and one in which the mother and baby take their cues and habits reciprocally, from each other rather than from outside experts” (Blum 1999: 65). And they have pushed for breastfeeding on demand with “child-led weaning,” arguing that children know what they need. Breastfeeding on demand and child-led weaning allowed for as much breastfeeding and touching as the child needed. La Leche League also advocated mothers “sharing sleep” with their babies. Bringing one’s baby to bed allowed for extensive nighttime breastfeeding and ongoing physical contact between mother and child.

Complete breastfeeding therefore includes minimal separation from the baby, few supplemental bottles (if any), and feeding on the baby’s demand, even if very frequent and/or irregular. Ideally, from this point of view, mothers should rely as little as possible on substitutes for the bodily comfort they provide - this includes bottles and pacifiers, but also playpens and carriages, as League mothers prefer

slings and carriers that keep the baby on the mother's body and at or near the breast. (Ibid.)

La Leche League International, and the attachment parenting movement in general, have been the foremost United States proponents of what they call "natural" or "child-led weaning." In her recent book, La Leche League Leader and author, Diane Bengson defines this form of weaning as allowing the child "to outgrow nursing on his own timetable" (Bengson 1999: 3). In other words, the child nurses as long as she needs. When she is ready, she will wean "naturally." In her book, *How Weaning Happens*, Bengson argues that there are numerous advantages to natural weaning. She claims that these involve health advantages for both the mother and child. "Illness, including ear infections and diarrhea, is greatly reduced in breastfeeding children." Breastfeeding women "have elevated levels of prolactin...[which] produced the feelings of relaxation that women associate with nursing. A recent study showed that lactation reduces the body's chemical reaction to stress" (ibid: 9-11). Unfortunately, Bengson does not back up any of her references to "studies" with citations.

Along with the health benefits, natural weaning advocates such as Bengson and La Leche League argue that breastfeeding - and in particular breastfeeding on the child's "timetable" - offers an intimacy unavailable in other feeding options. Bengson does not explain why she believes breastfeeding to be more intimate than bottlefeeding. She simply states, "Extending nursing helps to make a child confident and people-oriented...Nursing teaches a child to build close relationships and to trust intimacy and commitment to other people" (ibid: 12).

In regard to adult-child touch, Bengson explicitly discusses the need for touching. She believes touching to be so important for the mother-child relationship that it must be replaced with a new form of touching between mother and child as the child weans. During weaning mothers must find “new ways to touch your child.” And she continues, “[some] mothers find the child is happy to substitute touching mama’s breast for nursing while going to sleep, or he may put his mouth on the breast but not suck” (ibid: 47). Implicit in this is Bengson’s belief that *touching* makes breastfeeding intimate. And it is a specific touch - the touch between a child’s mouth and her mother’s breasts - that seems to do the trick according to Bengson and other La Leche League members. The touch involved in holding a child and giving her a bottle is, somehow, not sufficient. Oddly, this very touch - mouth to breast - is also a touch considered “sexual” in the modern western and Protestant world. And insofar as it is sexual, it is also bad.

“[B]reast-feeding involves breasts - which in modern America are usually seen more as sexual organs, designed for men to play with, than as nutritive ones, designed for babies” (Lewin, “Breast-feeding: How old is too old?” *The New York Times*, February 18, 2001: 5). That breasts are understood to be sexual and so like one’s genitals must be kept hidden is reflected in American public decency laws. Indeed in 1999, Blum writes that only fourteen states had “passed legislation to specifically make public breastfeeding “decent.” When proposed, such legislation is often met with hostility and ridicule, as it was recently in New Hampshire where it died in committee” (Blum 1999: 128).

Yet, breasts are not “naturally” sexual any more than other parts of the human body. Of course, any part of the human body is up for grabs, so to speak, when it comes to being sexual. However, certain parts become more sexualized, and others less so, in

different cultures. For example, women in Mwanza, Tanzania, where I once lived, seem to understand breasts in an asexual and public way, much as United States women might understand their ankles. Whereas United States women keep their breasts carefully hidden in public, women in Mwanza expose their breasts in the midst of a busy shopping area either to feed a child or to try on a modern western bra. My Tanzanian friend tells me that he has helped women fit bras over their bare breasts as they shop at his parents' market shop. Women in Mwanza do, however, keep their legs well-covered, and would be ashamed to be seen in the western running shorts worn by many women throughout the United States.

Sexual or not, according to Bengson and others, breastfeeding is essential for the physical and emotional well-being of children. And given this essentiality, weaning should happen according to the child's needs - not the mother's. Bengson quotes one mother who claims, "weaning is not about logic or charts or time. Weaning is about readiness. I only know this because I can see that my baby is not ready to wean." This woman makes clear that although two people are intimately involved in a breastfeeding relationship, it is the baby, not the mother, who should make the important breastfeeding decisions. "She hasn't shown me at all that she is ready to wean, and she is the one person whose opinion on this subject counts" (Bengson 1999: 61).

This attitude, that the baby's "opinion" is the only one that should count, resonates both in and outside the United States. It corresponds with a dominant way of thinking about mothering, that to be good mothers, women must mother selflessly. Women are encouraged to breastfeed even when breastfeeding may be detrimental to their health. Really, it is unusual for the issue of potential cost to women's health to be

raised when it comes to breastfeeding - or mothering generally, for that matter. Possible examples of this ideological pattern can be found in Third World breastfeeding information. HIV-positive mothers in Third World countries are encouraged to breastfeed their infants even though they might pass the virus onto their child. In places where finding clean water is a problem, these infants have a better chance of survival breastfeeding in spite of the very limited risk of contracting HIV through the breastmilk. Until recently, this information focused on potential risks to the child, not the mother. Still, in common wisdom, women have long known breastfeeding to be, at best, tiring, and at worst, to withdraw nutrients from the women's body for the infant's milk. Women of wealthy nations are advised to pay close attention to their own nutrition. Yet there seems to be little concern over the maternal malnourishment of many women in the Third World. For women whose health is already particularly vulnerable, such as women with HIV, breastfeeding may tap women's resources to an extent that is not healthy for the woman. Recently a Kenyan study found that "breastfeeding can treble the risk of HIV-infected women dying within two years of giving birth." The researchers randomly selected more than 425 HIV-positive women in Nairobi to either nurse their child or use formula. All the women were "followed up monthly in the first year and quarterly in the second year after birth. Reports said Nduati and her team discovered that two years after giving birth, 18 of the breastfeeding mothers had died compared to three in the formula group" (IRIN HIV/AIDS News report, weekly issue, May 25, 2001).

About older children, of four, five and more years, Bengson writes, "many children wean on their own during this time." Yet, "natural weaning is a weaning that happens on your child's individual timetable, when her needs for nursing are fulfilled"

(ibid: 38). In a testimony meant to encourage the exhausted or embarrassed mother of an older nursing child, one woman in Bengson's book wrote that she had promised her worried son, who loved nursing, that he could nurse as long as he wanted. And she continued, for "all practical purposes, I suppose Eric weaned at about five or six, but it's not an issue that we have discussed since that day in the pond. Our agreement was that the door would always be open if he really needed it. I sometimes wonder if, years from now, a tall, bearded bank president will walk through my door with a special request for a little old lady" (ibid: 40).

Again, the question for white middle class mothers is how long to breastfeed not whether to breastfeed. One clear issue springs from our cultural anxiety about incest and child sexual abuse. If one breastfeeds for "too long," defined by the dominant culture as more than one year, one risks being seen as weird or disgusting. The implicit concern is that the transgressing mother is having a kind of sexual exchange with her child. Before twelve months of age, the woman is being a good mother and giving her child the "best possible food" for, as a popular slogan states, "breast is best," but nursing beyond twelve months is considered strange by many people in the dominant culture. Journalist Tamar Lewin writes, "the same mothers who got kudos from their pediatricians and warm smiles from strangers when they nursed their newborn babies face criticism - and sometimes even formal charges of abuse - for continuing to breast-feed when that sweetly cooing infant becomes a walking, talking schoolchild - a practice not all that uncommon in traditional societies" (Lewin, "Breast-feeding: How old is too old?" *The New York Times*, February 18, 2001: 5).

As discussed above, the American Association of Pediatricians (AAP) now states that the *optimal* age for breastfeeding is from birth to twelve months, even though this contradicts the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO encourages women to breastfeed their children for a minimum of two years (Lewin, "Breast-feeding: How old is too old?" *The New York Times*, February 18, 2001: 5). AAP wisdom aside, the global average age of weaning is three years (Epstein, "Questioning the 'deadline' for weaning," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1999: F8). Katherine Dettwyler, an anthropology professor at Texas A&M University who studies breastfeeding, argues, "Around the world, there are lots of cultures where people nurse three, four or five years on average...All cultures have various ideas about how short is too short and how long is too long" (quoted in Epstein, "Questioning the 'deadline' for weaning," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1999: F8). Of course, the American Association of Pediatricians - or the World Health Organization, for that matter - is no more purely "objective" today than it was early in the century when mainstream medicine implicitly, if not explicitly, discouraged breastfeeding. This discrepancy points to the cultural, nonobjective influences in their recommendations.

At one end of the breastfeeding continuum are the "bad mothers" who do not breastfeed at all. They are selfish - one of the worst traits in a mother. Perhaps more than any other characteristics, "good mothers" are giving and selfless. They put their children, and possibly their male spouse, before all else. Bad mothers do not breastfeed. They are more concerned with their own freedom - as breastfeeding ties a woman pretty tightly to her child, or at least to a breast pump - than they are with the well-being of their

child. Of course, here again, white middle class notions of good and bad mothering is deeply raced and classed.

La Leche League has little room for women who have to work, much less for those who “merely” *want* to work (see Linda Blum 1999). The 1981 edition of their manual addressed the “problem” of working mothers in print for the first time in a chapter called “Are You Thinking of Going Back to Work?” (La Leche League International 1981: 55). The chapter is filled with not-so-gentle pressure to stay home. La Leche League argues,

The mother-baby relationship has fascinated the scientific community for a long time, since a child’s early years hold the clues to his future behavior as an adult. Society stands to gain or lose, depending on the soundness of the mother-baby attachment. As more mothers asked questions regarding mother-baby separation, we searched out studies on child development.

Scientists hold that the child’s initial one-to-one relationship with his mother is the foundation for emotional growth. From the security of the baby’s ties to his mother he learns to relate to others...Can a baby be “trained” to accept others and not always expect mother to care of him? Won’t this make him more “independent”? No, say the experts. A baby’s need for mother is not a habit; it’s biology. (Ibid: 60)

La Leche League continues, “The young child who is separated from his mother exhibits all of the classic symptoms of grief. He may cry unconsolably or withdraw into unnatural quietness” (ibid). In case there is any doubt as to the detrimental effects of mother working away from their young children, La Leche League makes itself clear by calling on a scientific expert for final validation, La Leche League quotes Humberto Nagera, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Montana. Nagera claims, “When the child is confronted with the mother’s absence his *automatic response is an anxiety state* that on

many occasions reaches overwhelming proportions. Repeated traumas of this type in especially susceptible children will not fail to have serious consequences for their later development...No other animal species will subject their infants to experience that they are not endowed to cope with, except the human animal” (ibid). Later in the book, La Leche League cuts straight to their point. “The greatest difficulty for you and your baby is the separation from each other that working entails. Being away from mother is a serious disruption in a young child’s life. Our pleas to any mother who is thinking about taking an outside job is, “If at all possible, don’t”” (ibid: 271). Where does this leave women who want to work or who must work outside the home to survive? Feeling guilty. And, *understood* by La Leche League among other conservative groups, *as* guilty, guilty of bad mothering.

If a woman does decide to bottlefeed, she is told never to “prop” the bottle, but to always feed the baby in her arms while holding the bottle herself. This maximizes the physical contact between mother and child. Even so, breastfeeding proponents worry because the baby will not get the skin-to-skin contact of the mouth on the breast. In an informal interview, one of my informants, a fifty-eight year old grandmother named Oma, told me about her good friend, another grandmother, whose daughter became seriously and chronically ill during the first two months of her infant daughter’s life. She had been breastfeeding exclusively and then, due to her illness, was forced to abruptly and completely stop. She was deeply concerned about her daughter missing out on breastfeeding’s many benefits. Her first concern was the loss of the benefits of touching her daughter might experience. She convinced her mother, my informant’s friend, to

“breastfeed” her granddaughter using a nursing supplementer. The supplementer allowed the baby to receive her formula while “nursing” at the breast. The nursing supplementer is a narrow tube taped to each breast and carries formula to the nursing baby from a bottle hanging on a cord around the mother’s - or in this case the grandmother’s - neck. The bottle’s cap has a valve that prevents milk from flowing until the baby sucks. Some women use this nursing supplementer to “relactate” if they have stopped nursing their baby and decide to start up again. Others use it to induce lactation so that they are able to nurse an adopted child. My informant’s friend was probably too old to induce lactation. She did not begin to lactate in the many months that she “nursed” her granddaughter. However, feeding the infant in this way, allowed the infant to receive all of the benefits of breastfeeding except for simple nutrition, as of course, the baby was receiving formula. The benefits for the infant were in being touched, in particular the intimate touch of the infant’s mouth sucking on the breast. In fact, the mouth to breast contact is the *only* difference in terms of touch between bottle and breastfeeding if one holds the infant in arms to bottlefeed.

A central slogan of La Leche League International is “We speak for the babies.” And as previously discussed, according to La Leche League and the attachment parenting movement, being touched by the child’s mother, is what babies want and need most. This is what babies would tell us if only they could. Yet at the other end of the adult-child touching continuum is the dominant culture’s deep-seated fear of, and fascination with incest and child sexual abuse. “Good mothers” are supposed to - and supposed to want to - breastfeed, but not for “too long.” “Too long” can mean anything from beyond the first few months to beyond two years. And again, most people in the dominant

culture feel tolerant of breastfeeding up to one year, particularly since the AAP recommends it. Mothers who continue breastfeeding beyond a year are often seen as extremely strange.

One very popular series of child-rearing books exemplifies this anxiety about extended breastfeeding. The *What to Expect* series includes *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, *What to Expect the First Year* and *What to Expect: The Toddler Years*. Arlene Eisenberg and her two daughters, Heidi E. Murkoff and Sandee E. Hathaway wrote the three books together. Additionally, for years before she died of cancer in 2000, Arlene Eisenberg led a weekly, hour-long question and answer group for new mothers and their infants at a New York City synagogue. I read her three books, and my baby son and I attended her group for nearly one year. Eisenberg in the group, and Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway in their book are clearly against extended breastfeeding - for the purposes of this study, I call a breastfeeding relationship that goes beyond one year "extended." What is extremely interesting about this advice is that, like much expert advice, it is merely expert *opinion* - or expert bias, expert prejudice or/and expert musing - masked under the rubric of "truth." In other words, the ideological nature of Eisenberg, et al.'s position on breastfeeding is starkly apparent. Of course, I argue that most, if not all, child-rearing experts espouse ideology in the form of advice. However, usually experts mask their ideology in claims of scientific "proof," or "nature" and "instincts." While on the side of science and the AAP, in their discussion of weaning, Eisenberg, et al. present their position as simple "truth" without any reference to scientific evidence.

In their toddler book, not surprisingly Eisenberg, et al. discuss weaning in chapter one about children's thirteenth month. The section is titled "When to wean from

breastfeeding.” Contra La Leche League International, Diane Bengson or other attachment parenting proponents, for Eisenberg, et al., think that for the thirteen-month-old child *weaning* from breastfeeding is the only thing to be discussed. Each component of the book is framed as a response to a parent’s questions. This section is in response to three inquiries. First: “I thought babies were supposed to wean themselves from the breast when they were ready. My daughter is past her first birthday and doesn’t seem to be showing any sign of wanting to stop.” Without acknowledging diverse opinions about this issue, they write,

If you wait until your daughter decides she’s ready to graduate to a more grown-up source of liquid nourishment, you may have a very long wait ahead. Though some babies and toddlers cut back on or discontinue breastfeeding on their own, usually near the end of the first year, others never do. So unless you want to see her rush home from school for a snack at the breast, you should consider initiating the weaning process yourself. (Eisenberg, et al. 1994: 31)

Throughout their book, Eisenberg, et al. affiliate themselves with mainstream medicine. Unlike La Leche League International, they do not suggest that parents/mothers listen to their “instincts.” They call on the AAP not on nature for their “proof.” Yet apparently having no scientific evidence for the above argument, Eisenberg, et al. let their opinion simply stand as “fact.”

The third weaning inquiry asks: “I’d really like to continue nursing my son for at least the next year or so. Why should I wean him when neither of us is ready yet?” The only affirmative answer Eisenberg, et al. give to this question - or for that matter, the whole issue of extended breastfeeding - is, “Your feelings and those of your toddler are important factors to consider in deciding when to wean.” Having stated the only positive

reason they can muster for extended breastfeeding, Eisenberg, et al. give a page of reasons for weaning. They write, “But other factors merit consideration as well. You will have to weigh these against your own reasons for wanting to continue breastfeeding” (ibid). Naturally Eisenberg, et al.’s first reason to wean is “Expert Opinion.” They claim, with no references or citations, “Most pediatricians and pediatric dentists recommend weaning at a year; their reasons are included in the following list” (ibid). Then, they give a list of nine more reasons to wean none of which are backed up with a reference to scientific research, a scientific expert, or any other citation. For all their reader knows, Eisenberg, et al. pulled this information out of their proverbial hat.

Eisenberg, et al.’s reasons to wean early include “Your toddler’s age. Weaning at a year is ideal. Nutritionally and emotionally the toddler who has nursed for a year has already gotten the optimum benefit from breastfeeding” (ibid: 31). This reason may be a good argument *for* nursing at least one year but it is hard to understand why it is an argument for stopping. Another equally peculiar reason is “Your toddler’s dietary needs. Both the composition of breast milk and the nutritional needs of the growing child alter by the end of the first year. Breast milk can no longer meet a child’s nutritional requirements” (ibid: 32). Again this may be a reason to supplement breastfeeding with solid foods but it is no argument for weaning. Eisenberg, et al. continue, “in fact, some recent studies indicate that children who are nursed beyond this point may not do as well as those who are weaned. Though more research needs to be done in this area, it does seem clear that there are no nutritional benefits to nursing now” (ibid: 32). Here Eisenberg, et al. directly contradict other “experts” on breastfeeding.

Bengson cites numerous articles to make her and La Leche League's claim breastfeeding's benefits increase over time. They argue 'the longer, the better' is a good rule of thumb when it comes to breastfeeding. "Breastfeeding researchers have recently become more aware of the need to factor in how long a child is breastfed in relation to the extent of the benefits. In nearly every study of this type, the longer the child was breastfed, the greater the benefit" (Bengson 1999: 10). According to Bengson, the benefits include continued high-quality nutrition, comfort and support, and immense health advantages.

There are additional health benefits associated with longer breastfeeding. Nursing past one year enhances oral development, leading to less need for orthodontic treatment as the child grows. Breastfeeding can lessen the severity of allergies, or delay or prevent them. Breastfeeding contributes to better brain development. Extended breastfeeding also protects children from diseases like childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and many others, and the benefits continue well beyond weaning." (Ibid: 9-10)

For all of these reasons, especially relevant to poor people who are often more vulnerable to disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) encourages women to breastfeed for *at least* two years.

For the purposes of this study Eisenberg, et al.'s position is especially interesting, not because it is correct or incorrect, but because they are so willing to make statements without any effort to substantiate them, about very important child-rearing issues, as though their ideological beliefs are simply true. Right or wrong, Eisenberg, et al.'s anti-extended breastfeeding stance fits well with mainstream medicine's position on touch.

Touching is to be avoided, particularly touching, like breastfeeding beyond the “necessary” year, which is potentially sexual.

I argue that anxiety about incest is at the core of the concern. The extended breastfeeding relationship, in particular, triggers this incest anxiety, the anxiety that in extended breastfeeding the mother is taking something from the infant. Anthropologist Dettwyler, said in a *New York Times* article, “I get one or two calls a month about someone accused of harming a child, even as young as 18 months, by nursing... They claim that the mother is breast-feeding for her own sexual pleasure. It’s a logical outgrowth of our society’s sexualization of the breast” (quoted in Lewin, “Breast-feeding: How old is too old?” *The New York Times*, February 18, 2001: 5). In informal conversation, several people said to me that women who breastfeed beyond a year are not doing it for the baby. They are extended breastfeeding because “they get something out of it.” One friend talking about my study asked, “Are you going to discuss pathological breastfeeding?” I asked her what she meant by “pathological breastfeeding.” She explained that some mothers breastfeed beyond two or three years. She claimed that these mothers are not breastfeeding for the child’s sake but to fill some need of their own.

Eisenberg, et al. hint at this worry. Their ninth reason to wean at one year of age states the following:

“The effect on your spousal relationship. Breastfeeding that continues well into the second year, especially if it’s taking place in your bed, can easily come between you and your spouse. Besides making spousal intimacy inconvenient at best, it may, on a subconscious level satisfy both emotional and physical needs for closeness, diminishing your interest in sex... (Remember, your spouse is yours for life. Your toddler will grow up, leave home, and eventually find a partner of his own. Save some nurturing for your partner...).” (Ibid.)

Indeed, many women *do* experience physical pleasure while breastfeeding. Some even have orgasms. In her paper on “Maternal experience and the boundaries of Christian sexual ethics,” Cristina L. H. Traina (2000) describes her own experience of orgasm while breastfeeding.

One day, as I breast-fed my eldest daughter, I decided to practice the Kegel exercises postpartum women use to regain tone in their pelvic floor muscles. Quietly nursing, rocking, contracting, releasing, I felt my vaginal muscles take over: an orgasm. I jolted to attention, shocked that I had experienced a sexual climax while embracing an infant. The connection felt dirty and incestuous. “I’ll make sure that I never do that again!” I thought. It was some years before I reflected carefully on the close physiological and emotional connections between my maternity, and my experience of my own sexuality and came to wonder not how I could have permitted myself to have this unsought experience but why the likelihood and even “naturalness” of it had never before occurred to me and why it is so rarely mentioned. (Traina 2000: 1-2)

In fact, the physiology of breastfeeding seems to be inextricably connected to orgasm for women. The connection involves a hormone called oxytocin. Oxytocin is secreted by the posterior pituitary, one of two parts making up the pituitary gland. The pituitary gland is connected to and controlled by the hypothalamus, “a portion of the brain that has centers for body temperature, sleep, sexual activity, and emotional states” (Mader 1992: 74). Oxytocin causes “milk letdown” during lactation. When a baby nurses or, for many women, when they just think of their baby nursing, a signal is sent to the brain to secrete oxytocin which in turn causes the mammary glands in the breasts to release milk. Oxytocin also causes the uterus to contract. This is one primary reason

mainstream medicine has begun to encourage women to nurse their infant immediately after birth.

