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## Abstract

“The Spock Paradox: Permissiveness, Control, and Dr. Spock’s Advice for a New Psychology of Parenting for Democracy in the Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S.” examines the paradoxical aspects of Dr. Benjamin Spock’s childrearing ideas. From its publication, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* in 1946 received immensely positive reactions from readers with its unbreakable sales record, next to the Bible. But, at the same time, especially in the 1960s onward, Spock’s advice was stigmatized as permissive by the conservatives and oppressive and male-dominated by feminists. Considering this, this dissertation focuses on a central paradoxical trait of Spock’s childrearing advice, his seemingly permissive approach toward control through a new psychology, which actually represented a new mode of control. It explores this paradox by paying particular attention to the question of how Spock developed his ideal of raising a proper citizen through his concept of self-control. By changing the basis for self-control, his advice supported the idea of a new form of control to be strengthened by means of more internalized and elaborate guidelines. Calling into question the existing belief that Spock’s methods of control were looser and more lenient, this study examines the patterns of transformation in his child rearing ideas from authoritative and visible controls to subtle and internal controls in the mid-twentieth century. Based on this, this dissertation argues that these paradoxical aspects in Spock’s childrearing idea might have acted as catalysts to lay the groundwork for a passage to a more self-centered moral norm in the therapeutic culture.

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**The Spock Paradox:  
Permissiveness, Control, and Dr. Spock's Advice for a New Psychology of Parenting for  
Democracy in the Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S.**

by

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Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Syracuse University

June 2017

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would not have been able to complete this dissertation had it not been for great support from professors at Syracuse University, who had showed me what it is like to be an intellectual. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, for being an inspirational teacher for me. Her incessant encouragement, support, and wisdom enabled me to bring my entire study eventually into fruition. She taught me that intellectuals should prove their knowledge by trying to embrace other people's ideas and opinions, and thinking about how to contribute to society with the knowledge that they acquired. Emphasizing a communal feeling among her advisees, she helped me develop an intellectually cooperative spirit. Through her writing seminars and a great deal of informal meetings, her philosophy of teaching illuminated my hidden creativity.

I have also been so honored to work with excellent faculty at SU, including my committee members. The late Ralph Ketcham, who made a huge contribution to the Syracuse community, always inspired me to continue my study with confidence. His seminar on the foundation of American political thought, which I took twice, enabled me to have a better understanding of the political basis of early America. James R. Sharp was the one who observed my academic development as my teacher, TA supervisor and a committee member. Susan Branson's history course, for which I was her teaching assistant, was the most interesting and exciting course I have ever served in. Albrecht Diem helped me to form my initial thought on the idea of self-discipline regarding preliminary research for my dissertation. Jeffrey Gonda's enthusiastic and engaging style of teaching allowed me to improve my teaching strategies. Last, but not least, I would like to thank John Western for joining in the defense as committee chair.

I am also very grateful to my beloved colleagues, Lex Jing Lu, Yoshina D. Hurgobin, Sravani Biswas, Andrea Catroppa, Paul Arras, Thomas A. Guiler, Matthew D. Stewart, David Wolken, and Lei Duan. They helped me feel more warmth in this community and complete this

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work with their helpful critique and support. I would also like to give a special thanks to Sunghee Cho, a great friend, who has been psychological support and an academic stimulus during my time in Syracuse.

Finally, it would have been impossible for me to exist without the support of my parents, Kyunghee Shin and Namsoo Lee. I will never find any way to be like them: always generous, dedicated, caring and loving. Their support is my basis of self-trust. I would also like to thank my everlasting friend and partner for my life, Woojin Doh, for being always supportive of my study for four years. You are done with being alone now. And, to my beloved sister, Yunhee Lee. Thank you for being so patient with your eccentric sister.

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## Introduction

Life itself is perhaps always full of attempts to conquer its own uncertainty. The desire to ease the feeling of anxiety about this uncertainty of life is a fundamental issue throughout human history. Especially after the tragic early decades of the early twentieth century, uncertainty that came from unprecedented aggression of human beings was a central matter to deal with for many. An American pediatrician who was beloved by many Americans during the mid-twentieth century, Benjamin Spock could also not escape this concern about the uncertainty of our lives. His main interest about the life of children, I believe, was how American society could cope with aggression toward the lives of others. It is precise to say that he aspired to control it through his advice about how to raise children. He delivered that advice over the course of a lifetime of treating patients, delivering talks, corresponding with the public, and publishing articles and other works at a prolific rate, including a book that eventually became the best-selling book of the twentieth century U.S. apart from the Bible. *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, instantly popular upon its publication in 1946, was translated into scores of languages, is now in its 9th edition, and has been so influential in its own time and since that it became a kind of baby bible for many.<sup>1</sup>

When Spock was in the Navy during World War II and fulfilling his duty as a psychiatrist at the U.S. Naval Hospital in St. Albans, New York, he had the chance to observe “patients who were considered psychopaths” and compiled the case histories of them.<sup>2</sup> Most of

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<sup>1</sup> Heidi Stevens, “Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care’ Empowered, Encouraged Parents,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 2012, accessed April 23, 2017, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-01-06/entertainment/sc-ent-0104-books-change-benjamin-spock-20120106\\_1\\_parenting-dr-spock-s-baby-penelope-leach](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-01-06/entertainment/sc-ent-0104-books-change-benjamin-spock-20120106_1_parenting-dr-spock-s-baby-penelope-leach); Jane E. Brody, “Final Advice from Dr. Spock: Eat Only All Your Vegetables,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 1998. His book was unprecedentedly successful as in the remark of *The New York Times*, “Throughout its 52-year history, ‘Baby and Child Care’ has been the second-best-selling book, next to the bible.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 147.