This, however, is not all that oxytocin seems to do. “Oxytocin, a hormone that stimulates the smooth muscles and sensitizes the nerves, is produced by sexual arousal - the more you’re in the mood, the more oxytocin you’ll produce. As you begin to make love, oxytocin is released throughout your body, making your nerves more sensitive to pleasure and giving you that turned-on feeling. As the hormone level builds, oxytocin causes the nerves in your genitals to fire spontaneously, bringing on orgasm and giving you the feeling of losing control” (ibid: 77). In both men and women, oxytocin activates the physical response in sex. Given this biological “reality” it makes sense that women often experience breastfeeding as pleasurable, even sexually so. However, of course, women exist as bodies in culture. And this physiological connection between breastfeeding and sex is simply unacceptable in the contemporary mainstream.

Yet must doing something for the baby only “count” when there is nothing in it for the mother? Ultimately, I argue that according to the dictates of the contemporary dominant culture, to be good mothers *means* “getting nothing back.” Getting nothing back is a sign of “love,” and good mothers act, purely, out of love. This very justification, mothering as a “labor of love” that has grounded the modern capitalist economy in the unpaid labor of women as they reproduce the workforce.

In other words, good mothers do breastfeed, *and yet* they do not breastfeed for “too long.” Ultimately, good mothers do whatever they do *for the child*. They are selfless. “Getting something out of it” herself starts a mother on the slippery slope to bad

mothering. And, at the bottom of the slope, mainstream culture understands incest to be one of the worst behaviors a bad mother might ever commit.

Incest and child sexual abuse

While discussing the social stigma against breastfeeding, particularly against breastfeeding beyond the first three months or so, one informal interviewee, Cara, mentioned that she allows her twenty two month old son, Max, “to touch her breasts.” She said that people have a lot of problems with that. She implied that the problems people expressed were due to the potential sexuality of such touch. But she believes the child and mother should have unlimited physical contact.

Clearly there is a very fine line between sexual and nonsexual touch. It may in some ways be a useless line to try and find. Given our cultural context, sexual intercourse or other clearly sexual behaviors between children and adults does seem deeply abusive of the child. But beyond such obvious sexual behavior, it may be hard to know. The theory behind attachment parenting is that if the child is given lots of loving contact and almost never feels abandoned or alone, the child will be well adjusted and confident as she/he enters the larger world. Indeed, Cara claims that her son, Max, is a very friendly, unafraid, well-adjusted child.

Video maker, Alyssa R. Bennett explores the line between the sexual and nonsexual touching of children in her documentary video, “Touching Children” (1994). Bennett argues that we have become deeply paranoid about our children’s sexuality and about our own sexual feelings towards children. In her video, Bennett interviews Denise Perrigo, a white single mother of one who was arrested on charges of child sexual abuse.

Perrigo's then two-year-old daughter, Cherilyn, was taken away from her and put in foster care for a year. The exact sexual abuse charge was "mouth to breast contact."

Denise Perrigo practiced extended breastfeeding although, as she says in her interview, she and Cherilyn were "working on weaning" when the arrest happened. One day while nursing Cherilyn, Perrigo experienced sexual arousal. This alarmed her and so she called a community volunteer center and requested that she be put in touch with La Leche League International. When the volunteer center heard "sexual arousal" they put her in contact with a rape crisis center instead of La Leche League. The counselor who answered the telephone at the rape crisis center heard Perrigo's story and believed it to be "child sexual abuse." She told Perrigo that because the situation involved a child she had to get her supervisor. When she explained the situation to her supervisor, she *told* her it was a case of child sexual abuse. The supervisor got on the telephone believing Perrigo to be sexually abusing her child as they spoke. Perrigo says that everything the supervisor heard, fit, in her mind, as "proof" of child sexual abuse. For example, she asked Perrigo where her daughter was right then. Perrigo said that Cherilyn was in her bed. Whereas Perrigo, speaking on the telephone, was in a different room than her child Cherilyn, in bed, the supervisor wrote down that Perrigo was in bed with her daughter.

While she was on the telephone arguing with the rape crisis center supervisor, the supervisor contacted the sexual abuse "hot line," which sent local police to arrest Perrigo. She was taken into custody and interviewed by the police for five straight hours. Perrigo claims that the police tried everything to get her to "admit" to sexually abusing her daughter. In the midst of the interview, the police made clear their ignorance about breastfeeding telling Perrigo that it is not possible to breastfeed a two-year-old child.

Even though the criminal charges were eventually dropped, “social services filed charges of sexual abuse and neglect with the family court and Perrigo was allowed only biweekly supervised visits with her daughter during an almost one-year separation” (Blum 1999: 96).

Charged with child sexual abuse for nursing a child over one-year-old, Perrigo is not alone in her experience. Similar charges take place in the United States regularly. In July 2000, a mother in Champaign, Illinois, temporarily lost custody of her five-year-old son whom she was breastfeeding. After an alarming telephone call from the family’s babysitter, child-welfare officials took the boy, charging the mother, Lynn Stuckey, with child sexual abuse - in other words, breastfeeding. The mother had “planned to wean her son whenever he asked to stop breast-feeding, a practice supported by La Leche League...But Judge Ann Einhorn of the Champaign County Circuit put the boy in foster care with the baby-sitter, saying the extended breast-feeding created a situation with “enormous potential for emotional harm” (Lewin, “Breast-feeding: How old is too old?” *The New York Times*, February 18, 2001: 5). Journalist Sara Corbett writes, “In interviews with counselors, the boy expressed shame and confusion regarding the situation, and the story went on to grab national headlines, which in turn set off rounds of moralistic clucking over its perceived impropriety” (Corbett, *The breast offense*, *The New York times magazine*, May 6, 2001: 84).

After an abrupt separation that lasted for six months, Judge Einhorn finally returned legal custody to the mother. The mother had to consent to parenting classes and counseling. Considering the potential harm of unexpectedly removing a young child from his mother for half a year, one wonders if such classes might have done the judge

good. Perhaps most curious, the mother was barred from discussing the matter in public. Whereas the judge did back down on her charge that the mother was sexually abusing her son, Judge Einhorn claimed that the case raised issues about “a parent helping a child to be appropriately independent” (ibid: 85). In fact, extended breastfeeding proponents claim healthy independence is one of the primary outcomes of long-term breastfeeding.

Recently, two years after the state took her child for six months, and in spite of having been barred from discussing the matter publicly, Stuckey really went public. She appeared with her now eight-year-old son breastfeeding on national television. Dave McKinney of the *Chicago Sun-Times* writes (July 10, 2002), “The footage on ABC-TV’s “Good Morning America” drew an incredulous reaction from the Champaign County prosecutor who wanted Lynn Stuckey’s son placed in foster care... While reading a Harry Potter book, a fully clothed Stuckey was shown briefly nursing her son - something she said occurs once every 10 days to two weeks, even though Stuckey said she is unsure whether she is still producing milk” (McKinney, *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 10, 2002). Stuckey claimed that her son “has not been teased at school or in their Champaign neighborhood” (ibid). And she denied the “possibility that she is causing him emotional harm by still nursing him” (ibid).

Stuckey picks up the mainstream’s belief about good mothers - they do whatever they do for the child - and uses this thinking to argue for an unusual behavior in contemporary mainstream culture. In the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Stuckey is quoted, “I never forced my child to nurse. I did not nurse because I was gaining any sort of sexual pleasure out of this. The state attorney’s office and the Department of Children and Family Services are very incorrect and are greatly misstating my motives” (ibid).

Stuckey said that her son could continue breastfeeding until “he decides to finish weaning himself” (ibid). When questioned if there is an age when it might be inappropriate for breastfeeding, Stuckey said, “Maybe...into their teens” (ibid).

Indeed, breastfeeding advocate and La Leche League International member, Elizabeth Baldwin, claimed that “it is not unheard of for some mothers to nurse children in private until they are as old as 10” (ibid). Yet Baldwin “questioned the wisdom of Stuckey allowing her son and herself to be filmed for a national audience” (ibid). Baldwin said, “I don’t believe this is helping the breast-feeding community. I believe it will hurt, and it will hurt herself [sic]. And the only reason I say that is the public’s perception” (ibid). As for Stuckey, she argued that the “greatest harm to befall her son was when Illinois child welfare officials took him from her for six months in 2000 amid allegations she was breast-feeding him against his will and sleeping with him in the nude” (ibid).

The act of one human being sucking on another’s breast contains multiple and significant meanings. Like other forms of adult-child touch, beliefs about breastfeeding have been and continue to exist within contested terrain in mainstream America. Yet as compared to other kinds of touching, breastfeeding entails a unique form of touch; breastfeeding involves a sexualized part of the body, *and* it only involves female bodies doing the feeding. Nonetheless, other touching practices are also heavily debated. Indeed, Stuckey lost her child for six months not only because of her breastfeeding practice but also for her sleeping arrangements. Thus from breastfeeding, in the next chapter, I explore an adult-child touching practice no less contested, albeit more inclusive of all genders, sleeping alone versus sleeping together.

Chapter four. The 1980s and 1990s and mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch: Child-rearing advice on sharing sleep versus the crib in popular books

Introduction

On September 30, 1999, *The New York Times* reported on a study by the Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission about children and sleep, particularly adults “sharing sleep” with their children. The study raised an immediate uproar in scientific, parenting and child-rearing, self-help expert communities. The study argued that parents should never sleep in the same bed with their infants or toddlers. The concern was that parents might, in their sleep, roll on top of their infants, or that the infants might get caught in the parents’ blankets and then suffocate. The agency “presented data from a study it had conducted indicating that over an eight-year period 515 children under 2 - an average of 64 a year - died as a result of sleeping in adult beds.” Ann Brown, the commission’s chair, argued that “the issue was one of safety and that there was no safe way for parents and infants to sleep together” (*The New York Times*, September 30, 1999). Calling on scientific data herself, Penelope Leach, a pro-sleep sharing childrearing expert and popular writer, responded, “Before making such a stark declaration of cause and effect, a government agency should make its case very carefully...Three other studies, in the United States, New Zealand and Britain, reported no direct risk to babies from sleeping in parents’ beds.” An expert herself, Leach added, “I’m not knocking experts, but I do think we should avoid offering advice until we’re absolutely sure that it accounts for every variable” (*The New York Times*, op-ed, October 1, 1999).

How to put - or *get*, as the case may be - children to sleep is a big issue for contemporary parents in the United States. Indeed, a 1995 study by Sara Harkness, Charles Super and Constance Keefer found that “more parents seek advice on how to get their children to sleep than on any other health or behavioral subject” (John Seabrook, *The New Yorker*, November 8, 1999). In my research on ideologies of adult-child touch, I argue that the contemporary controversy over whether to-sleep-or-not-to-sleep-with-your-children must be understood as a continuation of long-standing ideological and practical debates. Moreover, as I contend in this chapter ideologies surrounding touching, gender and class are central to the controversy.

Infants sleeping apart from parents became the fashion among the Anglo American Protestant middle class early in the twentieth century. Sleeping alone, like the avoidance of touch in general, kept infants and older children free from adult germs. The threat of germs was real. Many people died from diseases like tuberculosis. Science had just discovered the connections between unsanitary conditions and disease. However, the concern went beyond issues of physical health to issues of gender and class. For example, as discussed earlier, John B. Watson (1928) felt that the deepest threat to children was “mother love.” Women not touching their children helped to protect children from this “danger.” Yet also, the project of experts like John B. Watson and Luther Emmett Holt (1894) was to end the messy touching of children and to sanitize adult-child relations. This may be deeply connected to the early twentieth century middle class interest in “Americanizing” poor and working class immigrants who traditionally lived in large extended families where physical contact was understood to be normal and healthy.

The contemporary debate is between two scientific experts at either end of the to-sleep-or-not-to-sleep-with-your-child continuum, William Sears and Richard Ferber. Again and again, these two experts come up in popular media and forums as the primary contenders in the sleep debate. For example, recently in New York City, an informational service called the New Mommies' Network sponsored a talk on "The Sleep Debate: Ferber vs. Sears (and is there an in-between?) - Tough Love vs. Attachment Parenting" (presentation done by Lois Nachamie, author of *Big Lessons for Little People*, in 2000).

As one might expect in our dichotomous mainstream culture, the experts split into the same two reoccurring and sharply defined sides. On the one hand, Ferber and the behaviorists are against sharing sleep and wary of bodily contact; their goal for the child is individuation. Depending upon one's perspective, Ferber's method is understood to be more "boundaried" leaving the whole family better rested, and thus, the parents better able to parent. At the other end of the continuum, Ferber's method entails neglect of the child, and therefore, is tantamount to child abuse. On the other hand, the "naturalists" are for sharing sleep, strongly for adult-child physical contact, and proponents of a relationship-oriented understanding of healthy child development. And again, depending on the parent's beliefs, Sears's method is more loving and leads to a deeper connection with one's child leaving the whole family better rested, and thus, the parents better able to parent. Or again, for those on the other side of the debate, Sears's method borders on the incestuous, and therefore, is tantamount to child abuse.

In this chapter, I continue to explore the mind-body dualism as it is played out in ideologies of adult-child touch and beliefs about sleeping/not sleeping with children. In

particular, I examine the split between Sears's relationship-oriented focus, which emphasizes attachment and dependency, and Ferber's masculine orientation, which focuses on children separating from the parents and siblings and learning to be independent. Before delving into this study of the dualisms informing these two extremely popular self-help books, Sears's *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* (1985) and Ferber's *Nighttime Parenting: How to Get Your Baby and Child to Sleep* (1985), I provide a brief social history of the contemporary American sharing sleep debate with a focus on the popular challenge to science.

Socio-historical context

The "sleep sharing" debate between Sears and Ferber, like the larger "sleep sharing" debate going on right now in mainstream United States society, has multiple elements rooted in a complicated history. One central issue constitutes a popular challenge to mainstream medicine and science. Whereas Sears and La Leche League International, discussed in chapter three, represent a popular defiance of mainstream science, Ferber, like other behaviorists before him, falls solidly on the side of conventional science.

This history of challenge to science and to the scientific expert runs throughout the twentieth century and has had several prominent surges since the turn of the century. Most importantly, those supposedly opposing science have simultaneously *used* science to make their challenge. In the end, in the twentieth century United States, science is an ideology, a legitimizing force that everyone makes claims to, albeit in diverse ways.

The first wave of challenge to mainstream medicine came in the early part of the century from a popular health movement that was connected to both women's rights and working people's rights (Ehrenreich and English, 1978). Next, in the 1950s, came the women's health movement including the founding of La Leche League International. Historian Lynn Weiner (1994) argues that La Leche League and larger women's health movement foreshadowed the second wave feminist movement, but La Leche League was not explicitly feminist. Indeed, in many ways it was anti-feminist. Even so as discussed in chapter three, like the feminist movement, it did challenge the hegemony of elite male science. Yet unlike many feminists, La Leche League essentialized what it means to be female. It argued that women "naturally" know better than the experts how to have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth, and how to raise healthy infants and children. The experts have science; yet La Leche League argued, science cannot compete with "womanly intuition" when it comes to having and raising babies. This is women's natural, and most important, role in life.

In contrast to the rhetoric and legitimizing power of mainstream science, La Leche League called upon on the "natural." Yet they consistently used scientific experts to back up their claims. As well, in a number of less visible ways, the La Leche League movement grounded itself in Christianity. The founders of the movement were all openly Catholic women who met each other through a religious family social organization. And, although Sears did not become prominent for another three decades, he himself is reputed to be a born-again style Christian. Christian religiosity - rather than feminism - seems to be a central, if unacknowledged component of the Sears/La Leche League version of attachment parenting. The movement's "traditional" understanding of women and of the

primacy of women's roles as mothers and homemakers reflects the "traditional" Christian roots of the movement.

A third popular challenge to mainstream science came in the 1960s when a large component of the feminist movement focused on women's health. While it shared many ideals with the La Leche League movement, the feminist women's health movement was explicitly political. And in sharp contrast to La Leche League, feminists challenged the essentialization of women, and women's bodies and roles. Although components of the feminist movement did essentialize women and women's roles, feminist analysis of dominance, even when it essentialized gender, made feminist thinking fundamentally different from the La Leche League women's health movement. La Leche League did *not* see women as oppressed. It believed that science and industrialization were destroying the "natural" healthy relationships between mothers and babies. They wanted - and still want - to "go back" to women's "traditional" domestic roles as Mother, homemaker and wife.

The rest of this chapter investigates both the fourth popular challenge to mainstream science, which came in the 1980s and 1990s and was, and is, a continuation of the earlier challenges, and the mainstream scientific stand on children's sleep. Sears and organizations such as La Leche League International claim to challenge science by appealing to intuition and the natural, whereas Ferber upholds the more mainstream and behaviorist-leaning medical model. In line with the early twentieth century experts, Ferber and the mainstream medical experts such as in the Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission research discussed above, contend that sleeping with your children is *dangerous*. As discussed earlier, I argue that this thinking is tied to a larger white middle

class Protestant fear of touching, bodies, and of sexuality in general. Interestingly, feminists do not seem to have a prominent voice here although, if anything, many feminists, and particularly white middle class liberal feminists, seem to align themselves with Ferber and mainstream science rather than with Sears, La Leche League and their “womanly intuition arguments.”

The contemporary debate

a. Richard Ferber

The New Age recipe for bringing up baby - carry it about constantly and breastfeed it till it can open beer cans with its teeth and have it sleep between you and hubby until it reaches voting age - seems to me to be disastrous for a romantic and happy marriage.

The Born Again Cows who advise such a regime may well be responsible for a generation of split families ten years from now. For nothing turns a man off faster than making him feel he is married to a womb rather than a woman. (Columnist Julie Burchill, “Smother Love,” *Mail on Sunday*, August 26, 1990, quoted in Jackson 1999: 185)

Before sharing sleep became an official middle class, child-rearing method, my mother tipped her bed cap to the “Born Again Cow” philosophy; although she did not fully join their league. To be sure, when I was a child, there was nothing I wanted more than to stay with my mother at night in her bed. And when she was between lovers, sometimes she would let me. I would curl up tight squeezed between her and the wall, and try to be still. Every movement, even my breathing posed a problem. If I could only be still, perfectly still, maybe my mother would not notice the space I took, maybe she would, almost, not know I was there. Then, maybe, she would allow me to stay with her

again the next night. In my childhood, my mother's bed at night was the safest place I knew. And looking back, it still is.

Richard Ferber, had he known my mother, would have encouraged her to send me back to my own room. For Ferber, my desperate need to stay with my mother at night was a problem, a problem to be confronted, a problem to get through. For Ferber, and the behaviorists generally, neediness such as mine would only expand given the opportunity. Allowing me to stay with my mother at night only reinforced my need. For Ferber, the thing to do is to meet need head-on by denying its fulfillment.

Babies and children often want to sleep with their parents. In his well-known book, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* (1985), popular child-rearing expert Richard Ferber argues that parents should not permit this. Ferber uses scientific information about sleep to argue that children should not be allowed to sleep in their parents' bed. Armed with science and scientific evidence, Ferber claims to offer a way to better health and better parenting. And he has the scientific clout to back up his claims. At the back of his book under the heading, "About The Author," is the following notation:

Dr. Richard Ferber is widely recognized as the nation's leading authority in the field of children's sleep problems. Director of the Sleep Lab and the Center for Pediatric Sleep Disorders at Children's Hospital in Boston (Harvard University's pediatric teaching hospital), Dr. Ferber also teaches at Harvard Medical School and is a pediatrician. (Ferber 1985)

Ferber gives three primary reasons why babies and children should not sleep with their parents. Interestingly, given his reliance on science to describe infant sleep and to explain his method, he makes no use of science to back up the "whys" of his argument. Ferber describes in detail such phenomena as rapid eye movement or REM sleep, and

non-REM sleep, and he discusses the four stages of non-REM sleep and the percentage of time babies versus adults spend in REM and non-REM sleep each night. Yet after all his scientific information on sleep, if readers wonder *why* babies and children should never sleep with their parents, they have to trust Ferber's little-discussed opinion on the matter. First, Ferber claims both the child and the parents will not sleep as well and that this is unhealthy. He writes, "Although taking your child into bed with you for a night or two may be reasonable if he is ill or very upset about something, for the most part this is not a good idea." Ferber continues, "We know for a fact that people sleep better alone in bed." This is "a fact" that seems to have eluded many people, including the sharing sleep proponents. The "fact" that so many people sleep better with someone else does not seem to Ferber to need explaining. He does not explain why untold numbers of people love to sleep with others nearby in bed, or where he came up with this "fact." He gives no scientific or other reason why he believes this to be true, or who the "we" is that he refers to.

Second, Ferber argues that a child who sleeps with her or his parents will not become independent and individuated. He writes, "But there are even better reasons for your child to sleep in his own bed. Sleeping alone is an important part of his learning to be able to separate from you without anxiety and to see himself as an independent individual. This process is important to his early psychological development." And third, Ferber believes that the child will be overwhelmed by his/her feelings and confused by the situation. Here Ferber seems to be referring, albeit in an unclear manner, to his concern about the possibility of incest. Ferber writes, "In addition, sleeping in your bed can make your child feel confused and anxious rather than relaxed and reassured...Even a

young toddler may find this repeated experience overly stimulating.” And Ferber concludes, “These feelings may be heightened if only one parent is in the bed.” (Ferber, 1985, 38-39) Ferber does not actually say so, but he insinuates that the child will experience confusion related to her own and her parents’ sexuality. Ferber is expressing this white middle class fear of touching, and anxiety about the multiple meanings touching, which may include incest.

Ferber is much less explicitly gendered than many child-rearing experts. Indeed, Ferber directs his work to both fathers and mothers. He does not assume that fathers will go off to work in the public sphere while mothers stay in the private world of the home centering their lives around their husbands and children. And he uses gender neutral language when he talks about or speaks to parents. In spite of this and in sharp contrast to the sharing sleep proponents, Ferber’s thinking entails a deeply masculine way of understanding human development and adult-child touch.

Social theorist Roslyn Wallach Bologh argues that a masculine worldview banishes care and nurturance to the private sphere. Through the masculine ideal one sees the world as a place where “autonomous actors all [strive] to prove their independence and omnipotence...[I]ndependent, powerful actors all [contend] to impose their will on the world, a place made up of struggles for power and dominance” (Bologh 1990: 5). Masculine values uphold independence as a central component of healthy human development (Mosse 1996). Ferber believes children need to learn to be alone. In Ferber’s work, a central focus of child development is the process of individuation. In contrast to the sharing sleep proponents or La Leche League who concentrate on the interconnection of parents and their children, Ferber directs much of his discussion to the

need for parents to have firm boundaries with their children. For Ferber, independence rather than interdependence is a primary goal of healthy child development.

Tied to his masculine understanding of development, Ferber completely ignores the question of touch. Neither touch nor any synonyms for touch are listed in his index, nor is touching or the need for physical contact discussed anywhere in his text. The closest Ferber comes to discussing touch is in his several fairly brief discussions of “separation anxiety.” The first time Ferber addresses separation anxiety, he acknowledges it as a reason why some children have trouble sleeping alone. He recognizes separation anxiety as a problem. Yet for Ferber, children must go through this “stage” - separation anxiety - to individuate. “Bedtime means separation, which is difficult for children, especially very young ones. Simply sending a toddler or young child off to bed alone is not fair and may be scary for him.” Ferber proposes that parents spend “ten to thirty minutes to do something special with [their] child before bed.” Yet he argues that parents must let their child know that the “special time together will not extend beyond the time [they] have agreed upon...” He warns parents, “don’t go beyond those limits...don’t give in for an extra story. Your child will learn the rules only if you enforce them” (Ferber 1985: 37). He believes that rather than “giving in” to your child’s anxiety and spending more time, or even sleeping with the child, parents should encourage their child’s attachment to a “transitional object.” And as discussed earlier, in sharp contrast to the sharing sleep proponents and to La Leche League, Ferber believes that separation anxiety is something to work towards “getting over.” He proposes alleviating the bedtime anxiety minimally by spending time with the child, without

“giving in” to the child’s anxiety by holding the actual bedtime separation in place. This thinking is inextricably connected to Ferber’s belief in the need to “individuate.”

Ferber teaches that separation anxiety should be gotten over by teaching a child to be independent. This masculinist approach might include the use of “transitional objects” to help a child reach the goal of independence and in getting one’s child to sleep alone. Ferber writes, “Better than lying with your toddler or young child until he falls asleep at night is for him to fall asleep with a “transitional object” - a stuffed animal, a doll, a toy, a special blanket. The toy will often help him accept the nighttime separation from you and can be a source of reassurance and comfort when he is alone. It will give him a feeling of having a little control over his world because he may have the toy or blanket with him whenever he wants, which he cannot expect from you. His toy will not get up and leave after he falls asleep and it will still be there whenever he wakes.” Ferber argues against allowing “yourself to be used in the manner of such an object - to lie with him, to nurse or rock him, to be held, cuddled, or caressed by him, or let him twirl your hair whenever he tries to fall asleep.” For if you do, Ferber warns that your child “will never take on a transitional object, because he won’t need to” (ibid: 40-41). Here a transitional object helps children reach the goal of independence from their parents. In contrast, for Sears, independence is not an explicit goal. He focuses on what he calls “feeling right,” and “feeling right” happens for children through a dependent relationship with the child’s caregiver, particularly the mother.

Ferber’s focus on the process of individuation is not merely masculinist, it springs from a larger mainstream middle class way of understanding development and touch. Ferber, like the dominant middle class culture, believes that individual people need their

own separate physical space, their own beds, their own rooms. “Healthy” individuals must learn to spend time alone, boundaried and separate from one another.

Ferber is probably the most popular child-rearing expert on this issue, but he is not alone in his mandate to sleep separately. Most mainstream medical and other behaviorist-leaning child-rearing experts argue against sharing sleep. As one might expect in our individualist, masculinist mainstream culture, most of the other experts cite individuating as a primary reasons for sleeping separating. *The Self-Calmed Baby* (1989), a popular child-rearing book by pediatrician William A.H. Sammons, claims on its back cover, “It’s surprisingly simple to make your infant an equal partner in creating a contented family.” Of primary concern in his book, Sammons cautions parents not to be manipulated by their babies. Even for two-month-old infants, crying “becomes an important manipulator of attention,” and manipulating babies can be quickly “spoiled” (Sammons 1989: 167). Sammons warns parents, “Spoiling can occur at any age, even with a newborn” (ibid: 233). Instead of being manipulated, “help” the baby learn to “self-calm.” Sammons argues that all babies, even newborns, can self-calm. “Self-calming is a skill system, learned through practice...As the infant learns to self-calm, he relies typically on sucking, vision, and body motion or position as his favored mode” (ibid: 185). Whereas many health care providers consider infant body rocking - rocking her or his body back and forth while on all fours or while seated - to be a indication of psychological distress, Sammons claims it is sign of a healthy, individuated baby, a baby who can self-calm. One images Sammons’s babies with tiny boots pulling themselves upward by their tiny bootstraps.

In another popular book, *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child*, the author Marc Weissbluth (1987) claims that babies must sleep a certain set number of hours - how many depending on their age - to be healthy and happy, and to develop properly. For example, according to Weissbluth, three-year-old children need 1.9 hours of daytime sleep and 10.6 hours of nighttime sleep. Weissbluth's method of teaching a child to sleep this set period of hours is straightforward. Whether your child is four-months-old or four-years, you must put her in the crib or bed, shut the door to the room - like other behaviorist child-rearing experts, Weissbluth assumes that the child has her own room - and not return until morning. Weissbluth writes, "Once down, down is down, no matter how long she cries. Please do not return, until your baby falls asleep" (Weissbluth 1987: 123). Like Sammons, Weissbluth argues that babies and children will develop self-calming behaviors. These range from sucking on her hand to extensive self-rocking. Weissbluth's own son was a head-banger. He writes, "My third son banged his head against the crib every night when we moved into a new house...My solution was to use clothesline rope and sofa cushions to pad both ends and both sides completely" (ibid: 202). Weissbluth followed his own expert advice, and responded by leaving the child to work things through on his own. Happily, Weissbluth claims success, "Now, when he banged away, there was no racket, no pain, and no parental attention" (ibid).

Touch is, at best, a non-issue for these thinkers. Whereas other child-rearing experts like La Leche League advocate parents, particularly mothers, touching their children as much as is possible, Ferber does not mention touch. In Ferber's schema, touch is not merely unimportant. In the mainstream middle class, and for Ferber, touch is

dangerous. It is dirty and enables the spread of germs. Yet beyond the issue of germs, there is a larger concern about, and fear of bodies.

Ferber works as a researcher. He is the director of the Sleep Laboratory and Center for Pediatric Sleep Disorders at Children's Hospital in Boston. This probably explains why Ferber relies completely on science to back up his claims. This is not to say that Ferber's thinking does not have a heavy dose of ideology. It may be harder to see ideology at play in Ferber's thinking since he situates his work within the twentieth century cultural belief that science equals truth. Ferber assumes that science and scientific experts are authorities to be trusted without question or explanation. Ferber's ideology is simply more in tune with the mainstream medical establishment. Ferber does not refer to "instincts" or the "natural." Nor does he refer to God or the supernatural or to history, "folk" knowledge or the experience of other cultures. In fact, he does not mention that there might be other authorities, as though it is obvious that science is the place to turn for answers to parenting questions.

Interestingly in spite of this, as discussed earlier, Ferber offers three reasons why children should not sleep with their parents, none of which are grounded in science or scientific research. Ferber claims that it is "unhealthy" for children and parents to sleep in the same bed as "people sleep better alone in bed." Ferber states this and gives no reason, scientific or otherwise, to show his readers that this might be true. Next he argues that sleeping with their parents, children will not individuate. Here again, he neither offers hard scientific "proof," nor psychoanalytic nor any other theory to back up his thinking on individuation.

Finally, Ferber claims that children sleeping with their parents will find the “experience overly stimulating.” Here, as with breastfeeding ideology, and thinking about adult-child touch generally, incest rises again as a central concern. Ferber insinuates that children sleeping with their parents will experience the situation in a *sexually* stimulating way. For Ferber, and for much of the mainstream middle class with its Anglo-Saxon cultural history, bodies are dangerous. Put bodies together they will run out of control into bad - sexual - behavior. Bodies must be kept apart from one another so that the rational mind can stay in control. This concern with sexual stimulation, along with Ferber’s first two reasons, is thrown in amidst a book full of scientific language and descriptions of scientific research. Yet in offering his three reasons for sleeping separately from one’s children, Ferber is unable, or at least does not attempt to back them up with science. Maybe he assumes that his being a scientist is reason enough for trusting his statements, even when they move beyond the realm of scientific “proof.”

b. William Sears

In this section, I explore the contemporary debate over sharing sleep from the perspective of William Sears and the naturalist child-rearing experts. Diverging sharply from earlier experts, in the latter part of the century, particularly the 1980s on, there has been a turn in some of the expert advice and mainstream thought about where children should sleep. William Sears, and other popular “naturalist” child-rearing experts such as Katie Allison Granju (1999), advocate strongly for parents “sharing sleep” with their babies and children. Sears argues that sharing sleep is beneficial in large part *because* it involves extensive touching. He writes, “The skin is the largest organ in the human body,

and tactile stimulation or the lack of it can have a profound effect on how the baby develops.” Sears continues, “tactile stimulation is beneficial to the entire baby, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. The extra touching that a baby receives by sleeping with his parents definitely has a beneficial effect on his development. I suspect that infants who sleep with their mothers grow better” (Sears 1985: 29-30). According to Dr. Sears, touch is central to the child’s physical and emotion well-being. To deprive a child of touch is not unlike depriving a child of other basic physical needs such as food and drink. With touch, children “grow better.”

For Sears, the central component of a healthy, dependent adult-child relationship is touch. One can imagine many ways to communicate with, and to be with, a child. One might emphasize discussion, reading out loud to/with a child. One might focus on activities done together with a child, such as art projects or sports. One might emphasize cooking and eating special foods with a child. Yet for Sears, the crucial element of a healthy parent-child relationship is touch. Over and over, in his book, Sears discusses the importance of touching, or what he also calls “skin-to-skin contact.”

Sometime in the 1980s, Dr. William Sears became the La Leche League International expert of the day. It is interesting that scientific experts continue to play a significant leadership role in La Leche League. Significantly, the current expert is like the old experts, a white middle class Christian male. One might expect that an organization that is predominantly run by and for women, would make a particular effort to find female leadership. La Leche League understands women as inhabiting a very narrow social role. Women are closely connected to the “natural.” According to La Leche League, women should trust their “instincts.” In contrast, men are the rational

authorities one turns to for scientific information. Sears is the current scientific “backup” for La Leche League. Originally, the La Leche League published most of Sears’s numerous child-rearing books. (As Sears developed in popularity, he began to use bigger, for-profit publishers.) And whereas La Leche League International founded “attachment parenting” in the 1950s, it was Sears who gave it its name decades later.

Sears named the La Leche League style of parenting, “attachment parenting” with an obvious tip of his hat to Bowlby. Attachment parenting according to Sears, helps parents “to know their child,” and this helps parents “to help their child feel right” (Sears 1985: 1). Sears writes, “A child who feels right acts right and is a joy to parent. I want you as parents to enjoy your child” (ibid). Knowing one’s child, the child ‘feeling right’ and parents enjoying their children are all rather ambiguous goals. People probably have vastly different ways of defining what it means to know a person, or to feel right. And in fact, Sears never makes clear what he means by these goals. Whereas parents may not understand the outcome, the process of attachment parenting is more concrete; physical contact or *touch* is the central and unifying element of attachment parenting. In essence, the more adult-child touching, the better.

Sears describes the attachment parenting philosophy as involving “rules” such as “making a commitment to your marriage and your child,” and more concretely breastfeeding with child-led weaning, responding promptly to your baby’s cries, carrying or “wearing” your baby continuously, and finally, sharing sleep with your baby. Touching is central to attachment parenting. Sears focuses on the importance of babies touching their *mothers*, not only through sharing sleep, but also through breastfeeding and being carried on their mothers’ bodies – their mothers “wearing them” - throughout

the day. It is not surprising, given the essentializing of women in attachment parenting philosophy, that Sears uses gender exclusive language throughout his book. The child is always referred to as male or “he,” while the parent, the mother, is always “she.” For Sears it seems, children are always boys, and parents are always women.

Sears essentializes women’s bodies and feeds into a longstanding vein of thought in which women’s most important role in life is that of mother. For Sears, women are mothers and mothers are female bodies. In this essentialist thinking, to be a woman is to fulfill what Sears understands as one’s biological/female destiny. Inextricably connected to issues of gender are those of class. For Sears, the Good Mother devotes herself, her body, her time, fully to her child. While Sears seems to assume this lifestyle of full time mothering is possible for all women, it is probably only women of the middle to upper class who can afford to fulfill his vision.

In spite of, or perhaps because of this, Sears’s - and for that matter, La Leche League International’s - thinking on “attachment parenting” is very popular within the white middle class. Sears deeply challenges a twentieth century site of power, science and the medical establishment, at the same time as he uses science to make and reinforce his arguments. Sears advocates a “return” from science to the body, to intuition, to instincts and that which is “natural.” In Sears’s thinking, as in our larger cultural contexts, the “natural” is of course a socially defined construct. “Natural” means things of the body, yet it also means that which is female. Within this dualistic framework, natural and female go together much like rational, scientific and male on the other side of the dichotomy.

Sears uses “intuition” - and here he almost always means “women’s intuition” - along with a healthy dose of practical experience, to legitimize his thinking on child rearing. Sears perpetuates the dualistic thinking of mainstream culture. Women, who are associated with the body, have intuition to teach them how to live and rear children. Men, who are associated with the mind, have rationality. Sears, the rational male scientist was taught by another rational male scientist to listen to intuitive females who mother - men do science, women mother. From intuitive females, Sears learned about the “natural,” of-the-body process of child rearing. Indeed, Sears begins his book describing his awakening to “intuition” over science.

Twelve years ago when I started pediatric practice. I was faced with the reality that doctors receive the *least* training in the problem areas which bother parents the *most*.
“Doctor, is it all right for our baby to sleep in our bed?”
“When our baby wakes up crying, should I go to him or am I going to spoil him?” These were real concerns from real people and they deserved real answers. *But I didn’t know the answers.* There aren’t any courses in medical school on where babies should sleep or why babies cry...Then one day, a wise colleague took me aside and confided that when he wanted to know the answer to a difficult question on parenting, he asked an experienced, intuitive mother. Eureka! Over the next twelve years this is just what I did. I learned from experienced mothers. (Sears 1985: xvii-xix)

And what’s more, Sears had one of his own at home. He writes happily, “During my learning phase, I have been blessed with five children and a wife who is an intuitive mother” (ibid).

Attachment parenting philosophy maintains amorphous goals like helping one’s child to “feel right,” but the method behind the goals is anything but amorphous. It involves near continuous touching of one’s child. The ideology implicit in attachment

parenting challenges the scientific expertise, champions traditional gender roles, and assumes a middle class cultural framework and access to resources.

Before the baby comes, Sears offers three “attachment tips.” Once again, he advocates making a commitment to one’s child and spouse. Sears never considers the possibility - or in fact, the likelihood - that the parent he addresses has no spouse. “Very early in your parenting career, before the birth of your baby, make a commitment. Promise your faithful attention to two relationships: to yourselves as a married couple and to your child as his parents. One of the greatest gifts you can give your new baby is a home built on the foundation of a stable and fulfilled marriage” (ibid: 2). Aside from his conservative understanding of marriage as fundamentally important to child rearing, Sears’s first tip sounds as amorphous as his “goals.” Yet his advice about how to make the commitment is tangible. It involves *touching*. Sears writes,

To strengthen these commitments during pregnancy, I advise couples to follow a custom we have enjoyed in our own family. I suggest that each night before going to bed you as a couple lay your hands on the pregnant uterus. Talk about your commitment to each other as a married couple and your commitment to this tiny life inside. This beautiful nighttime ritual gets to be a habit that is likely to continue after your baby arrives. After the birth of our baby, I had come so accustomed to laying my hands on my unborn baby that I couldn’t get to sleep at night unless I would go over and lay my hand on the head of our little newborn and reaffirm my commitment to fathering her. I was hooked! I was already attached before our infant was born. (Ibid.)

Sears refers to the “unborn baby” or the “pregnant uterus,” as though they exist separate from the woman’s body. One imagines putting one’s hands directly on the uterus with no woman-body in the way. His language implies that the fetus floating in its

home, the uterus, has a life of its own disconnected from her. Sears also suggests that the parents ‘create a peaceful womb experience,’ and ‘prepare themselves’ through parent support groups. Naturally, the group Sears advises parents to join is La Leche League International. He claims that La Leche League is “the most effective parent support organization” (ibid: 3).

Once the baby comes, Sears offers the parents the final five “attachment tips.” The first of these has been discussed in greater depth in the previous chapter, to breastfeed with child-led weaning. Next, Sears suggests that parents be open to various sleeping arrangements. Sears also argues that parents should respond promptly to their baby’s crying. And parents ‘should travel as a father-mother-baby unit.’ Traveling as a unit entails the mother carrying the baby next to her body so that the baby has constant physical contact with her mother. Sears writes,

While traveling on a speaking tour of Australia I began to appreciate the “marsupial mothering” style of kangaroos, whose babies are nearly always in touch with the mother because they live in a pouch on the mother’s abdomen. I advise couples not to succumb to the usual outside pressure to “get away from your baby,” but instead to become accustomed to “wearing” the baby in an infant sling or baby carrier. As you get used to being a unit you will feel right when you are together and not right when you’re apart. Functioning together by day makes it easier to function together by night. (Ibid: 6)

In response to this, one informal interviewee said, “What planet is he from? Can’t I feel good *both* with my baby, *and* away from her?” What’s more, nowhere does Sears address the exhausting nature of “wearing” one’s baby around the clock. Nor does he address the physical wear and tear on one’s back and body from carrying a heavy weight in front

pack, a sling or other baby carrier. Clearly, Sears concerns himself with what he deems good for the baby, and not necessarily with what might be good for the mother.

Finally, Sears argues that parents should be wary of “detachment parenting.” Sears contrasts his style of parenting - attachment parenting - with what he calls “detachment parenting.” According to Sears, detachment parenting is a “restrained style of parenting that warns parents against taking cues from their child. The advocates of detachment parenting preach: “Let the baby cry it out. He has to learn to sleep through the night.” “Don’t be so quick to pick your baby up. You’re spoiling her.” “Get your baby on a schedule. He’s manipulating you.” “Don’t let your baby in your bed. You’re creating a terrible habit.”” Sears argues that attachment parenting builds family harmony, while “detachment parenting leads to disharmony” (ibid: 6-7). Sears takes an indiscreet stab at Richard Ferber. Referring to Ferber’s behaviorist sleep program for children, Sears writes, “Besides being full of negatives, this style of parenting also features quick and easy recipes for difficult problems.” Sears continues, “For example, when a baby repeatedly awakens during the night, detachment parenting advises, “Let him cry one hour the first night, forty-five minutes the second night and by the third night, he’ll sleep through the night.” Sears warns parents, “let me caution you. Difficult problems in child rearing do not have easy answers. Children are too valuable and their needs too important to be make victims of cheap, shallow advice. In my experience, parents who practice detachment parenting are at risk of losing their intuition and confidence and are less likely to achieve those two important goals of parenting, knowing their child and helping their child to feel right” (ibid: 7-8). Sears’s critique of Ferber here is unfair as Ferber’s method is rather more involved than Sears states. And while Sears claims that

difficult problems in raising one's children "do not have easy answers," one might question Sears's own easy answer: intuition. In a certain sense, "intuition" is the easiest answer of all.

The popular challenge to science that has existed in multiple waves through the twentieth century cannot be separated from struggles of gender and class. William Sears and La Leche League International offer a powerful challenge to mainstream science and modern medicine's hegemony over child rearing. They give back to women their "traditional" sphere of expertise. This "traditional" subject of course has not belonged to women everywhere in all times. It was with the industrialization and urbanization of the western hemisphere that the public and private spheres were born. And only then, in the "First World," did women begin to be associated with the private world of the home, while men lived in the public world of industrial work. As already discussed, while Sears and the League essentialize women's roles and bodies, they argue that women know best about how to raise children. They refer women back to their own "instincts" and "intuition" for answers to child-rearing questions.

Still the stand taken by Sears, and his organizational counterpart, La Leche League is complicated. First, while he argues that women know best, he simultaneously proposes a child-rearing method that he claims *is* best. In the end, he fails to empower women because he does not open a space for them to make *their own* decisions about how to rear their children. Instead, he claims that if women were to listen to their intuition, they would raise their children in the manner he proposes. Second, while he

challenges the traditional medical model of child rearing, he simultaneously makes use of science to back up his argument. And of course, he himself is a scientific expert.

Indeed, Sears's book gives a chapter to discussing babies' sleep patterns that completely depends on "scientific knowledge." This chapter, "How and Why Babies Sleep Differently Than Adults," offers according to Sears, "a basic understanding of what science has learned about sleep." He argues that children "do sleep differently than adults," and writes, "Parents struggling with their child's sleeping habits need to know some general facts about sleep as well as specific facts about children's sleep" (ibid: 13). He uses his "scientific" information about children's sleep to back up his claim that babies and children need to sleep with their parents. Interestingly, Sears and his opponent Ferber use *identical* "scientific" information about sleep to argue that children *should* (Sears) or should *not* (Ferber) be allowed to sleep with parents in the parents' bed. Both Ferber and Sears describe rapid eye movement or REM sleep, and non-REM sleep. Both discuss the four stages of non-REM sleep and the percentage of time babies versus adults spend in REM and non-REM sleep each night. Yet, making starkly apparent the ideological nature of interpreting scientific data, Ferber uses this same scientific information as Sears to argue that babies and children should *not* sleep with their parents, rather than that, like Sears, they *should*. In a sense, it may be easier to see ideology at play in Sears's thinking since he challenges a mainstream twentieth century cultural belief that science equals truth. Whereas, Ferber assumes that science and scientific experts are authorities to be trusted without question or explanation. Ferber's ideology is simply more in tune with the mainstream medical establishment. Ferber does not, like Sears, refer to "instincts" or the "natural." Nor does he refer to God or the supernatural

or to history, “folk” knowledge or the experience of other cultures. In fact, he does not mention that there might be other authorities, as though it is obvious that science is the place to turn for answers to parenting questions.

So, while Sears argues for natural child-rearing instead of scientific child-rearing; he uses science to back his argument whenever necessary. In the same vein, La Leche League, which is deeply committed to the idea of women trusting themselves over their pediatricians, simultaneously looks to one or two white male pediatricians such as Dr. William Sears, to support and reinforce it’s analysis.

In spite of its contradictions, the challenge Sears and La Leche League offer to science does, to some extent, return to women an area of power that science had usurped around the turn of the century. Both argue that women know better than science how to rear their children. Yet Sears and La Leche League only speak to a limited group of women. Because of the extensive time demands of their child-rearing methods, and because of their ideological framework, their methods are practically accessible only to middle or upper class women (see Linda Blum 1999). It is an extremely demanding and child-centered method of child rearing and very difficult even for affluent women to manage. They must be willing to be almost completely child, rather than career, focused. For many women, this means giving up their careers altogether. Often working class and poor women cannot afford the time away from work and other demands on their lives, so as to commit themselves and their time totally to childrearing.

Sears’s central reason for adults “sharing sleep” with their children is that it allows for extensive touching, but there are other rationales. For example, he claims that

the baby *and* her parents will all sleep better. Sears refers to the desperation of “millions of tired parents who struggle nightly with the dilemma of wanting to be a good nighttime parent yet longing for a full night’s sleep” (Sears 1985: xvii). He claims that he wrote his book to address this dilemma, and to help everyone in the family to sleep better. “One of the goals of this book is to help parents and children achieve **sleep harmony**...Difficult sleepers can exhaust the whole family, put a strain on their parents’ marriage, and contribute to parent burn-out” (ibid: xix). In other words, even for parents’ most “selfish” reason to cure their child’s sleep problems - they want more sleep - sharing sleep is the answer.

After this brief diversion into parental selfishness, Sears returns to his mother focused child-rearing philosophy. According to Sears, a third reason to share sleep with one’s child is that being kept physically apart from his *mother* at night leaves the child isolated which is psychologically damaging to the child’s development. Sears writes, “Children who sleep alone...often grow up regarding sleep as a fearful time, a time of separation.”

In a later section titled, “Sharing Sleep Has Long Term Effects,” Sears makes the implicit argument that mothers who sleep with their children not only raise healthier, happier children, they are better mothers. He writes,

There are many variables which contribute to children’s growth and development. However, *psychologists agree that the quantity and quality of mothering does affect the emotional and intellectual development of the child* [my emphasis]...One of these effects [of sharing sleep] is on the quality of intimacy. Many psychologists and marriage counsellors report that one of the common problems of contemporary teenagers and adults is that they have difficulty forming genuinely close and intimate relationships with another person...A childhood need for

intimacy that is not filled never completely goes away but reappears in later years. Psychologists report that many adult fears and sleep problems can be traced back to uncorrected sleep disturbances during childhood. (Ibid: 33-35)

For Sears, good mothering is synonymous with “intuitive” or “natural” mothering. Sears argues that it is not only harmful psychologically for the child to sleep alone, but goes against the mother’s “natural instincts.” Sears believes that mothers’ “instincts” compel them to sleep with their children. To sleep apart from her child denies this maternal instinct or intuition and leaves the mother worried and restless, affecting not only her own sleep but her very capacity to mother. He writes, “This may come as a surprise, but not only does baby sleep better in the family bed, most parents do also. Certainly mother usually does. Baby is not the only one who is separation sensitive at night. A new mother, too, experiences anxiety when her baby is not nearby. She lies awake and wonders, “Is my baby all right?” The farther away she is from her baby the deeper is the anxiety” (ibid: 27). Eventually, claims Sears, the mother’s very capacity to mother will be diminished by her not responding to such basic needs as to sleep with her child. She will begin to shut down, or numb out, to mothering in general. He argues that a vicious cycle develops where non-natural mothering leads to “bad mothering,”

If a mother consistently goes against what she feels, she begins to desensitize herself...The less intuitively a mother responds, the less confidence she has in the appropriateness of her responses. The less confidence she has, the less likely that her responses are appropriate, and the less she enjoys mothering. A mother who restrains from responding [sic] to her baby gradually and unknowingly becomes insensitive. This is a vicious cycle of detachment which I urge new mothers not to let themselves get into. Once you allow outside advice to overtake your own intuitive mothering you and your child are at risk of drifting

apart...parenting with restrained responses hinders the development of your motherly intuition. (Ibid: 79)

For Sears, people will never have conflicting intuition. Intuition, mother's intuition, will always, only, say one thing, the truth. If she is confused, then she is out of touch with her intuition. At this point, her best bet is to simply do what Sears says to do.

A fourth reason for "sharing sleep" is that sleeping with one's child allows for continuous unrestricted breastfeeding. Here is another tenet of Sears's attachment parenting philosophy, an element that excludes working women of all classes. Children should breastfeed on demand, without restriction, and until they are ready to wean. Calling upon biology, Sears names this unrestricted breastfeeding, "natural," and argues that both unrestricted breastfeeding and sharing sleep allow for increased touching. Sears claims both also stimulate of the release of the hormone, prolactin, heighten physical and emotional intimacy between mother and child, aid in developing feelings of "well-being," security and "rightness" on the part of the child. And finally, any breastfeeding but particularly unrestricted breastfeeding along with sharing sleep lowers the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Sears is willing to use something as heavy as the potential death of one's child via SIDS to argue for his sleep sharing philosophy. Sears claims that shared sleep alone, aside from the breastfeeding benefit involved, lowers the risk of SIDS. It is, he argues, dangerous to sleep apart from one's child. He uses the risk of SIDS to push for sharing sleep even though the evidence here is very shaky. Interestingly, both pro- and anti-sleep sharing experts use the potential for child death in making their arguments. As discussed earlier, a poignant example of the counter argument came out in the recent study by the

Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission, which concluded that parents “should never sleep in the same bed with infants or toddlers under the age of 2...because sleeping together poses a significant risk of accidental smothering or strangling” (Erica Goode, *The New York Times*, September 30, 1999). Chair of the commission, Ann Brown, emphasizes the scientific merit of the study. She writes in a *New York Post* letter to the editor, “the American Medical Association found it to be of such value that it published it in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.” She continues by quoting the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine editor, Catherine DeAngelis, who wrote, “The results of this study should be shared with all parents of all infants and toddlers younger than 2 years. I was surprised by the extent of the problem; can you just imagine the state of a parent who overlays a child, resulting in his or her death?” (Ann Brown, letter to the editor, *The New York Post*, October 7, 1999) Sears’s argument that sharing sleep with one’s child may prevent the child’s death is as weak as the Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission’s evidence that it may cause such a death. Critics of the report claim that, for a variety of reasons, the study’s methods were faulty. Primary among these reasons, Dr. Abraham B. Bergman, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington, argued that “because no one knows exactly how many babies sleep with their parents in adult beds the study gives no indication of relative risk” (Erica Goode, *The New York Times*, September 30, 1999).

One of my informal interviewees, Karen, claimed that the smothering worry is a myth and that “it has never happened.” Most of her “facts” seem to come from La Leche League, so as with most evidence in the sleep debate, it is hard to know if it is reliable. Karen asserted that in feudal times women used to smother their infants as a form of birth

control. They used the excuse of an accidental smothering as way to cover up killing the child. She said that the Catholic Church began to advocate sleeping separately from one's children - which was unusual - to stop people from using accidental smothering as an excuse for child murder. Karen argued that the myth - of the possibility of smothering your child if you sleep with it - came from these times. She says that it is impossible to accidentally smother a baby and claimed that we have "instincts" that stop us from doing it.

About SIDS, Sears also uses science - rather than merely instincts - to further his child-rearing philosophy of sharing sleep. In sharp contrast to the equally "scientific" Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission's report, Sears argues, "In those infants at risk for SIDS, natural mothering (unrestricted breastfeeding and sharing sleep with baby) will lower the risk of SIDS" (Sears 1985: 161). He claims that SIDS has been classified as a sleep disorder where the infant "may be unable to arouse from sleep in response to a breathing problem" (ibid: 156). Babies have immature automatic breathing mechanisms, so it is normal for new infants to have episodes, called apnea, where they stop breathing for as long as ten to fifteen seconds. At times, breathing fails to start again. When this happens Sears writes, "Infants who are monitored show signs that the oxygen in the blood is at a dangerously low level: the heart rate becomes alarmingly slow, and the infant turns pale, blue, and limp. An observer must intervene and arouse the infant. Sometimes a simple *touch* [my emphasis] will trigger the self-starting mechanism; sometimes the infant must be aroused from sleep in order to breathe" (ibid: 157). Sharing sleep means more extensive touching between mother and infant - touching which may save the life of an infant experiencing apnea.

In his heavy-handed style, Sears continues, “Infants who have experienced an apnea episode that required outside intervention to restart their breathing are called near-miss SIDS. In other words, they would have died had someone not intervened. Tragically some infants stop breathing permanently, succumbing to SIDS” (ibid). Certain infants are at a higher risk for SIDS. These babies, writes Sears, “have two breathing abnormalities: 1. Impaired chemoreceptor sensitivity; that is, they don’t breathe when they need to; 2. Impaired arousal response in the nervous system to a breathing problem. In other words, high risk infants don’t awaken when their breathing stops” (ibid: 159).

Sears claims that if “SIDS is related to a diminished arousal response during sleep in some infants, it follows that anything which increases the infant’s sensitivity or the mother’s awareness of her baby may decrease the risk of SIDS.” And he continues, “This is exactly what sharing sleep and night nursing do. Infants show REM sleep patterns during sucking, and mothers also go into REM sleep when their babies nurse during the night. This harmony of sleep cycles gives the nursing pair a heightened awareness of each other” (ibid: 162). Breastfeeding infants who “share sleep with their mothers suck more often throughout the night, which also gives mothers and babies an increased sensitivity to each other.” Drawing on science, Sears continues, “An interesting study which sheds more light on the sleep harmony of the nighttime nursing pair concluded that the sleep periods of nursing babies and their mothers are synchronized so that “they tend to dream simultaneously during the night from twelve weeks postpartum until the time of weaning” (West 1969)” (ibid: 163). In contrast, Sears

argues that non-nursing mother and baby pairs do not coordinate their sleep and dream cycles.

“Natural mothering,” implies Sears is also correct - good - mothering and if one is unsure as to what “natural mothering” might be, then simply read Sears’s books. His mothering technique is *the* natural and good one. Adding a heavily moralizing component to the question of “good mothering,” Sears goes as far as to say, “While inadequate mothering is certainly not the cause of SIDS, it may be a contributing factor in those infants already at risk. Studies have shown a much higher incidence of SIDS among infants of less committed and less skilled mothers” (ibid: 161). Whereas at points in his book, Sears claims not to cast judgment, nonetheless he argues that bad mothers - mothers who choose not to mother his way - put their babies’ very lives at risk.

Once again, *touch* is central to Sears’s argument: Sharing sleep is a good idea because it entails extensive touching between mother and child.

The human infant is meant to be a continuous contact species. The composition of the milk of each species gives a clue to the infant care practices natural to that species. Animals who leave their young for extended periods produce a milk high in fat and protein which satisfies the young for a relatively long period of time between feedings. Human milk is relatively low in fat and protein, necessitating frequent, seemingly continuous nursing. The human infant is meant to be carried in arms during the day and nestled with mother in bed at night - not trained into a separate sleeping arrangement before he is ready. (Ibid: 165-166)

To conclude, William Sears’s child-rearing method is explicitly gendered insofar as he sees mothers’ and fathers’ roles in very traditional terms. Sears never explicitly says that women should stay home and parent while men go off to earn the family living.

Yet this thinking is implicit in his writing. Most of it is addressed to women/mothers, rather than to men/fathers or to parents generally. Repeatedly, he speaks about how important is the mother-child relationship thus making clear his thinking that women/mothers are the primary and most important parent. The reason mothers are the most important parent is because they are “naturally” endowed with the capacity to mother. According to Sears, women are “instinctual” beings who need to make use of their instincts and intuitions to be good mothers. Taking his place in line with a long philosophical history of mind/body dualisms, Sears associates women with the body, “instincts” and the “natural,” and men with the mind and realm of the intellect.

Sears holds traditionally gendered assumptions about work: Women do and should stay home to raise their children; men do and should work outside the home in the public sector, taking care of their wives and children’s financial needs. Not only is this thinking conventional, it is also incorrect. United States middle class women no longer stay home as full-time mothers and homemakers, and men are no longer the primary breadwinners. Anthropologist Maxine L. Margolis writes that women have become an additional family breadwinner. “[D]ual income families are now the norm in this country. Today so much of the typical middle-class family’s consumption is dependent on women’s earnings that one must wonder what the consequences would be for the American economy were large numbers of women ever to return to full-time domesticity, a *very* unlikely event in any case” (Margolis 2000: 148). Margolis continues,

A few figures highlight this. In 1960, 38 percent of all adult women held jobs, a figure that rose to 46 percent in 1975, and 60 percent by the late 1990s. More striking is the increase in employed mothers. In 1960, 39 percent of women with school-age children had jobs, in 1975 the

number was 55 percent, and by 1995 it had reached nearly 77 percent. (Ibid: 149)

However out of touch with reality and deeply conservative his thinking in terms of gender, at the same time, Sears's work is "anti-masculinist." In sharp contrast to Ferber, Sears emphasizes attachment and dependency as normal and healthy parts of human relationships. Essentially, Sears argues that development should happen in a context of what I call "normalized dependency." In other words, his focus is on dependency as normal and healthy rather than dependency as something to be overcome. He argues that in a safe dependent relationship, children will experience "well-being" and feeling "right." Because Sears believes that babies need to be with their parents, particularly their mothers, almost all the time, they should not be left alone at night or at other times. For Sears, "separation anxiety" is a normal and healthy response children have when they are separated from their caretakers. Separation anxiety should be avoided by not forcing premature separations on the child. The anxiety never need arise. The child should be allowed to take the initiative in separating when he is ready and in ways that he can manage.

Sears believes children *should* be attached to their parents "in the manner of such an object," as Ferber puts it. For Sears, the attachment of children to "transitional objects" such as pacifiers is a sign that the child is being forced prematurely into separation from the human "objects" of their love. Sears's philosophy advocates that children should attach only with their parents, siblings and other human beings, but especially, with their mothers. One gets the sense that a child attaching to "things" such as "transitional objects" might be a sign of child neglect. Sears advocates that healthy

children need the near-constant physical presence of their mother. Like Harry Harlow's monkeys, they will make do with an inanimate object, but it is a making do that deprives the child. It leads her or him to dis-ease like Harlow's crazy monkeys.

Indeed, Sears focuses on this *interconnection* of parents with their children. It is only within this context of normal dependency that Sears believes normal and healthy development will happen. He writes that parents who use his style of parenting - attachment parenting - ensure that their child "learns to bond with persons, not things. The infant who is accustomed to being in arms, at breast, and in mommy and daddy's bed receives security and fulfillment from personal relationships. This infant is more likely to become a child who forms meaningful attachments with peers and in adulthood is more likely to develop a deep intimacy with a mate." And Sears warns, "The child who is often left by himself in swings, cribs, and playpens is at risk for developing shallow interpersonal relationships and becoming increasingly unfulfilled by a materialistic world" (Sears 1985: 10).

This is the position taken not only by Sears but by the larger attachment parenting movement including organizations such as La Leche League International. Sears, La Leche League International and those involved in the attachment parenting movement argue strongly against a "thing" becoming that to which one's child attaches. Indeed, "people not things" is an often-stated La Leche League motto. In a La Leche League book by Diane Bengson, *How Weaning Happens*, one mother tells the following story about transitional objects.

"Of course I weaned my baby," the mother told me. "I had already nursed him for a full five months longer than my first two sons. Now that he is eating solid food, he doesn't

need me any more. The last thing I want to be is a human pacifier!”

The first thing that flashed through my mind when she said this was the odd way our society has recognized the artificial pacifier as the normal object and the mother’s breast as the substitute. In advertisements, baby-shower gifts, and store displays, pacifiers are promoted as necessary items of infancy.

Thinking further about pacifiers and motherhood, I considered just what it is that pacifies, that “brings peace.” I thought of calm in a storm, or the renewal of sleep, of the bridging of cultures. When a child is crying, she is asking for peace in her young life in the only way she knows, from the mother who is uniquely able to provide it. Learning to give and receive peace in this way equips the mother and child to face anxiety and conflict later, long after an artificial pacifier is discarded. Do I want to be a human pacifier? Now that I think about it, I am sure I do. When all is said and done, that’s the best kind.” (Bengson 1999: 75)

For Sears, independence - a central goal of masculine understandings of human development - will happen if and when the child is ready for it to happen. Sears writes, “Your child will not grow up to be less independent because he slept in your bed. In my experience, children who are given open access to the family bed in infancy become more secure and independent in the long run. They reach the stage of independence when they are ready. Independence is not, in itself, one of our most important parenting goals. It is not the parents’ responsibility to make a child independent but rather to create a secure environment and a feeling of rightness which allows a child’s independence to develop naturally” (Sears 1985: 38). Forcing independence on the child will only harm the child’s development. Sears sees such imposed independence as one of our society’s deepest problems. We are, he believes, a society of people unable to attach with one another in normal, healthy ways.

As Sears's thinking is complicated in terms of gender, so is his thinking in terms of class. Here Sears's work is non-traditional and does not fit within the larger mainstream white middle-class Protestant way of understanding human development and adult-child touch. In contrast with larger middle class beliefs in individualism and private space, Sears advocates for family members sharing space, sharing rooms and even sharing beds. He argues that instead of pushing children to be independent and individualistic, children need to be with, and attached to, other people. Sears focuses on parents, albeit particularly mothers, having deep connections with their children. In these intimate relationships, adult-child touch is very important. Contra the middle class avoidance of touch, Sears argues children need to be touched by their parents much as they need food and drink.

Yet ironically, at the same time that Sears offers a challenge to middle class beliefs, Sears's attachment parenting philosophy excludes people without the resources to have one parent stay home and focus on childrearing full-time. Attachment parenting requires mothers to stay home with their children forgoing work and careers outside the home. Many poor and working families simply do not have the financial capacity to do this.

Finally, Sears's thinking on science and scientific experts is as complex as his thought in terms of gender and class. Like the larger popular health movements throughout the twentieth century in the United States, Sears's work challenges the authority of science. He argues that people should trust themselves and their "instincts" rather than the experts. Like more traditional scientific experts such as Ferber, Sears claims to offer a way to better health and better parenting. Yet unlike most scientific

experts, Sears argues that parents, particularly mothers, trust their own “instincts.” He advocates what he calls “natural” parenting which means trusting oneself rather than looking to the experts for guidance. Sears’s writing contains an anti-expert ethos while simultaneously making use of science and the scientific expert - himself - to back his claims. In the end, Sears seems to argue that if you trust your “instincts,” you will parent in the manner proposed by Sears. In other words, good parenting is Sears’s method of parenting. You can listen to Sears and “trust your instincts.” Or, just in case your instincts let you down, you can circumvent “nature” and simply listen to Sears, parenting in the manner he proposes. Either way, the end result is Sears, Sears the advocate for parental intuition, Sears the pediatric expert.

Incest and child sexual abuse

Concern over incest and child sexual abuse arises again and again in mainstream child-rearing literature. In terms of sharing sleep, Ferber indirectly cites incest as a reason not to sleep with one’s children. On the other side of the debate, Sears and the attachment parenting experts also address this concern, albeit in an offhand way. Clearly, they understand this fear about incest is a reason many parents do not sleep with their children. One attachment parenting expert, and Sears fan, Katie Allison Granju, addresses a component of this worry in her book, *Attachment Parenting: Instinctive Care for Your Baby and Young Child* (1999) under a section entitled “Questions About the Family Bed.” If parents are sexual when children are present, that may be abusive. So, given this, when and where should parents be sexual, when they share their bed with children. Granju raises this among other “commonly asked questions.” She writes in the

voice of a concerned parent, “What about our sex life? Isn’t the parents bed supposed to provide private time for parents?” Granju responds to this question,

The idea that the parental bed should be the locus of all sexual activity or even emblematic of the sexual relationship between mother and father is a cultural construct. Your baby’s need for nighttime nurturing is a biological necessity. Parents who enjoy a family bed don’t stop having sex. Instead, they have sex in other areas of the house. Many couples claim that the act of seeking alternative locations for intimacy adds creativity and spontaneity to their lovemaking...Lots of sleep sharing families have second, third, or even more children, so clearly the family bed isn’t wrecking their sex lives!
(Granju 1999: 196)

Granju’s response to this sexual worry might be somewhat glib for many unconvinced parents. The reality seems to be that parents who share sleep with their children do struggle with the issue of sexuality. One informal interviewee, Cara, was strongly for and practiced attachment parenting, and was an active member of La Leche League International. At the time of the interview, Cara had a 22 month old boy whom she still breastfed. Her child, Max, still slept with Cara and her husband Tom. In fact, Cara told me that Max *cannot* sleep without her. It sounded like Max needed Cara’s presence in the bed to both fall asleep and stay asleep. I asked Cara about having sex given the child in the bed. She said that La Leche League points out couples can go other places - to a couch in the living room maybe - to have sex, and that if the couple feels comfortable it is okay to have sex with babies in the bed. As Cara put it, “babies are too young to participate.” Yet in spite of these two possibilities, Cara said that their sexual life had been a problem for her and Tom because Max would not sleep without Cara. She

made it sound as if this was mostly hard on Tom, and that that had made it a problem between them.

Whereas this interviewee believed it alright to have sex with the baby in the bed, many people would be uncomfortable with that, and maybe even view such a sexual practice as violating or abusive of the child. When I raised the child sexual abuse/incest question, Cara claimed, “it [incest] really never happens.” Given the proliferation of research about the frequency of incest, one wonders if Cara’s response to the incest issue is a neat defense. As some attachment parenting experts agree, clearly, there is something sensual about having a baby or child in one’s bed. In a cultural moment where there is widespread fear about incest and child sexual abuse, and I would argue, anxiety over the body’s potential out-of-controlness, Cara’s response that incest does not happen frees her from having to grapple with the boundaries around her practice of sharing sleep. Unless one takes Watson’s approach, and gives up touching children altogether - or Cara’s approach and refuses the possibility of sexually violating adult-child touch - the line between sensual and sexual is somewhat unclear. This uncertainty is bound to bring anxiety especially in a culture that is in the first place so suspicious of sexuality, the body and touch.

One attachment parenting advocate and author, Deborah Jackson (1999) recognizes this ambiguity. She writes that many people “worry that bedsharing may be connected in some way with sex abuse, a recurring and apparently growing crisis in the industrialized world” (Jackson 1999: 182). In contrast to Cara, she argued that incest and child sexual abuse may be real problems. Yet, she argues that sex with a baby in the bed is not abusive. “When parents want to be alone together, they do not have to banish the

child from the room. When the baby is asleep nearby, there is nothing whatsoever to prevent intimacy. There is no need to whisper unless you want to, because a baby is used to sleeping through noise in the womb” (ibid: 186-187). Indeed, she continues, “Parents in many cultures make love when their babies are awake alongside them, a practice which - contrary to Western belief - does not scare them for life, and makes a nonsense over our embarrassment over sexual education” (ibid: 187). Here Jackson gives us an example. “Daphne, a mother from Leeds, told me the wonderful story of her toddler announcing to his grandparents that ‘mummy and daddy were playing gee-gees in bed last night’” (ibid: 189). She continues, “You may feel this is the kind of intimate experience our society isn’t quite ready for. So hold your horses, if you prefer, and wait until the little ones are slumbering - and invest in a squeak-free, non-bouncy bed” (ibid).

As an attachment parent, Jackson argues that the answer is not to give up on adult-child touch - nor it seems, to deny abuse - but to make touching *more* a part of our lives, in particular, more touching between *mother* and child. Lots of healthy mother-child touching allows the child to grow into a healthy adult, an adult who will not abuse his or her own children. Jackson writes,

The problem is not whether or not our babies are beside us when we make love. It is that society does not know where to draw the line between ‘healthy’ loving, constructive, reproductive relationships - and violent, abusive, uncontrolled desire.

Once again, we need to look back at our own infancy, when all we needed was our mother’s loving touch. That is where a healthy sex education begins. (ibid: 196)

The answer to the contemporary anxiety over child sexual abuse is to touch one’s children more. Lots of wholesome touching leads children to grow up healthy so that

they will not sexually abuse their children. However, the flip side of Jackson's argument here is to, once again, blame mothers. If mothers do not touch their children enough, their children will grow up to be confused about touch and sexual abusers. This, Jackson claims, "is the result of unresolved mothering" (ibid: 193).

True to form for child-rearing experts, Richard Ferber has an answer here too. Of course, he argues that babies and children should not sleep with their parents. However, if one does choose to bring one's child into the parental bed, he suggests questioning one's own preference about the practice. Ferber's suggestion sounds very similar to the breastfeeding-test-of-child-sexual-abuse. Ferber argues, "If you find that you actually prefer to have your child in your bed, you should examine your own feelings very carefully" (Ferber 1986: 39). In other words, if you prefer the practice then the practice is suspect; one should never prefer - enjoy too much - physical contact, be it breastfeeding, sharing sleep or some other contact, with one's child. That enjoyment equals getting something out of it for oneself, and good mothers always act selflessly.

Chapter five. The radical sixties and seventies, and challenges to mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch: Second wave feminism

Introduction

The United States feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s irreversibly influenced the ways people think about the touching of children. After the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement - also called the “second wave” - touching children is now understood to involve more than health or character. For many feminists, social power between unequally situated individuals - men over women and girls - *happened* through touching. In particular, radical feminists argued that we live in a “patriarchy” in which men oppress women, and male violence - including sexual violence - against women is at the bottom of this oppressive power structure. In other words, radical feminists believed men used violence to maintain and reproduce their power over women. Implicitly, feminists argued that touching was the medium for male violence.

In a variety of ways, feminists challenged the two schools of child-rearing advice discussed earlier, the behaviorists and the naturalists. Feminists explicitly detached women from obligatory child rearing. And, they contested the ways the mind-body dualism was a historic means to oppress and contain women and their energy. Yet I argue that some feminists unwittingly reproduced a version of the mind-body split. And so, whereas I claim that the radical feminists were fundamentally correct in their analysis of male violence and patriarchal oppression, they erred through a kind of dualistic thinking that fed their argument back to the New Right and its powerful backlash against feminism in the 1980s.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the history and significance of the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement. In particular, I explore the feminist challenge to the

“traditional” family and the socio-historical context of this challenge in terms of the changes in women’s lives over the past two centuries. I briefly explore the historical roots and various branches of United States feminism with a focus on radical feminism. Next I examine the movement in terms of the changing dominant culture’s thinking about family, gender and adult-child touch. Finally, I challenge dichotomous elements of the radical feminist argument with a focus on the influence of this dualistic thinking on ideologies of touch.

Socio-historical context

a. Women enter the workforce

Since 1945 in the United States and other industrialized societies, the economy began to shift from one that produced goods to one that produced services and information. Some scholars call this new service economy, “postindustrial.” Inflation magnified the impact of postindustrialism on United States family structure. Skolnick writes,

The shift in the economy was reducing the number of high-paying blue-collar jobs like typist and file clerk. Also, since the mid-1960s, the costs of food, housing, education, and other goods and services have risen faster than the average male breadwinner’s income. Despite their lower pay, married women’s contributions to the family income became critical to maintaining living standards in both middle- and working-class families. (Ibid.)

It is this “quiet revolution of women’s steady march into the workplace that set the stage for the feminist revival of the 1970s” (ibid).

Now, in our postindustrial, service-oriented economy, women commonly work outside the home. This has led to many other changes in United States family life. Money is lost – the money women would have earned at their jobs - when women leave their jobs to bear and raise children. This potential financial loss has brought about lower fertility rates. As Skolnick points out, there is evidence that the “increasing employment of women makes divorce more likely, by reducing a woman’s dependence on her husband’s income, making it easier for her to leave an unhappy marriage” (ibid: 13). However, there are, in our postindustrial society, few jobs for men or women that pay a living wage open to people without a college degree. In the 1950s, a young person from the working class could find unskilled work that paid enough to support a family; now there are very few such opportunities. These massive changes in the economy have brought about shifts in family behavior. People marry later and have fewer children. And most women work outside the home.

Not only working conditions, in a very literal sense, people’s lives have changed. In the United States people live much longer than any group ever before. Not only did the breadwinner family fit early modern conditions, it made sense in nineteenth century demographic conditions. People had more children and lived shorter lives. Most women lived their whole lives with children in the home. Skolnick argues,

Nostalgic images of family stability in past times typically leave out the terrible facts of high mortality rates in infancy and early adulthood. Before the twentieth century, death was as much a hovering presence in the home as divorce is today. While the death of a baby or small child was almost a typical experience of parents down to the early decades of the twentieth century, the loss of a father or mother was also a common event of childhood and adolescence. (Ibid.)

Historically, these changes have been very sudden. Only in the twentieth century has old age become an expected component of the usual life course. Given longer life spans, the parental period of one's life is significantly shorter now than it would have been early in the century. Today "the average woman can expect to live more than thirty-three years after her last child has left the house. The traditional nuclear unit of parents and small children exists for only a small proportion of the life of an individual or a family" (ibid: 14). A great number of women have entered the work force because most women live large periods of their life without children. Having significant amounts of time without children leaves women free to work outside the home.

Besides changed working conditions and longer life spans, Skolnick identifies a third social transformation she calls "psychological gentrification," resulting from the first two changes discussed - the raised levels of education and the general standard of living. All this has deeply altered the way people think about themselves. Between 1957 and 1976, Americans became "more introspective, more attentive to inner experience, more willing to admit to marital and personal problems than in the past, and yet more satisfied with their marriages...Above all, they became more attentive to the emotional quality of relationships, not just in the family but at work as well. Increasingly, people wanted friendly warm relationships at work and intimacy and closeness in the family" (ibid: 17).

It is interesting that this new focus on intimacy places new burdens on family and other relationships. It creates novel expectations of relationships and thus, potentially, novel dissatisfactions. Yet, in spite of worry that the United States has become a nation of narcissistic, disconnected individuals, people seem to be *more* not less attached to their

families. Studies show family ties are, for most people, “even more important than in the past.” And significantly, this shift is especially true for men (ibid).

Due to these fundamental changes in work conditions, life span and relational norms, in the United States and other advanced societies, the realities of life today are different from those faced by all other generations. Skolnick argues,

No other people ever lived longer or healthier lives, or exercised so much choice about life’s central dramas: work, marriage, parenthood. Many of the troubles and anxieties confronting the American family today arise out of benefits few of us would undo if we could - lower mortality rates, reliable birth control, mass education, the democratization of American life. (Ibid: 18)

b. A challenge to the “traditional” family

When I was six, my mother became a feminist and decided to divorce my father. I did not experience this as a change that needed explaining. I was a child. To me, everything that was, simply was. Each moment, each happening accounted for itself without explanation. Maybe this is because, having only known six years, I had little with which to compare my experience. I had my family, and the places of six years. Things happened. I did not know there had been other happenings, other years, other families. My world, its time and place, unfolded arrogantly sure that it was all there was.

So when I was six, my mother became a feminist and divorced my father. And this upset my grandmother. My grandmother was not a feminist. And upset is too mild a word. Yet any other word would not be polite enough for my not-feminist grandmother. And really, I am not sure what the divorce meant to my grandmother. Did the divorce mean pain? Was the divorce a sign of her failure in raising her son? Or was the divorce

simply not okay because it was a doing of what my grandmother could not do? My mother became a feminist and divorced my father. She did what my grandmother could not, would not ever do. Was my grandmother angry?

Divorcing my father was a bad thing, something women should never do. It meant my mother was a bad woman. In our small town of Grand Junction, the knowledge of badness spread quickly. It spread as quickly, as thoroughly as water when you knock over a glass. Not wine, but water, for there was no dark stain to point to, no funny smell, no sign. Being bad cannot be seen, nor is it a profession, like being a teacher or doctor. It has no title. It is bigger, deeper, fainter than titles. It is simply known. And that is worse. My mother divorced my father when I was six. And then, it was known, she became someone else.

Feminism's influence on and in my family happened in the midst of what is called the "second wave." In the past two centuries, United States feminist thought and activism has had three major historical periods or waves. The first spanned the early half of the nineteenth century through 1920 when women gained the right to vote. The second wave is usually dated as starting in 1967 at the Miss America Pageant when feminists gathered to protest the objectification of women. Feminist scholars consider the second wave as encompassing the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the third wave feminist movement began with a new ideological focus.

The wonderful, horrible effect - depending on one's perspective - feminism had on my family was not unusual. Central to second wave feminism was its challenge to the traditional family. Even moderates such as the liberal feminists of the National

Organization of Women (NOW) called for changes in marriage and family life. The NOW manifesto of 1966 stated:

We do not accept that a woman has to choose between marriage and motherhood on the one hand, and serious participation in industry and/or the professions on the other... We believe that a true partnership between the sexes demands a different concept of marriage, and equitable sharing of the responsibilities of home and children and of the economic burdens of their support. (Cited in Skolnick 1991: 103)

Many grassroots radical feminist groups such as the New York City Redstockings argued that the traditional nuclear family played a central role in the oppression of women. Radical feminists pushed for drastic solutions. These included calls for communal child rearing by feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson (*Amazon Odyssey: The First Collection of Writings by the Political Pioneer of the Women's Movement*, 1974) and for artificial reproduction by Shulamith Firestone (*The Dialectic of Sex*, 1970).

These sweeping challenges attracted a great deal of media attention. News of what was then called the “women’s liberation movement” spread with speed. Those who joined the movement early often found themselves out of step with their worlds at home and at work. Yet slowly, more and more Americans began to rethink gender roles in both the family/private and work/public spheres.

Sociologists like Skolnick argue that feminist positions gained widespread acceptance in the early 1970s. Surveys from that time, confirm that there was a dramatic shift in “sex role beliefs as well as in the acceptance of the women’s movement itself” (Skolnick 1991: 105). Skolnick discusses a Gallup poll that tracked women’s answers to a question about discrimination based on gender, which revealed the movement’s vast

influence. Skolnick writes that “in 1962 two out of three women denied having been treated unequally; in 1970 half said they had been discriminated against; in 1974 two-thirds reported unequal treatment and were in favor of efforts to improve women’s status” (ibid). Skolnick continues, “Underlying attitudes on particular issues was a sea change in perceptions of women, a new view of women as individuals able to make choices about their lives - working, marrying, child rearing - along with a new tolerance for whatever choices they might make” (ibid).

The second wave feminist movement shattered pre-1960s ways of thinking about women, gender roles and the family. Before the 1960s, many people had a boundless faith in male-dominated technology and science, and in the “traditional” family represented by 1950s dominant culture. Skolnick writes that the “central symbol of the nearly perfected America of the 1950s was the suburban family. Suburbia meant more than physical comfort; it embodied a long-held American dream of a happy, secure, family life” (ibid: 2). Yet, this happy family ideal did not last for long. “Ten years after the “American high” had reached its peak, the hopes and expectations of the 1950s lay in ruins. Instead of the social stability that had been expected, the two decades that followed were among the most turbulent periods of American history, comparable only to the Civil War era” (ibid: 3). Skolnick argues,

To a greater extent than in any earlier period, the upheaval was as much about cultural and sexual standards as public issues...Between 1965 and 1975, the land of togetherness became the land of swinging singles, open marriage, creative divorce, encounter groups, communes, alternative life-styles, women’s liberation, the Woodstock Nation, and “the greening of America.” A land where teenage girls wore girdles even to gym class became a land of mini-skirts, bralessness, topless bathing suites, and nude

beaches...Middle-class norms that once seemed carved in stone were crumbling away. (Ibid: 3-4)

Given the astonishing shift in attitudes, and the speed with which they changed following the emergence of the women's movement, it is understandable that feminism has been held responsible for many of the changes affecting women and the family in the decades that followed. Yet Skolnick, Margolis (2000), and other scholars claim that evidence shows "behavior changed first and the feminist ideology came later." Skolnick argues, "Increasing levels of education for women, rising employment rates of wives and mothers, the lengthening and changing shape of the life course, the liberalization of the sexual norms, the greater control over reproduction made possible by the pill, rising divorce rates - all these shifts in work and family life preceded the spread of the women's movement, and to a certain extent, helped cause it" (ibid: 106). The feminist movement was socially explosive because hundreds of thousands of women could relate the movement to struggles and changes that they were already experiencing in both the private and public spheres of United States society. Contrary to popular thought, the feminist movement did not lead women to work outside the home. Rather the masses of women wanting and needing to go to the public sector to earn a wage led to the explosive second wave feminist movement. By 1960, a decade before the second wave movement, 40 percent of all women were in the workforce, including large numbers of white, middle-class, married women (ibid: 108).

Feminism and adult-child touch

Second wave feminists focused on touch insofar as touch played a central role in gendered power relations. Yet in my research, I could locate no second wave feminist

texts that focused on issues of adult-child touch per se, such as in infant feeding or children's sleep arrangements. This interesting oversight is almost certainly due to the second wave feminist concentration on freeing women from compulsory parenting. Two texts by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective did briefly discuss infant feeding although they made no mention of sleep and only passing mention of touch (1976/1984/1992/1998; 1978). One, itself a parenting manual, *Ourselves and our children: A book by and for parents* (1978) devoted only *one* page to breastfeeding versus bottlefeeding. The authors took no stand and were careful to point out the benefits of *each* alternative, beginning the discussion with the following sentence: "Breast-feeding and bottle-feeding both have advantages" (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective 1978: 238). The authors continued by *briefly* raising touch as an important factor in both feeding options.

Breast-feeding involves a special and very important physical closeness at feeding times, it is convenient and always available, and some babies may have less trouble digesting human milk than formula...Bottle feeding is much less demanding on the mother's schedule, makes it easier for her to return to work, and has the particular advantage of allowing the father or another adult, to participate fully in the care and feeding of a young baby. And holding and cuddling can provide similar physical closeness to that experienced during breast-feeding. Babies can thrive either way; what is important is that you have a real choice. (Ibid.)

Again, in second wave feminist literature, I found no other mention of adult-child touch in terms feeding or sleep practices. Instead, feminists focused on power - social and familial power - and touch.

a. The historical roots of contemporary feminism in the United States

As framed by feminist scholars, Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Jill Neibrugge-Brantley, feminist theory tends to fit within three different ideological orientations. These include the “gender difference,” “gender inequality,” and finally, “gender oppression” orientations (Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992). These three ideological orientations thread through the three historical periods of feminism in the United States. In other words, one can find elements of these three orientations, “gender difference,” “gender inequality” and “gender oppression,” in each feminist period, at the turn of the century, in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the contemporary “third wave.”

Whereas all three orientations were always present, the concern with “gender difference,” the most conservative and traditional, and “gender inequality” dominated the first US feminist wave in the second half of the 19th century through the early 20th century. This early US feminism focused on the right to vote, which was won in 1920 (Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992).

To date the beginning of the second wave feminist movement, many feminist scholars and activists point to 1967, while others argue that it started as early as 1965. Either way, the second wave grew from both the Civil Rights, and the anti-war movement (that itself followed and emerged from the Civil Rights movement).

In *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation* (1998), feminist scholars Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow write, “the formative and galvanizing source for the women’s movement was the Civil Rights movement: its strategies, analyses, and high sense of political vocation.” They continue, “In its

attention to racial oppression, the Civil Rights movement had already made the case that justice in the United States would require fundamental social change” (DuPlessis and Snitow, editors 1998: 6). The beginning of women’s liberation, like all the radical sixties movements were indebted to the Civil Rights movement and its analysis. Given the broader radicalism of the times, it makes sense that in the second wave, the less conservative orientations, “gender inequality” such as liberal feminism, and “gender oppression” such as radical feminism, dominated feminist thought.

DuPlessis and Snitow argue,

“The dynamism of the sixties catalyzed all this rich political material, mobilizing mass movements. Many people sought to understand the motors of change. The Civil Rights movement said moral, spiritual, and militant resistance to unjust power would bring justice. The intellectual tradition of Marxism suggested that economic contradictions generated the opportunity for new social forms. The free-flowing atmosphere of youth culture said that commitment to personal liberation would transform society. The rage, fear, and political frustration inspired by the Vietnam War’s brutalities and irrationalities, the erosion of democratic values in the conduct of that war and elsewhere in political life - these suggested the time had come to confront the deep structures of society.” (Ibid.)

Increasing aspirations together with the numerous unfulfilled demands for social justice brought about powerful expectations and feelings. “A wide range of boiling, expanding movements sought a United States renewal...The women who became feminist activists shared with their generation this social, spiritual, and emotional yearning for a better world for all” (ibid).

Beginning with involvement in the civil rights movement, many women - both Black and white - started to find themselves “questioning the radical questioners” (ibid:

7). There were deep contradictions between the radical ethos of many sixties movement groups and their “proud, unthinking male chauvinism. Women in these groups began to see how the movements they had given their passion and energy were exploiting them. They began to wonder if “liberation” could apply to the women” (ibid: 6-7).

As left-wing women began to question the “questioners,” their analyses brought issues of women, gender and sexuality to the fore. These new critics quickly became the outsiders both to the rest of the rebel movements and to the mainstream. And shortly, feminists came to question *everything* from the larger culture, including its scientific experts, to the more intimate realm of home and family. They wondered why adult women were commonly called “girls.” They asked about the assumption that housework is women’s work. They questioned why women are paid less than men for work outside the home. They explored the exploitation of women in advertising. They wondered why there seemed to be no great women artists, historians or political leaders. They looked for the origin of what they saw as a common hatred of women. These were burning questions that needed answers. As DuPlessis and Snitow write, “Each woman seemed like a presenting symptom for which feminism was the cure” (ibid: 7). From this deep-seated questioning came what DuPlessis and Snitow call the “declaration of a feminist consciousness.”

Numerous second wave feminists, and radical feminists, in particular, argued for “sisterhood,” for complete solidarity among all women. “Out of this moment of separation from men came the opportunity to see one’s gender in isolation from other social identities. This isolation was a startling and suggestive proposition, and the moment that gender seemed separable as a theme for specific analysis was bold and

radical” (ibid: 8). Inevitably, the belief in universal female solidarity was a fantasy. “As feminism exploded into a mass movement, all kinds of protagonists with their multiple identities, allegiances, and needs complicated the assumption that there was one universal identity for all women” (ibid).

The second wave feminist movement seemed to take three, at times overlapping, primary courses. One was the struggles of women of color to fight simultaneously against racism and against sexism. This branch of second wave thought grew to dominate the third wave of feminism in the 1980s and 1990s. It is rooted in the “gender oppression” orientation, and is sometimes called identity feminism. Identity feminism examines the differences among women (not to be confused with the gender difference orientation which examines the differences between men and women).

In the 1960s and 1970s, women of color faced racism in the feminist movement, and sexism in the Civil Rights and other anti-racism movements. A branch of the second wave feminist movement made up primarily of women of color critiqued the “gender-as-monocause and sisterhood-as-monocure” analysis of components of the second wave. Scholar and contributor to *The Feminist Memoir Project*, Barbara Omolade argued, “By the late 1970s white “girls,” who only a few years before were awed by Blackness, usually in the form of Afroed, militant, male gladiators, became fired up with their own words and womanhood. These white women grew closer together, bonding ostensibly around their femaleness, but ultimately also around their whiteness.” (Omolade in DuPlessis and Snitow, editors 1998: 378). Women of color struggled together to analyze the complex separate, yet interconnected, issues of racial and gender oppression. They often felt that race excluded them from the dominant white feminist movement.

Elizabeth Martinez writes about her women's meeting on the night that Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. "The streets of New York and the nation, the hearts of people everywhere, were filled with rage. But at our women's meeting, nobody mentioned King's death, no one said we should talk about it before our usual business...Stunned and speechless, I left...It was a night to realize that if the struggle against sexism did not see itself as profoundly entwined with the fight against racism, I was gone" (Martinez in DuPlessis and Snitow, editors 1998: 118).

Another branch of the second wave sprang from the "inequality orientation" of feminism, in particular they took a liberal approach to feminism. Liberal feminists fought to incorporate women into the existing system. The problem for liberal feminists was the exclusion of women from the public realm of society rather than something fundamentally wrong *with* society. From this branch of the second wave movement came organizations like the National Organization of Women (NOW). Over the past three decades, liberal feminism became the prominent form of United States feminism outside of the university. Second wave feminist, Anselma Dell'Olio names these feminists in New York City, the "uptown feminists" (Dell'Olio in DuPlessis and Snitow, editors 1998: 156). Dell'Olio writes, "In the early days of the second wave, there were uptown feminists and downtown feminists, and the split was roughly between those who wanted a more equal share of the patriarchal pie, and those who wanted a different pie altogether, in which all that is now voiceless and valueless would be expressed and take pride of place, in our now male-oriented and male-defined culture." Dell'Olio continues, "The uptown women...were more mainstream in their politics, not necessarily tied to the ethos

of the sixties and the student movement” (ibid). Dell’Olio describes the different cultures of the two feminist branches, uptown (inequality orientation) versus downtown (oppression orientation). She writes that among the uptown feminists were often “married women...who had proper home lives.” In contrast, Dell’Olio continues, “most of the downtown women were single, and lived alternative lifestyles” (ibid: 158).

Second wave liberal feminism falls into the second general orientation within United States feminist thought, the “gender inequality” orientation. Gender inequality theories tend to revolve around four themes. One, men and women are not only differently, but also unequally situated. Gender inequality theorists point out that “women get less of the material resources, social status, power, and opportunities for self-actualization than the men who share their same social location” (Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992: 462). Two, these theorists argue that gender inequality springs from social organization rather than biological or personality differences between men and women. Three, they claim that there is no real pattern of difference between men and women. Most important to all human beings is the need to develop and “self-actualize,” defined in modern liberal and mainstream middle-class terms. Four, gender inequality theorists believe that human beings can change and will adapt with relative ease to a more equal social organization. Unlike gender oppression theorists, inequality theorists believe it is both desirable, and possible to restructure society in a more just fashion, that we are only a few steps away from a fair society. Fundamental social change is not necessary. Gender inequality feminists claim that we can make change happen within and through existing social institutions.

b. Radical feminism and ideologies of adult-child touch: Child sexual abuse and incest

The third general orientation within United States feminist thought is that of “gender oppression.” While less common in academic fields such as sociology, much of contemporary feminist theory falls within the “gender oppression” orientation. Gender oppression theorists,

describe women’s situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men, who have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling, using, subjugating, and oppressing women, effectively implement those interests...this pattern of oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways into society’s organization, a basic structure of domination most commonly called the patriarchy. (Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992: 470)

This structure is not an unintended or secondary result of some other form of oppression but a primary configuration of power held together by deliberate and strong - although possibly unconscious - intention. For gender oppression theorists, gender differences and gender inequality are the results of the patriarchy.

There are four main types of “gender oppression” theory: psychoanalytic, radical, socialist and third wave feminism. Of these, radical feminism played a central role in the second wave. So, for the purposes of this study, of the four “gender oppression” theories, I explore only radical feminist thought. Radical feminists strongly affirmed women and women’s special worth within a society that devalued them. Radical feminists expressed grief and anger at women’s oppression. They saw society characterized by domination, of which the most fundamental is gendered through the system of “patriarchy.” Although second wave liberal feminists were more concerned with making space for women in existing institutions, radical feminists, including a strong Marxist branch, were deeply

critical of these same institutions. They wanted to dismantle, rather than join, them. They argued that contemporary social institutions were an intricate part of the web of oppression that they called the patriarchy.

Second wave radical feminists believed that, ultimately, men maintained the patriarchy through violence. Central to the radical feminist “analysis is the image of patriarchy as violence practiced by men and by male-dominated organizations against women” (ibid: 474). Radical feminists described violence as happening whenever a group of people, in its own interests, controls the life opportunities, actions, social and physical environments and perceptions of another group. Yet Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley write, “the theme of violence as overt physical cruelty lies at the heart of radical feminism’s linking of the patriarchy to violence” (ibid). Fundamental to this theory was the examination of rape, child sexual abuse and incest, sexual slavery as in forced prostitution, domestic violence and pornography.

Once again, radical feminists argued that the patriarchy exists in so many places and times because men use physical force - violence - to establish and maintain control. Once the patriarchy is in place, via violence, other powers such as economic, political, psychological and ideological are used to sustain male dominance but physical force remains the bottom line defense for the patriarchy (see Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley, edited by Ritzer 1992). Radical feminists exposed rape, enforced prostitution, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the workplace, on the streets, in the schools (Brownmiller 1975; Dworkin 1979; Russell 1974). They fought against what they considered the “violence” of pornography. And they uncovered the most silenced secret of all, incest and child sexual abuse (Herman 1981; 1992; Butler 1978; Russell 1986).

For radical feminists, any solution to women's oppression must be grounded in a fundamental reworking of women's consciousness. For change to happen, women must learn to see their own worth and strength. Women must work together to establish what radical feminists call "sisterhood." Once rooted in sisterhood, women will be able to critically confront the patriarchy in all of its aspects, and to separate from men and live in "women-centered" places.

The second wave radical feminist movement was extremely important in shaping how people thought about the touching of children by adults. For the first time, adult-child touch - whether or not to touch children, how to touch them, what is and is not appropriate - became an issue of power relations. As previously discussed, during the first half of the century, science dictated mainstream ideological thought about adult-child touch. With the feminist second wave, people began to understand the touching of children as involving more than, simply, physical and psychological health or character development. Radical feminists made the argument that touching entails social power. Indeed, it *enacts* power between unequally situated individuals - men and boys over women and girls. In other words, they argued that power "happens" through adult-child touch, and in particular, it happens through incest and child sexual abuse.

For radical feminists, contra large-scale social denial, child sexual abuse, and in particular, incest, happened and it happened often. Second wave feminist Judith Lewis Herman argued, "Female children are regularly subjected to sexual assaults by adult males who are part of their intimate social world. The aggressors are not outcasts and strangers; they are neighbors, family friends, uncles, cousins, stepfathers, and fathers. To be sexually exploited by a known and trusted adult is a central and formative experience

in the lives of countless women” (Herman 1981: 7). The more socially acknowledged phenomenon - child sexual abuse by a pedophile, a crazy deranged stranger from somewhere else - happened too. It was a result, like stranger rape, of the patriarchy. But for radical feminists, more common and more insidious - if only for, it’s lack of social recognition - was the phenomenon of incest, child sexual abuse in the family.

Incest was a result of the patriarchy. In the patriarchy, women and children were the property of men. Radical feminist Susan Brownmiller wrote, “The unholy silence that shrouds the interfamily sexual abuse of children and prevents a realistic appraisal of its true incidence and meaning is rooted in the same patriarchal philosophy of sexual private property that shaped and determined historic male attitudes towards rape. For if woman was man’s corporal property, then children were, and are, a wholly owned subsidiary” (Brownmiller 1975: 281). Incest happened because of male oppression, enacted in part through male control over, and abuse of, female bodies.

Radical feminists explored the limited research already done on child sexual abuse, and they initiated their own research. They argued that the research supported their thinking about child sexual abuse and violence against women and girls. As discussed in chapter two, Kinsey had done such research. He found, as Brownmiller argues, “One in four women interviewed...had reported an unwanted preadolescent sex experience of some sort with an adult male...80 percent reported that they had been frightened” (ibid: 276).

Brownmiller, Herman and other radical feminists such as Florence Rush were stunned by Kinsey’s belief that except for children’s cultural conditioning, there is no reason why such adult-child sexual contact should be harmful to them. They argued that

Kinsey exhibited yet one more example of patriarchal thinking. Rush wrote, "With the usual male arrogance, Kinsey could not imagine that a sexual assault on a child constitutes a gross and devastating shock and insult, and so he blamed everyone but the offender" (Rush in Wilson and Connell, editors 1974).

Along with Kinsey's work, radical feminist cited numerous studies to claim that incest and child sexual abuse happened often. Brownmiller lists some of the studies addressing child sexual abuse: "Dr. Charles Hayman's Washington study disclosed that the ages of rape victims brought to D.C. General Hospital ranged from 15 months to 82 years. Twelve percent of his intake were children age 12 and younger. Brenda Brown's study of rapes reported to the Memphis police department showed that 6 percent of all victims were age 12 and under. Menachem Amir's study of reported rapes in Philadelphia showed that 8 percent of all victims were age 10 and under; a total of 28 percent were age 14 and below" (Brownmiller 1975: 272-273).

Brownmiller also explored a study done in 1969 by the Children's Division of the American Humane Association. It is important to note that once again the legitimacy of science is being invoked to justify an ideology, this time the feminist ideology about the association between patriarchy and violence. This study entailed a "detailed analysis of adult sex crimes against children in Brooklyn and the Bronx, using as its core sample 250 cases that had been reported during an eighteen-month period to police and child-protection agencies. No case involving an offender below the age of 16 (or victim above 16) was included. The Association's definition of a sex crime encompassed rape, attempted rape, incest, sodomy and carnal abuse" (ibid: 277). Among other things, the Brooklyn-Bronx study found that the "sexually abused child is statistically more

prevalent than the physically abused, or battered child; [t]he median age of the sexually abused child is 11, but infants have not escaped molestation; [t]en girls are molested for every one boy” (ibid: 277-278) Further, noted Brownmiller, ninety-seven percent of the offenders were male and “in three-quarters of the Brooklyn-Bronx cases the offender was known to the child or her family. Twenty-seven percent lived in the child’s home (father, stepfather, mother’s lover, brother). Another 11 percent did not live in the home but were related by blood or marriage...Only 25 percent of the offenders were reported to be total strangers” (ibid: 278). Further, over forty percent of the cases entailed abuse that occurred over an extended period of time including, in one case, seven years.

Radical feminists argued that scientific evidence supported their claim that incest and child sexual abuse occurred often and were usually ignored or denied. Rush wrote:

That fact remains that sexual offenses against children are barely noticed except in the most violent and sensational instances. Most offences are never revealed, and when revealed, most are either ignored or not reported. If reported, a large percentage are dismissed for lack of proof, and even when proof can be established, many cases are dropped because of the pressure and humiliation forced on the victim and family. (Rush in Wilson and Connell, editors, 1974)

Radical feminists believed that common among the kinds of child sexual abuse was incest and in particular father-daughter incest. About father-daughter incest Herman wrote,

Father-daughter incest is not only the type of incest most frequently reported but also represents a paradigm of female sexual victimization. The relationship between father and daughter, adult male and female child, is one of the most unequal relationships imaginable. It is no accident that incest occurs most often precisely in the relationship where the female is most powerless. (Herman 1981:4)

Radical feminists argued that incest was more than simply a result of the patriarchy; it was a means to *recreate* the patriarchy. Girls learned to be girls - they became girls - through a socialization process that included male violation of their bodies and selves.

Thus did the victims of incest grow up to become archetypally feminine women: sexy without enjoying sex, repeatedly victimized yet repeatedly seeking to lose themselves in the love of an overpowering man, contemptuous of themselves and of other women, hard-working, giving, and self-sacrificing. Consumed with inner rage, they nevertheless rarely caused trouble to anyone but themselves. In their own flesh, they bore repeated punishment for the crimes committed against them in childhood. (Ibid: 108)

Second wave theorists and activists raised a broad range of issues related to violence against women including rape, battering, the sexual division of labor, the prevalence of patriarchy, and many others. Of all these, child sexual abuse and incest had the greatest resonance with the general public, or at least with the mass media. Suddenly incest was “everywhere” - if not the actuality, at least the discourse. Novels and memoirs were written about incest and child sexual abuse. Movies began to regularly address these issues. Maya Angelou’s well-known memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* exemplifies such work. Angelou describes the ongoing sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her mother’s boyfriend with whom they lived, Mr. Freeman.

He grabbed my arm and pulled me between his legs. His face was still and looked kind, but he didn’t smile or blink his eyes. Nothing. He did nothing, except reach his left hand around to turn on the radio without even looking at it. Over the noise of the music and static he said, “Now, this ain’t gonna hurt you much. You like it before, didn’t you?”

And then there was the pain. A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart. The act of rape upon an eight-year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot.

I thought I had died - I woke up in a white-walled world, and it had to be heaven. But Mr. Freeman was there and he was washing me. His hands shook, but he held me upright in the tub and washed my legs. "I didn't mean to hurt you, Ritie. I didn't mean it. But don't you tell...Remember, don't you tell a soul." (Angelou 1971: 65-66)

Mr. Freeman had told Angelou that if she ever told anyone what he had done, then he would kill her beloved brother, Bailey. But, after being hospitalized, Angelou did tell. Then, she quit talking altogether except to her brother. "I had to stop talking...I had discovered that to achieve perfect personal silence all I had to do was to attach myself leechlike to sound. I began to listen to everything. I probably hoped that after I had heard all the sounds, really heard them and packed them down, deep in my ears, the world would be quiet around me" (ibid: 73).

The radical feminists echoed Angelou's story. They spoke about male violence, often the violence by familiar males sexually violating the little girls in their lives. They spoke about silence, about not telling. And in this, a space opened for more and more voices. This chance to speak and be heard was profoundly liberating for many, many women.

Suddenly women everywhere began to speak for the first time about their hidden childhood experience, horrible secrets long remembered. Other women began to remember that which they had been forced to forget. With the help of a growing body of feminist psychotherapists, these women claimed to have repressed their memories of

child sexual abuse. Feminist psychologists argued that “repressed memory syndrome” was the result of children experiencing something too horrible for them to handle psychically. The abused children repressed the abuse memories as a means of survival. With the second wave of feminist thought a safe place was suddenly opened up in society for the women to re-remember what they had forgotten.

c. Radical feminism and dualisms

I am, of course, a feminist. I call myself a socialist feminist. And for me, feminism has been both an intellectual, and literal, lifeline. I come from three generations of Irish Catholic women - my own, my mother’s and my grandmother’s generation. My mother became a feminist, a radical feminist, in the early 1970s, and this was the beginning of the end of my family. And this was a very good thing. So for me, the story of my family is a story of the profound value of second wave radical feminist thought. Feminism allowed my mother both to see, and to open, a door that led out of our family history, our multi-generational family story of violence. Radical feminists, in particular, focused on the question of male violence, and they developed complicated analyses of the oppressive system, the patriarchy, which included a deeply critical study of contemporary capitalism. Of course, there were also problems with second wave radical feminist thought. In particular, there was an element of simplicity in it. It was, to some extent, dualistic.

Some second wave radical feminists laid the world out in either/or terms. They reproduced a “deeply embedded cultural habit of thinking” (Chancer 1998: 24). This dualistic thought had, at its core, a gendered element. Here women and men were

understood to be on oppositional sides of the split like the body and mind, animals and humans, nature and God. As discussed earlier, “This bifurcation extends back to ancient philosophical splits...It is the foundation of, and frequently justification for, constructing gendered poles of “masculinity” and “femininity”” (ibid: 25).

For some second wave radical feminists, the oppressive order of things was both complex, and simple. Men violate to maintain their dominate position and, simply, because they can. Men violate and women are violated. Men oppress. Men act. And women are oppressed, the victims, the hurt, the acted upon. The movement had an inclination to see things with a clear line between the good and the bad. As many scholars have argued, this tendency fed into other problems such as the limits in the movement’s understanding of other forms of oppression like racism, classism and homophobia. Of course, even as I write this, I recognize that I too am simplifying. Second wave radical feminists did materially grounded analyses of gender, race and class that pushed the limits of the dualistic thinking I just described.

Nonetheless, there was a dichotomous ethos to second wave radical feminist thought that has been heavily critiqued today by third wave and other feminists like Chancer (1998), Patricia Ticineto Clough (1994), Susan Bordo (1993), June Jordan (1985), bell hooks (1981; 1984), and Audre Lorde (1984). Third wave feminists complicated our understandings of oppression. They argue that oppression is multi-faceted; that power is not a physical thing to hold on to, but is like a dynamic force that flows through society configuring to assume particular historical forms.

Indeed, in my own family story, the men *were* the violent ones, the women *were* the violated. Yet it was also more complicated than that. The men were *also* battered,

literally, and figuratively by the larger socio-economic situation in which they lived. The women *also* acted, both in colluding with the patriarchal culture, and in resisting it.

Not only did radical feminists tend to reproduce - albeit in reverse - broad cultural dualistic ideology, feminist thought tended to split, to dichotomize, *within* feminism as well. One side of the radical feminist split is discussed above (see Chancer 1998). This point of view focused on structural sexism and the patriarchy. The other school of thought, together with the split within radical feminist thought, developed during the antifeminist backlash of the 1980s and 1990s. Chancer contends that this second position focused on sexual freedom, rather than on sexism and violent oppression. These feminists realized that, in part, male power had been exercised to repress women's sexuality and women's desires. And for all people, sexuality "has been permissible only with certain partners and in certain forms" (ibid: 2). Chancer writes,

Because of this history of sexual repression, many feminists feel strongly, and understandably so, that procuring sexual freedom for all women must be a central concern of the feminist movement. This goal of sexual freedom is often pursued through individual defiance: here, sexual practices that challenge traditional constraints become a mode of rebellion and a quite personal politics. To seek and find physical pleasure is believed to be a good, even in a sexist present. (Ibid: 2)

Hence, on one side of the divide within radical feminism are the "sex feminists" who challenge the ways in which "male-dominated societies" restricted and controlled women's desires (Chancer 1998). On the other side are the "sexism feminists" who contest the male-dominated and oppressive social structures of the capitalist patriarchy. As Chancer says, this split in feminist thought developed in the 1980s and 1990s, and continues to haunt the feminist movement today.

Within feminism, this split plays out along a number of political fault lines, which include the areas discussed by Chancer: pornography, beauty, sex work, sadomasochism and rape. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, some sexism-focused radical feminists, such as Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, argued that pornography oppresses women by objectifying them, which reinforces/reproduces violence against them (Chancer 1998). Ironically, the antipornography feminists found themselves hand in hand with the religious right, and simultaneously, criticized by many third wave “pro-sex” feminists. In sharp contrast to both antipornography feminists and the religious right, some postmodern or third wave feminists argued that pornography *can be liberating*. They believed that we live in an “uptight” Protestant society, where the body and things of the body, such as sexuality, are seen as bad. Women, in particular, have been victimized in this mind-body split by being seen as either pure spirits/madonnas or impure bodies/whores. Pornography could be a celebration of the body and of sexuality. It could be understood as a place where women challenge the “whore” image of sexual women by explicitly celebrating their own sexual bodies.

Clearly, as Chancer argues, there are understandable reasons for feminism to reproduce the larger cultural ways of dualistic thinking, and for there to be dichotomies within feminist thought. “After all, dualistic thinking is deeply entrenched in Western civilization. Either/or dichotomies have indeed become habitual - difficult to elude, even seductively familiar” (Chancer 1998: 5). I argue that the sexism-focused radical feminists were fundamentally correct in both their social analysis and in uncovering of the phenomenon of incest. Yet, finally in their either/or thinking, some radical feminists tapped into the old dualistic rigidity of United States mainstream culture: the body is bad,

irrational and out of control; the mind or spirit is good, rational and in control, a dualism played out in numerous sites in second wave radical feminism, as well as in mainstream thought.

There is a sense in which some sexism-focused radical feminists challenge the terms of the mainstream dualism, but leave the fundamental structure in place. In the dominant culture, women are associated with the body/irrational/out of control and men with the mind/rational/in control. In much of second wave radical feminism these associations are accepted, women/body, men/mind. Yet in contrast to the historical western dualism, radical feminists reverse the valuation. Second wave radical feminists value the body as good and the mind as bad. The body continues to be associated with the “natural.” In radical feminist thought, the “natural” is good, trustworthy, pure; the rational, “objective” mind - and the male more generally - is cruel and inhumane. The scientist, the rational, the mind is “not-natural.” In this new schema, he is disconnected from nature, emotion, love and caring. And insofar as he is cold and emotionless, he is also potentially dangerous.

There are many limitations to this divided thinking and, certainly, to the polarization within the feminist movement. For the purposes of this study, I will deal with the problems of the “sexism feminists,” and in particular, with radical feminists’ dualistic focus on violent male touch. Second wave radical feminists tended to end with a flat explanation for men’s behavior. It went something like this: men violate because they can, and because it - violation/oppression - allows them to maintain their position of power. There is a way in which this leaves one with no better explanation than that men and male touch are bad. On the other side of this analysis, women are simply victims and

in that sense, simply good. At the end of the day, this is not a very satisfying explanation for our social situation. And this dualistic framework directly involves adult-child touch.

Some of the women in *The Feminist Memoir Project* write about their conflict with this facet of second wave feminism. Sometimes issues arose when a woman gave birth to a boy child. Prominent second wave feminist, Alice J. Wolfson remembers the conflict in her Washington, DC Women's Liberation group and the tension that coincided with a split between the "straight" and "gay or gay-identified women." She writes, "A small group of gay or gay-identified women successfully imposed an ideology identifying male children as the enemy and refused them access to the Women's Liberation office" (Wolfson in DuPlessis and Snitow, editors 1998: 276). Wolfson continues, "Although it is possible that some of the women who believed that male children were a barrier to feminism held this position not superficially but deeply, this belief seemed thoroughly irrational to me." Wolfson writes, "At the time, I was pregnant with my first child. Despite the fact that my theoretical background was still weak, I instinctively knew that these women were not going to make a revolution that I - or anyone - would want to be a part of, if the only way we could become a part of it was to give up our male children." Wolfson continues,

I remember the summer day that I sat, seven months pregnant, with two women from my collective, The Daughters of Lilith, women whom I had worked with and loved, and was told that I could still choose to be a part of the feminist revolution, to be a "woman-identified woman" ...if I was prepared to give up the baby if it were a boy. I was appalled and deeply hurt, but several women with whom I had worked so closely did, in fact, give up their boy children to their ex-husbands so that they could join the "revolution." (Ibid: 277)

Wolfson claims that this conflict destroyed the women's movement in Washington, DC (ibid: 277). Such dichotomous thinking was embedded in the radical feminist analysis of violent adult-child touch. Insofar as radical feminist thought influenced the mainstream, it also influenced mainstream ideologies of adult-child touch. This same "either/or ethos" that led a small component of the movement in DC to view male children - and all males - as "the enemy" played a part in the second wave's understanding of child sexual abuse and incest.

The men-are-bad, male-touch-is-dangerous element in some radical feminist thought led to a wariness with, and vigilance over, men touching children. This vigilance fed into the soon-to-come conservative backlash. In the backlash, the conservatives did not look at *all* men with suspicion. Rather conservatives viewed certain men with suspicion. Conservatives refocused popular attention where it was willing and ready to go before feminism: to child molesters and pedophiles.

Chapter six. Conclusion

My dissertation explores ideologies of adult-child touch in the twentieth century white middle class United States. Thinking about touch has varied radically in the mainstream. Some schools of thought have understood touching to be good and necessary; others have seen it as bad and harmful. I use these diverse ways of thinking about physical contact with children as windows into mainstream culture. Ideologies of touch expose beliefs about bodies, women and men, nature and science, different ethnic/racial groups, class, and what it means to be human. And, through all of these beliefs, social power can be seen and, in turn, it happens through these ways of thinking.

Because touching involves bodies, the mind-body split plays a central role in ideologies of adult-child touch. Like Bordo, in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), I assume that the body is not a fundamentally stable, acultural constant against which one might contrast other culturally relative forms. The body, like everything in culture, is always “in the grip,” as Michel Foucault argues, of cultural practices. Indeed, the problem is not cultural repression of the natural instinctual body; there is no “natural” body. Our bodies, as much as anything human, are made by our culture. At times, culture simply influences the way people experience their bodies. For example, “the practice of dieting - of saying no to hunger - contribute to the anorectic’s increasing sense of hunger as a dangerous eruption from some alien part of the self, and to a growing intoxication with controlling that eruption” (Bordo 1993: 143). However, the culture can shape the physical body more concretely; the nineteenth-century corset physically incapacitated women. The corset “served as an emblem of the power of culture to impose its designs on the female body.” Bordo argues, “Indeed,

female bodies have historically been significantly more vulnerable than male bodies to extremes in both forms of cultural manipulation of the body” (ibid).

Women not only have bodies but are also associated with the body, and with that which threatens to be out of control, that which is understood, like the body, to be “instinctual,” spontaneous and wild. In contrast to this, the male as mind or spirit is identified with control and rationality.

Dualism here appears as the offspring, the by-product, of the identification of the self with control, an identification...lying at the center of Christianity’s ethic of anti-sexuality. The attempt to subdue the spontaneities of the body in the interests of control only succeeds in constituting them as more alien and more powerful, and thus more in need of control. The only way to win this no-win game is to go beyond control, to kill off the body’s spontaneities entirely - that is, to cease to *experience* our hungers and desires. (Ibid: 146)

Using the anorectic as an example, Bordo writes that many anorectics’ final goal is to end their physical desires. “[I want] to reach the point,” as one put it, “when I don’t need to eat at all” (ibid). Bordo claims, “...many anorectics talk of having a “ghost” inside them or surrounding them, “a dictator who dominates me,” as one woman describes it; “a little man who objects when I eat” is the description given by another. The little ghost, the dictator, the “other self” (as he is often described) is always male” (ibid: 155). The anorectic’s additional side is that of uncontrollable appetites. This side is impure and has a flabby will. This side is the body. And it is gendered female.

There are multiple meanings to these gender associations. Bordo proposes that one entails abhorrence for traditional female roles and cultural limitations. And she argues that another meaning springs from a deep fear of “the Female,” with all its more

nightmarish archetypal associations of voracious hungers and sexual insatiability” (ibid). Adolescent anorectics often express a fear of growing up to be mature, sexually developed women. ““I have a deep fear,” says one, “of having a womanly body, round and fully developed. I want to be tight and muscular and thin.”” Another anorectic believes that if she could only stay thin, she would ““never have to deal with having a woman’s body.”” She claims, ““like Peter Pan I could stay a child forever.”” Bordo writes, “The choice of Peter Pan is telling here - what she means is, stay a *boy* forever. And indeed...many anorectics, when children, dreamt and fantasized about growing up to be boys. Some are quite conscious of playing out this fantasy through their anorexia...” (ibid).

In the mind-body dualism, the body has not been understood as merely evil. As our culture has romanticized the so-called “primitive” person-as-body in stories of the “noble savage,” we have also romanticized the female-as-body. In the mind-body dualism, on the one hand, the “bad” female-body is understood to be out-of-control animalistic sexuality. On the other hand, the still-animalistic, yet “good” female-body is the instinctual mother. Feminist scholars have named this opposition within the mind-body dualism, Madonna-whore. In other words, in the mind-body dualistic heritage of western thought, women are associated with bodies. Yet within that association, women-as-bodies are understood to be good bodies or bad bodies. They may be good, mothering, nurturing bodies or conversely bad, oozing sexuality, out-of-control bodies. In this projection, there is no room to be fully complicated human beings. Indeed, women are understood to be all that men are *not*: Good women are virtuous, nurturing mother figures. Bad women are out-of-control, sexual “sluts.”

In my thesis, I explore the two primary mainstream American child-rearing schools in terms of their thinking about bodies and adult-child touch. These two schools, the “naturalist” and the “behaviorist,” exist at either end of the touch continuum, and run throughout the twentieth century. For the naturalists, the body is to be celebrated; they have been, and continue to be, fundamentally pro-touch. For the behaviorists, the body is to be controlled and contained; they are more or less anti-touch. I argue that neither of the two schools have their finger on the pulse, so to speak, of the “right” body. Indeed, both play a role in body practices, in making our bodies part of culture.

Ideologies of touch swing towards the pro-touch end of the continuum when the body and the “natural” are seen as good and “wholesome.” Here, it is women’s touch that matters most because women are associated with the body. There is a push for mothers to touch their children - and in the case of attachment parenting, mothers should touch their children as much as possible. For attachment “parents” - in other words, *mothers* - bodies touching bodies, mothers touching babies, is central to good mothering. In this thinking, babies *need* to be touched as much as, if not more than, any other need. For babies to grow up physically and psychologically healthy, they must be touched a lot. And it is extremely important that it is their mother doing the touching.

At the other end of the touch continuum, the anti-touch end, the body and the “natural” are understood to be dangerous, unclean, uncivilized and potentially out of control. Here, due to their association with the body, women are especially dangerous. Within this ideological framework, we must be vigilant of women’s bodies and women’s touch. The push, then, is for less touching between parents - mothers - and children.

Watson took this to its extreme. In Watson's thinking there should have been virtually *no* touching of children and babies by mothers. For Watson, the ideal way to raise children was in a scientific laboratory. Science represents the opposite of the out-of-control female/body. Science like the male mind was understood to be rational, ordered and in control. Children raised by science/men would grow up to be science/male-like. They would be controlled, strong, rational and firm, in a word, masculine. In contrast, Watson believed that children raised - as almost all children were - by women/bodies were weak, emotional and out of control.

The behaviorists align themselves with science and mainstream medicine. And their founder, Watson, discussed in chapter two, was deeply misogynist. Throughout the twentieth century, the behaviorists, such as Watson, and Ferber, discussed in chapter four, champion a masculine ideal in human development. According to the behaviorists, a healthy child is one who grows up to become a rational, non-emotional, controlled/ing, strong and independent adult. Behaviorists argue that children are born as relatively blank slates. Children must be trained to become the people we want them to be; that is, masculine adults.

The behaviorists appropriate and claim for science an area of expertise, that of child rearing, that had belonged to women. Yet, ironically, in taking over women's "traditional" knowledge, and in a sense, disempowering women this way, the behaviorists helped open up the possibility, the space, for second wave feminism to ideologically free women from obligatory child-rearing as they entered the workforce in the second half of the twentieth century. And indeed, with the second wave, increasingly, women not only

work outside the home, but also feel (somewhat) entitled to focus on their own careers, to understand themselves in terms of work away home.

Recently an academic friend of mine who is also a mother, commented that, aside from me, she knew no mothers who did attachment parenting. I asked her what the mothers she knows do for work. They were all either academics or other professionals, or they were the women who worked *for* the professionals doing childcare. Of course, these two groups are not likely to do attachment parenting. Attachment parenting makes it fairly difficult for a woman to have a career. Indeed, much attachment parenting literature is explicitly against women working outside the home. Women who *must* work away from their own children out of financial necessity (the situation of many childcare workers) and women who feel strongly committed to their careers, as are many working women, are less likely to be interested in or able to do attachment parenting. In contrast, behaviorists make working away from home and children a little easier for women, through their greater openness to weaning, or even, not breastfeeding at all, and through sleep training children so that children sleep through the night on their own.

The naturalists like La Leche League International discussed in chapter three, and William Sears in chapter four, essentialize women and women's roles. This essentialization may, in part, come from their Christian religious background. La Leche League was founded by seven Catholic white middle class women who met through a Christian association. Yet insofar as they essentialize women's roles, naturalists also challenge the hegemony of science over child-rearing expertise, and take back this expertise for women. They offer women a kind of power, albeit limited, in that they celebrate women's "traditional/instinctual" knowledge. The naturalists also challenge

two key aspects of twentieth century mainstream America: the masculine ideal, and the materialism of middle class consumer culture.

Simultaneous to challenging mainstream science, the naturalists use science to make their arguments. Indeed all of the various ideologies of touch make use of scientific research and findings in their claims. In other words, science can and is used for a variety of ideological positions.

In their child-rearing philosophy, naturalists follow the lead of the child. For naturalists, the child *naturally* knows what she or he need from birth. Parents must simply learn to listen to their children's language or "cues." Crying is one such cue, and because of this, it must be responded to quickly. Naturalists believe children will become healthy, happy adults if their needs are met. Primary among children's needs is to be *touched*. Among many benefits, touching induces intimacy and connection. And, for naturalists, being connected to, in relationship with, others is a fundamental need of human infants. Through healthy connection in infancy and childhood, human beings learn to be healthy related, interdependent and independent adults. Whereas behaviorists value masculine ideals, like learning to be alone in childhood, naturalists are anti-masculinist. They value dependency in children, and through inter/dependency, children learning to be related to and in relationship with others.

Interestingly, in our consumer capitalist society, naturalists challenge materialism by arguing for connection to "people not things." Naturalists are against the behaviorist independence-inducing tool, the "transitional object." Behaviorists encourage the use of a transitional object, such as a blanket or toy, to help babies and children to be separate from their parents and alone. In this thinking, children should attach to the object as a

way to help them let go of their parents, and transition to being without them for periods of time. It is fascinating that in a consumer society such as ours, the behaviorists and naturalists split around the questions of *things*. Behaviorists argue that things should be used as a psychological aid in raising healthy children. For behaviorists, like mainstream society, property is a, quite literally, good thing. Naturalists argue that babies and children should be aided in and allowed to attach to their parents, particularly their mothers, and never material objects. They believe that when children attach to transitional objects, this is a sign of a child whose (natural) needs are not being met.

Contemporary issues

a. Families and values: The conservative backlash

In this section, I discuss contemporary issues involving the family that flow from debates about adult-child touch. First, I address the role of ideas about the family in the 1980s conservative backlash. Then, I relate the backlash to issues of touch. Finally, I briefly discuss how the law treats distinct adult “touch” offenders, as in cases of child sexual abuse, differently.

In the late 1970s, after two decades of radical change, things shifted once again. The conservative right began an intense backlash. The “New Right’s” backlash against feminism and other left-wing movements was not only the result of the revolutionary sixties and seventies; it followed “Watergate, Vietnam, energy crises, inflation, and economic stagnation” (Skolnick 1991: 4). People became very nostalgic for an imagined perfect past. Skolnick argues, “Americans hungered for the stability, order, and tradition

of a lost golden age” (ibid: 5). When looking for someone to blame for the fall from paradise, feminism became the primary target of conservatives.

For the backlash, not only was feminism seen to have caused harmful social change, but even what seemed like *good* change was actually bad. Conservatives argued that as women became more independent, more equal, they were less and less happy. The New Right “pointed a damning finger at feminism, claiming that they can chart a path from rising female independence to rising female pathology” (Faludi 1991: xii). Women were told that they “may be free and equal now...but [they] have never been more miserable” (ibid: ix). In her well-known book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, Susan Faludi (1991) argues:

This bulletin of despair [was] posted everywhere - at the newsstand, on the TV set, at the movies, in advertisements and doctor’s offices and academic journals. Professional women are suffering “burnout” and succumbing to an “infertility epidemic.” Single women are grieving from a “man shortage.” The *New York Times* reports: Childless women are “depressed and confused” and their ranks are swelling. *Newsweek* says: Unwed women are “hysterical” and crumbling under a profound crisis of confidence.” The health advice manuals inform: High-powered career women are stricken with unprecedented outbreaks of “stress-induced disorders,” hair loss, bad nerves, alcoholism, and even heart attacks. The psychology books advise: Independent women’s loneliness represents “a major mental health problem today.” (Ibid: ix-x)

And the cause of this despair, the backlash claimed, was feminism. They held the second wave feminist movement responsible for nearly every problem, real and imagined, affecting women “from mental depression to meager savings accounts, from teenage suicides to eating disorders to bad complexions” (ibid: x).

The conservative backlash had an answer to the many problems feminism had supposedly caused women. The answer, of course, had to do with the family. In a 1986 Los Angeles Times article Psychologist Annette Baran said, ““I would suspect...” that single women now represent “the great majority of any psychotherapist’s practice,” precisely “sixty-six percent,” her hunch told her” (Baran quoted in Faludi 1991: 35). If only women would quit their jobs, marry and stay home to raise children, then all would be well.

In fact, many studies have shown that married women are *less* happy than singles. (On the other hand, married men are *happier* than singles.) About women and marriage, Faludi writes that demographers “have collected a vast amount of data comparing the mental health of single and married women. None of it supports the thesis that single women are causing the “age of melancholy”: study after study shows single women enjoying far better mental health than their married sisters (and, in a not unrelated phenomenon, making more money)” (Faludi 1991: 36). Faludi continues,

The psychological indicators are numerous and they all point in the same direction. Married in [various] studies report about 20 percent more depression than single women and three times the rate of severe neurosis. Married women have more nervous breakdowns, nervousness, heart palpitations, and inertia...The Mills Longitudinal Study, which tracked women for more than three decades, reported in 1990 that “traditional” married women ran a higher risk of developing mental and physical ailments in their lifetime than single women - from depression to migraines, from high blood pressure to colitis. A Cosmopolitan survey of 106,000 women found that not only do single women make more money than their married counterparts, they have better health and are more likely to have regular sex. Finally, when noted mental health researchers Gerald Klerman and Myrna Weissman reviewed all the depression literature on women and tested for factors ranging from genetics to PMS to birth control

pills, they could find only two prime causes for female depression: low social status and marriage. (Ibid: 37)

Contra conservative rhetoric, marriage and the “traditional” family did not seem to be the perfect answer to women’s problems. Though research debunked it, conservatives pushed forward with their male breadwinner, female homemaker solution.

Despite the election of Ronald Reagan with his promise of a return to “traditional” families with old “family values” in 1980, social reality did not go back in time. The United States family continued to change. With the increasing transformation in middle class families, there was much talk of the decline of the family and of a general moral decay in our society. As Skolnick points out, “the theme of moral decay was not confined to New Right religious activists. Critics across the political spectrum complained that individualism, hedonism, feminism, and a new therapeutic ethic was eating away the social fabric” (Skolnick 1991: 7). Still today, we continue to maintain nostalgia for the Golden Past, particularly that of the 1950s. Yet, as Skolnick argues, much of this discourse about the family lacks a historical context. This longing for the past compares the present to the 1950s even though the 1950s were a unique and contradictory time in the history of the United States family.

The nostalgic discourse on the family lumps together a diverse set of problems and claims that they are due to the “fall” of the family. In this glorification of the past, people tend to ignore the structural roots of changes in the family and imply that if only “we” - particularly women - had the strength of character, we would go back to the old model. Our cultural remorse over this lost past uses the same old rhetoric that has been used across the twentieth century, for new social conditions. It assumes that all Americans are in flight from the family. However, Skolnick argues, “the lure of

nostalgia blinds us to the facts of social change and impedes us from coming to grips with the problems created by that change” (ibid: 9). She continues, “The changes in our hearts and minds are responses to large scale social change, rather than a fall from moral grace. Thus, family arrangements that made sense in 1800 or 1900 or even 1950 have little relevance for how we live today” (ibid: 10).

Families have changed. Divorce rates have gone up. People now commonly have sexual relationships outside of marriage. Women work. Families are often headed by a single-parent, who is typically female. More and more couples are made up of - and families are started by - openly lesbian women and gay men. In spite of conservative calls for a “return to family values and the traditional family,” attempts to remake families in a 1950s idealized pattern have failed. And in fact, such attempts were doomed to fail given that the 1950s were a deviant decade in the long-term historical trend altering the way families are in the United States. There is still widespread anxiety about combining parenthood and work. Yet women are clearly in the workforce for good. Nor is the public completely against this. Skolnick discusses a 1987 Gallup poll in which 87 percent of the surveyed said they had “old-fashioned values about family and marriage.” Yet, at the same time, over two-thirds were against the idea that “women should return to their traditional role” (ibid: 189).

Yet while United States families in the 1980s and 1990s are different from their 1950s counterparts, families continue to be a central component of United States culture. People still want commitment and they still want children. In sharp contrast to the predictions of many demographers, the birthrate rose rapidly at the end of the 1980s. In

fact, according to the Census Bureau, “more babies were born in 1989 - more than four million - than in any other year in our history” (ibid: 187).

b. Families and child sexual abuse

Yet there is a political tale here too. In the early 1980s, as the New Right emerged with its powerful backlash against feminism, it made good use of the child sexual abuse storyline. Children, the New Right argued, were being abused because their negligent mothers were leaving them all day, even all night, in the hands of strangers, or worse yet, all alone. Because of the selfishness of contemporary women, small children were increasingly left in daycare centers while their mothers went out into the public world to find personal fulfillment. School-age “latch-key children,” came from school to their empty homes. They had no one waiting for them to give them snacks and hear about their day. According to the New Right, these children had been abandoned. The New Right argued that, in their vulnerability, many were the victims of sexual abuse. The pedophiles lurked around every corner and potentially worked within every daycare. Parents were advised to never, ever, let their guard down.

Meanwhile, children *were* being sexually abused. Yet studies indicate that child sexual abuse is more likely to happen at home by family members and friends, than stranger abuse or abuse at a daycare (Herzberger 1996: 18; National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect 1995). Indeed, national “incidence studies indicate that child sexual abuse is primarily intrafamilial” (Blome 1997: 1). I argue that the New Right was less interested in child sexual abuse so much as in criticizing women for working outside the

home. This was true in spite of the fact that most women have no choice, and many were working at dead-end jobs with few benefits and low pay.

Though feminists had raised the issue, those who joined the hunt against child sexual abuse in the late 1980s and 1990s came increasingly from the right. For radical feminists, child sexual abuse and incest fit into a deeply critical analysis of society and its institution, the nuclear family. In contrast, the right wing, in its battle against pedophiles did not recognize the trouble within the “traditional” nuclear family. The New Right, in their conservative 1980s backlash against feminism, used child sexual abuse to demonize feminism and feminist women.

In the early 1980s, the “incest survivor movement” grew, and with it popular journals, self-help groups, and a plethora of pop psychology books on incest and child sexual abuse were published. The mass media also jumped on the bandwagon, happy to oblige feminism, and later the New Right, with extensive coverage; child sexual abuse is titillating and exciting, and child sexual abuse and incest stories sold well. Talk shows exploited the incest theme for its juicy, heavily emotional elements. Novels, movies, and television dramas followed suit. Not only did people begin to remember incest and child sexual abuse, they began to look for it, but as the conservative backlash took hold, this popular search focused increasingly on pedophiles, strange men outside the family who molested children, rather than incest and child sexual abuse within the family.

In the 1980s, there was a wave of daycare scandals where child sexual abuse was supposedly found to have occurred. Looking back, one recognizes that telling a little girl what you think happened to her, and then asking her if it happened, might not be the best way to garner information from a small child. Unfortunately, many of the daycare

scandal interviewing techniques were that unsophisticated. There was an almost hysterical witch-hunt mentality. "Pedophiles are bad. They are out there somewhere. And we are going to get them." In contrast to this popular focus, studies increasingly showed that child sexual abuse was happening in the *home* (and as it turns out, the church) by adults known to the child, rarely in public places. However, the nation and the mass media focused its attention outside of the home.

The right saw the *lack* of traditional nuclear families - families with a wage earning male head of household and a dependent female at home raising children - as the root of the problem. Like feminists, conservatives argued that child sexual abuse happens and happens often. However, conservatives pointed not to the "traditional" home of the right's ideal family, but at the dangerous world outside the home. For example, the right wing claimed that daycare centers present incredible peril. Really, the right argued, children should be raised at home in the loving care of their mothers. Child sexual abuse is what happens when women leave the home, and abandon the family. Children raised by single mothers, or where both parents work, are in danger of falling into the wrong hands.

Children should grow up in a two parent home where the parents are married, are solidly gendered examples of "traditional" maleness and femaleness, and where the woman stays home to raise the children. Without "family values," and the traditional nuclear family, our children are at great risk. In a recent article in the *National Review Online*, the editor, conservative Rich Lowry, expressed the right wing's perspective on childcare.

Why is it so hard to admit that mothers are central to child-rearing, so important, in fact, that they should stay

home when their kids are little? It probably has a lot to do with the problem liberals have admitting that biology sometimes is inescapable, that nature imposes certain obligations that can't be got around with clever alternate arrangements... This gets to a broader point about contemporary liberalism. It's central value isn't compassion or anything noble like that, but convenience, especially when it comes to family issues. This is why abortion is so important. Why should anyone be burdened with an inconvenient child? And if liberals think awkwardly timed children can be sucked away into eternity, why would they think that mothers should have to go too far out of their way to nurture them once they are actually here? (Lowry 2001)

Conservative writer, Mary Eberstadt, stated the right-wing analysis of child sexual abuse in a recent article she wrote for the *Policy Review* called "Home-Along America" (Eberstadt 2001). Eberstadt argued that most of the troubles faced by United States youth can be traced back to one place, one person - the home and the mother. From the young San Diego killer who opened fire in a high school in March 2001 to Columbine, Colorado's high school killers to Jeffrey Dahmer and Timothy McVeigh, mothers leaving their children to go to work causes children to kill. What do all of these young white males have in common? As teenagers, they were all left at home, alone, while their mothers went to work. What other problems can be explained by working mothers? Adolescent suicide, mental problems, bad conduct, child sexual abuse, world poverty - no, not world poverty - find their source in mother abandonment via mothers working outside the home. About child sexual abuse, Eberstadt wrote, "Consider also the statistics on child sexual abuse... Writing in 1997, Patrick Fagan of the Heritage Foundation used... data - from studies conducted by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - to arrive at the

following figure: child sexual abuse has “increased by 350% since 1980” (Eberstadt 2001: 6).

One might argue that the “increase” in child sexual abuse is merely an increase in social awareness and a changed definition of abuse - thanks, one might add, to the second-wave feminist movement. Research like that done by Kinsey reinforces this. Kinsey found a similar rate of “child sexual abuse” in the 1930s and 1940s. He simply did not call it “abuse.” In her essay, Eberstadt briefly acknowledged this possibility of changing social awareness. “Though part of the increase in these numbers is of course due to changes in reporting always governing physicians and other professionals” (ibid). Yet changes in reporting was all Eberstadt was willing to acknowledge. She wrote, with no further evidence outside of Fagan’s questionable study, “there is also no doubt the same numbers would have been rising independent of those changes” (ibid). For Eberstadt rising numbers of abuse are not because there has been a fundamental shift in social recognition and ways of understanding child sexual abuse. Eberstadt argued that since 1980 - since the end of the second wave feminist movement - child sexual abuse has risen enormously, and mothers working outside the home are the cause. “Child sexual abuse at contemporary levels, as anyone who follows the data will agree, is tragic. And here, too, a connection to home-alone America seems undeniable...in order for predatory males (and they are almost always males) to abuse, they must first have access; and that the increasing absence from home of biological mothers - who statistically speaking almost never violate children in this way - effectively increases the access of would-be predators” (ibid: 6-7).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the popular culture reflected Eberstadt and the conservative fears about working parents, neglected children and pedophiles. A station for women, "Lifetime," continues to air a rich collection of movies made-for-television about pedophiles and the children they abuse. Indeed, has become associated with child sexual abuse stories in many people's minds. When I lecture on child sexual abuse, inevitably one of my students refers to one or another show she has seen on "Lifetime." These shows tend to be shown during the day to women who work at home. Some of these movies tell stories about other mothers - bad mothers - who go off to work and leave their children to become helpless victims alone in a depraved world. For example, one made-for-television movie, *Don't Touch My Daughter* (1991) tells a standard right-wing story about child sexual abuse: It is about an eleven year old white girl, Dana, who is kidnapped and molested by a working class man from the same city. The girl and her divorced mother, Linda Hemmings, are presented as good, clean, middle class people, albeit naive to the wicked ways of the world. And of course Linda, a divorcee, works outside the home, leaving her young daughter, all too often, alone.

In sharp opposition to Linda and Dana is Eddy Ryter, always grubby and unshaven. We first meet him being arrested at his job of two weeks at a meat-packing factory. As if these markers were not enough, we are told of his class status through his non-middle class (read: problematic) English. The police officer working with the mother warns her that the judge is "soft." There is nothing these good people can do when the soft-on-crime legal system lets Eddy go with a low bail. And sure enough, he lurks about their house smirking at them and making threatening phone calls. He personifies evil. As the movie progresses, we garner more and more information as to

the depth of Eddy's evilness. He has kidnapped, molested and murdered untold numbers of little girls. He threatens to do it again with Dana. And the legal system permits it. Finally, the mother is forced to take justice into her own hands. She breaks into Eddy's home, shoots and kills him. Of course, it never would have come to this if Linda had not been away at work leaving her daughter alone in the first place.

Don't Touch My Daughter is rich with ideology. It tells a story about gender, class and the legal system. It speaks to widespread conservative fears about evil pedophiles, out there somewhere, lurking, waiting for the opportunity to snatch up our daughters and defile them with their dirty evil touch. The legal system protects the criminals. There is little that everyday people can do to protect themselves except to take matters into their own hands; at the very least, mothers must be where they are supposed to be, with their children.

In the 1980s, the hunt for perpetrators of child sexual abuse focused on daycare centers. Cases of extensive abuse were reported to have occurred in a number of daycare centers across the nation. One of the most notorious involved a Southern California preschool run by the McMartin family. This case started in the summer of 1983 with allegations of child molestation and ritual satanic abuse. The trial itself ran from April 1987 until July 1990. The charges included 354 counts of molestation and/or abuse, 41 witnesses, and 369 alleged victims (Kincaid 1998: 195). Cultural critic, James R. Kincaid wrote about the McMartin trial, "This longest criminal trial in U.S. history trailed off into acquittals, deadlocks, and declarations of mistrials, all signaling that we had other spectacles to attend to and could finally let this one go" (ibid). Kincaid argued that when the McMartin trial was finally abandoned, it "and copycat cases that came in its wake,

left a permanent mark on day-care operations...and on those who need their services” (ibid: 200). Kincaid continued, “how much more guilt do working mothers need shoveled on them...[Yet o]ften it is worse than guilt, a judge in Michigan actually remov[ed] a three-year-old girl from her mother because the mother was using day care thirty-five hours a week while taking classes in Ann Arbor” (ibid).

Frank Fuster’s indictment was another high-profile daycare child sexual abuse cases. In 1984, he and his wife were charged with sexually abusing more than twenty children in their home daycare center. Out of his case came the “Miami Method” developed by former United States Attorney General Janet Reno. It curbed the number of interviews for each child by “videotaped interviews with children and expert testimony assuring jurors that the children should be believed” (Frontline, April 25, 2002). “Reno developed a special children’s unit within the state attorney’s office, where “child experts” Joe and Laurie Braga conducted videotaped interviews of children suspected of being abused” (ibid). A prosecutor in Reno’s office, David Marcus defended the techniques used to interview the children, claiming “Reno’s unit was one of the first to limit the number of child interviews in order to minimize the trauma of asking a child to discuss such painful topics” (ibid). However Dr. Stephen Ceci, an expert on children’s memory and interviewing techniques, disagreed. He argued that the “Braga sessions were rife with leading questions that prompted children to say what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear” (ibid). Ceci claimed, ““Kids are cooperative conversational partners...they want to give you the answer that they think will make you happiest...And especially if the first couple of times they resist and just say ‘No’ and you keep bringing

it up, they start to get the message. They think, ‘Well, maybe I’ve been giving the wrong answer and I should switch’” (ibid).

Eventually, over twenty children reported being raped and molested by Fuster and his young wife, Ileana. As in other daycare child sexual abuse cases, the reports were bizarre. “Masks, snakes, drills, and other objects figured in the children’s reports of horrific sexual abuse” (ibid). In the end, Fuster’s five-year-old son, Noel, from a previous relationship provided the “most damning” evidence against Fuster. Noel’s interview was biased at best. There are scenes in the “taped interview in which the Bragas - apparently stymied by Noel’s insistence that no one abused him - ask the child if it’s possible that he was abused but simply doesn’t remember it because he was hypnotized or asleep at the time” (ibid). Noel Fuster now claims that “These people did a number on me” and that “he was never abused by his father” (ibid). Nonetheless, Frank Fuster is still serving his 165-year sentence.

c. Families, child sexual abuse and the law

There is much ambiguity surrounding the issue of child sexual abuse. And the question of adult-child touch is central to this. Namely, much of the ambiguity surrounding sexual abuse reflects a larger ambiguity about touch. When is adult-child touch appropriate? When is it necessary? When is it harmful? When is adult-child touch sexual? And is sexual touch between adults and children always hurtful to children? There is a fine line between sexual and nonsexual touching; a line, at times, impossible to find. And yet, albeit hard to define, in the United States today “child sexual abuse” is a crime.

Child sexual abuse is not, of course, a crime of “nature,” but like all crimes one defined as such by our society. A criminal act is not a fact, forever and always. What one culture calls “criminal,” another culture might consider appropriate and even celebrated behavior, and still another society might not even recognize as existent. Here one may think about the example of marital rape. A few decades ago there was no such thing as “marital rape.” People believed, and the law reinforced this belief, that men had the right to sex - albeit, at times forced - with their wives. Today, people’s thinking on this issue has changed. The phenomena of men forcing their wives to have sex is considered rape, marital rape, and it is a crime. Much like marital rape, our society’s thinking on child sexual abuse has changed over time.

Contemporary concern with child sexual abuse reflects two historical currents. One is the concern with cruelty to children within the family. Included within this concern is the more hidden, less socially recognized type of child sexual abuse, “incest.” The other historical current is the concern with the sexual abuse of children by strangers. This type of child sexual abuse has been much more socially recognized. As radical feminists argued, this is true even though research indicates that child sexual abuse is *primarily intrafamilial* (Herzberger 1996; National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect 1995; Herman 1981; 1992). Accordingly, legal attention given to sexual assaults of children by strangers, “child molestation,” has a longer history. Due to these two separate ways of thinking about child sexual abuse, and the cultural reluctance to see and recognize child sexual abuse in the family, the perpetrators of the two forms of child sexual abuse are understood, named, and treated in fundamentally different ways. In

other words, the law reflects the conservative bias *against* pedophiles and *for*, in a sense, familial perpetrators.

Incest offenders are subject to far less public scorn and derision. They receive less media attention compared to child molesters. In contrast, child molesters are viewed as evil, sick and somehow, more deviant than the perpetrators of incest. Incest offenders are generally charged in family court. Child molesters are charged in criminal court. Sociologist Juliana M. Blome writes, “Intrafamilial perpetrators of sexual abuse may be charged in either family court or juvenile courts or Criminal Court or simultaneously in both courts. However Criminal prosecution of incest cases remains infrequent, unless it is particularly heinous.” In contrast to incest offenders, for whom the legal system offers a chance at rehabilitation through treatment, “child molesters [are] not only...likely to face imprisonment, but civil commitment laws, invasive medical treatment, and community notification and registration laws.” In fact, “child molesters are almost seven times more likely to be imprisoned than their intrafamilial counterparts” (Blome 1997: 14). Incest offenders are likely to be offered a therapeutic form of jurisprudence. In contrast, child molesters are much more likely to be put in prison. Once released, they often face harsh punitive measures such as community notification as in the case of Megan’s law. Some convictions of child molesters seem significantly out of proportion to the injury done. In one case, a California man received 129 years in prison for molesting an eleven-year-old girl. Another convicted molester was sentenced to 527 years. His defense attorneys observed that had the defendant killed the child he would have served less time (Blome 1997).

Concluding thoughts

Twentieth century ideologies of adult-child touch have worked, in part, to socially construct gender roles. Women learn to be women through these ways of thinking. And dualistic beliefs about gender lies at the bottom of most of it. Dualisms are deeply problematic, partially, because they leaves no room for ambiguities, and life and parenting are full of ambiguities. In this, dualisms are also dangerous because they distort and distract from reality; they pull our attention from the realities of how people live, the economic difficulties, the time constraints of the second shift, and the lives and poverty of many, particularly of many women and children. They serve as moralizing or idealistic discourses about how people “ought” to live, not how they actually do live.

In the 1980s and 1990s, in the New Right’s backlash, conservatives focused their attention on the family. They claimed that the “traditional” family was being destroyed and that this was the reason for all the other social problems we faced. According to conservatives, there were good families and bad families. And the bad families were destroying our society. Social historian Hester Eisenstein writes, “The New Right ideology creates a stark polarization between Good versus Evil. On the side of the angels is the traditional nuclear family with the nurturing mother at home raising her 2.1 children to believe in the traditional values, and the hardworking breadwinner father out there in the difficult but rewarding world of the paid workforce, bringing home the bacon. On the side of Satan and the forces of evil are the lesbians, the homosexuals and the women in the paid workforce” (Eisenstein 1991: 86-87). Anti-feminist conservative Phyllis Schlafly exemplified this thinking in her claim that, “America is a two-class society, divided not between rich and poor but between those who hold decent family

values and those who do not” (paraphrased in Stephanie Coontz 1992: 107). A similar “two-class society” exists for the child-rearing experts as well. There are the good mothers and the bad mothers. The good mothers parent in the manner prescribed by the experts, and the bad mothers do not.

In the frantic middle class focus on child-rearing advice, we lose track of the real issues, such as poverty, the lack of affordable childcare, and low wages, wages so low they are impossible for families to live on. Coontz offers an example of this in terms of the issues surrounding prenatal care. In the United States a very large percentage of the population cannot afford health care. Yet even so, in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a growing movement to punish pregnant women who do not seek prenatal care. “A number of states...jailed women because authorities estimated that they would not otherwise seek prenatal care” (ibid: 112). Yet there is a “catch-22 for many modern mothers, just as there was for those accused of child neglect one hundred years earlier. By the end of the 1980s, growing numbers of pregnant women could not find prenatal care. To punish women for not getting prenatal care when we do not recognize public responsibility for providing it is uncomfortably close to the turn-of-the-century practice of penalizing poor mothers for not giving their children the benefits of affluence” (ibid: 112-113).

There are many ironies in binary thought. One surrounds women’s labor. Women are belittled for putting their children in daycare. And yet there exist almost no social assistance for women - or men - to stay home with their children. If non-affluent women stay home with their children and use the very limited - at this point, almost

nonexistent - resource of welfare, they called lazy welfare mothers. If they go to work, chances are very good that one job will not cover their living expenses, and further, they are considered selfish for leaving their children in someone else's care. In fact, the very work women often do as homeworkers - service work including sex work, cleaning, childcare, and cooking and serving food - is considered good, and a "labor of love" *unless* they get paid for it. When women get paid for labor such as service work, they are often looked down upon for doing something "dirty" or "lowly."

Social understandings of what it means to be female and what is women's work has changed over time. As discussed in chapter two, with industrialization, middle class women and men began to have separate spheres. Middle class men went out to the public realm of the workplace, such as the factory, to work, and middle class women stayed in the newly private world of the home. The factory and public world was rational, calculating and competitive. The private home surrounded by firm, ideological boundaries was the place of connection, caring and love. Love was understood to be women's work.

With industrialization, middle class women's work increasingly involved child rearing and homework such as cleaning, rather than producing the goods of life. Production was now done in the public world of industry. Yet one "product" was left to middle class women - the child. And child-rearing advice helped women to produce the very best child possible. This child - at least the boy child - was meant to function well in the regimented, competitive world of industrial capital.

With the second wave radical feminist movement in the 1970s we had a cultural moment where child sexual abuse in the family, incest, was more widely recognized. Yet, since then, our social focus has re-centered on the fear of the less common child molester outside of the family. The danger here is that we may persecute the McMartin family or the single mother who does child-led weaning rather than acknowledging where the real danger lies. Yet there is another danger directly involving adult-child touch. That is, we risk stopping the touching of children in ways that children perhaps need to be touched.

Nationally the response to the child sexual abuse terror has been fearful vigilance for pedophiles, increased pressure on women to stay home with their children, and an intense focus on the touching of children by adults outside the home. Indeed, there was and continues to be an ethos of danger around adults touching children at all. In the late 1980s and 1990s, many childcare workers were told not to touch or have physical contact with the children in their care. Teachers became increasingly careful not to touch their students for fear of being misunderstood. Even those who work with very young children - children who may need to be touched for healthy development to occur - became cautious and began to avoid physical contact. For instance in 1993, I worked for several months in an urban institution with young girls who had reached the end of the institutional rope. They had been tossed out, or had run away from, one too many foster families and could no longer be placed. This institution was a holding place - albeit a holding place with good intentions - until the girls turned eighteen and the state was relieved of its troublesome responsibility. The institution's staff was, quite literally, not allowed to touch the girls. Even a tap on the shoulder or a brush of the arm was frowned

upon. Furthermore, the girls were not allowed to touch each other. Sitting next to each other on the couch or resting an arm around another girl's shoulders, received the quick reprimand, "Hey! No pc!" (physical contact). Because these girls all came from extremely abusive backgrounds, the majority had histories of sexual abuse, and some had been both abused and the abuser of other smaller children, the institution was very concerned that the girls not misinterpret any touch. Its simple institution-style solution was to allow *no* touching to occur.

Oddly, in this anti-touch ethos, we seemed to have swung back to the first half of the century before the late 1940s. Mainstream scientific "experts" tended to argue more or less adamantly *against* touching children. These "experts" represented the dominant culture and its Protestant, Anglo-Saxon or white, masculinist, "scientific" values. In a certain sense, second wave radical feminists fed back into this Protestant anti-sexuality, anti-touch ethos of the first half of the century. Or at least, their deeply critical social analysis of adult-child touch, the nuclear family and power has been stood on its head.

I contend that, due in part to the dichotomized element of their thinking, sexism-focused radical feminists have come dangerously close to being anti-touch. They argued that, to some extent, the sexist oppression of women and girls is enacted in the adult male touching of girls. However unintended, the social response to this argument has been and continues to be a surveillance of adult-child touch. And insofar as radical feminist thought was dualistic and bordered on being anti-touch, radical feminists ended up, in a funny way, aligned with the right wing.

Ironically, second wave feminist exposure of child sexual abuse has been used by the New Right to argue *against* feminist goals. Second wave radical, and in particular,

liberal feminists fought to make space for women in the mainstream and male establishment. They worked for the freedom of women to enter the public work world in mass, with equal access to jobs and all areas of the public sphere, and for equal pay for equal work. They worked to alter old patterns of socialization, to stop violence against women, and to support diverse family structures, including single women with children. The right has consistently worked against these goals, and in the 1980s, used the radical feminist's exposure of child sexual abuse in its backlash against feminism.

Ironically, the various movements to end child sexual abuse have had the result of ending the touching of children in public places, while doing very little to stop child sexual abuse in the home where, according to research, it actually seems to happen. Daycares, schools, camps and other places in the public sphere have had to become ultra-vigilant about the touching of children. They have developed rules of conduct that stop adults working with children from touching them. This, like the naturalists argue, might be a problem. Children may need to be touched. At any rate, Harlow's monkeys certainly did. Raised without physical contact, they were, as my advisor who visited them put it, some pretty crazy monkeys. Children probably do need to be touched; we know they need many other things a sizable number do not get: food, housing, education and a life without brutality. But at the end of the day, one has to wonder how much of our adult hoopla is ever really about the well-being of children.

Epilogue

Okay. I will come clean. As I said earlier, I am a mother, a white middle-class mother. Having the cool, detached eye of a researcher has only helped me marginally, if at all, to stay calm and clear-headed when it comes to child-rearing advice. I worry, and I worry over each alternative. Every decision about feeding or sleep seems to carry the weight of my son's future happiness and well-being. And no matter which way I go, I always wonder, anxiously, if it was the "right" choice.

As a graduate student, whose partner worked full-time hours for part-time pay adjuncting, we were very squeezed financially when my son was born. Nonetheless, I wanted to stay home for the first year or so with my son. For help, I decided to look into social services. There was only one service available to us - three people, of whom one adult was teaching four classes a semester at a local university, and the other adult was staying home to take care of the third person (who, I might add, did absolutely nothing, not even offer to try and bring home an income). We three together were living on \$20,000 per year in New York City, which is not much, I assure you, but is still a lot by many, many people's standards. At this income level, the one service we qualified for was Women, Infants, Children (WIC). After going through numerous forms and bringing them duplicates of everything down to my great-grandmother's cat's birth certificate, they finally gave me my official WIC card.

The only step left was the training. Training? Yes, I had to sign up for a breastfeeding training to begin to get my checks. As I said in chapter three, there is a cultural imperative to breastfeed right now, and furthermore, for WIC it makes financial sense. When women breastfeed, WIC does not supply them with formula and thus saves

a great deal of money. A very young woman, who had probably never held a baby much less breastfed one, led the training. To begin, she passed out a plethora of pamphlets and informational sheets, covered with images of white women sporting wedding rings and breastfeeding babies. The pamphlets were about how to breastfeed, why to breastfeed, the benefits of breastfeeding and, after all that encouragement, that we should be sure and stop breastfeeding at one year. Next, the trainer made our group of six pregnant women spilling out of our metal folding chairs, four African American women, one Latina with her mother, and myself, watch a short video on happy smiling white women with their happy white babies, breastfeeding. And then, she made us all go around the circle and say whether we were going to breastfeed. Everyone said no except for me. I felt like I was letting the other women down, buckling to the WIC program's pressure. Yet the truth was that I was going to breastfeed, or at any rate, try. Next, each of us had to practice holding and "breastfeeding" a life-size white baby doll. It was a bit humiliating, but at least we did not have to take our shirts off. And, at the end of all this, we received our WIC stamp of approval - checks.

The checks meant I would be given food assistance, in the form of very particular food options. As the saying goes, beggars can't be choosers. Well, at WIC, they take that saying quite literally. The food "options" were not necessarily nutritious, just particular. I could get so many of a certain brand of eggs (white only), so many ounces of two different kinds of bright orange American cheese, lots and lots of cow's milk (it had to be full-fat, and there was too much for anyone except maybe bovine babies), and cereal (only a certain brand, and of that, only the ones that were 99.9% sugar).

I did breastfeed my son. And I breastfed, and I breastfed. And here I am, still breastfeeding. My son is thirty-months-old, and even now, very attached to breastfeeding. Having read most available child-rearing literature for my dissertation, I was both angered at the bigotry of all of it, and even so, I was swayed by the attachment parenting movement. I decided to do child-led weaning. I must admit, it sometimes seems as if my son were never going to stop breastfeeding. But then, I look back and see that he is nursing much less than six months ago, and even less than six months before that. Anyhow, this is probably not what the WIC trainer had in mind.

As you might imagine, my partner and I “share sleep” with our son as well. Indeed, the other day my son came across his hardly-used crib, which is currently serving time as a dresser drawer/bookshelf, and asked, “What’s dat!?” Maybe he would have been this way anyway, but in the case of my son, what the attachment parents claim has come to fruition. He is very smart and very calm. And he is probably the most cheerful, friendly person I have ever met. If I were still on WIC, I wonder if the WIC people would approve.

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