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them were confined not because of their severe mental illness, but their recurrent violence or disobedience. Spock concluded that there was a correlation between their offensive or reckless behaviors and their upbringing. A lack of parental love, guidance, and a sense of belonging was a major reason for their “inadequate personality,” which could engender aggression toward society.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Spock’s job was mainly “keeping the peace” in the psychiatric ward at night because the Navy did not intend to provide any fundamental treatment for these patients.<sup>4</sup> Although he could not help his patients live in peace at that time, his realization of the importance of proper childrearing was one motivation for devoting the rest of his life to seeking peace in American society.<sup>5</sup>

His experience in the Navy emboldened Spock in his conviction of the importance of good childrearing. It was obvious that poor upbringings would contribute to society’s share of aggressive and maladjusted adults, who could become a threat. To sustain a peaceful society by preventing the potential danger posed by these malfunctioning members, Spock believed that the proper control of aggression during a child’s development was indispensable. Thus, Spock’s childrearing advice mainly focused on effective parenting as a nurturing process that would achieve successful control over children’s aggressiveness.

Spock interpreted the reason for aggression as having to do with a sense of guilt. Spock’s childrearing advice, from my perspective, can best be seen as his effort to control guilt or its remnants in both parent and child. An uncontrolled sense of guilt might cause a detrimental effect to a parent-child relationship, in Spock’s view. Guilt often comes from a conflict between the reality and the ideal. For example, children might have very conflictual and complicated

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<sup>3</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 148; Benjamin Spock, “A Child Must Feel He Belongs,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1958): 14.

<sup>4</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 148.

<sup>5</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 148.

feelings toward a parent when they are being scolded. It might be natural for them to get angry at their parent or even be rebellious. Yet, unconsciously they might feel a sense of guilt because their inner voice says, “you should love your parent,” or “you should not behave like that to your parent.” Because of the gap between the real feeling and the ideal feeling imposed on children, they might unconsciously repress their feeling of guilt and pretend not to have it in the first place. If a parent is strict and authoritative, children inevitably and unconsciously repress antipathy toward their parent.

Moreover, unresolved guilt and aggression have another significant impact on childrearing when children grow up and become parents. A parent’s sense of guilt and aggression that came from their past experiences might cause that parent not to treat their own children firmly enough. At times, they might even resent their child with no reason. Or they cannot bear the child’s rebelliousness, and become easily furious. This vicious cycle was what concerned Spock most.

This dissertation explores Spock’s childrearing idea in the context of American culture and society from the 1940s to 1960s in the United States, showing the specific ways in which he managed this uncertainty and concern about how to control aggression and achieve peace. In order to stem the tide and prevent further social aggression, Spock’s advice revolved around the idea of how to control guilt in everyday settings through subtler forms of control. Differing with the traditional view of guilt as the primary apparatus to prevent someone’s misdeeds, Spock argued that guilt must be effectively assuaged. Without this process, children might not properly develop their own composure and self-assurance. By means of a new type of psychology, parents could raise well-adjusted children by instilling self-control. If we take this into consideration, Spock’s famous remark for parents, “Trust yourself,” the opening lines of his classic work,

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requires a more specific interpretation. A seeming contradiction in Spock's advice between "trust yourself" and the need for people to read the baby bible can be resolved by narrowing down what he meant by "yourself." For a successful childrearing process, from Spock's point of view, parents need the tutelary apparatus provided by experts so that parents could eventually trust their rational self. Self-control, or self-discipline, was an indispensable device to figure out what that real rational self was. By learning how to reason according to this new psychology, parents could contribute to the nurturing of a good citizen for a peaceful society.

This dissertation focuses on a central paradoxical trait of Spock's childrearing advice, his seemingly permissive approach to control through a new psychology, which actually represented a new mode of control. It explores this paradox by paying particular attention to the question of how Spock developed his ideal of raising a proper citizen through his concept of self-control. By changing the basis for self-control, his advice supported the idea of a new form of control to be strengthened by means of more internalized and elaborate guidelines. Calling into question the existing belief that Spock's methods of control were looser and more lenient, this study examines the patterns of transformation in his child rearing ideas from authoritative and visible controls to subtle and internal controls in the mid-twentieth century.

Born in May 2, 1903, in New Haven, Connecticut, Benjamin McLane Spock was the first child of six children of Benjamin Ives Spock and Mildred Louise Stoughton Spock. Under his mother's strict and inflexible upbringing, he was not the happiest boy and did not have a satisfactory childhood. Young Spock was calm and even timid rather than confident and bold.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 3-33; Lynn Z. Bloom, *Doctor Spock: Biography of a Conservative Radical* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), 8-10.

He later became interested in psychoanalysis, believing that “there must be a pleasanter way to raise children” than his “tyrannical mother’s.”<sup>7</sup>

As his father had before him, Spock matriculated at Yale University, and studied literature and history. However, being a part of the Olympic rowing crew and a gold medalist at the 1924 games in Paris changed his self-impression, and he began to have his own feeling of control. He attended Yale University’s School of Medicine for two years before joining Columbia University, from which he graduated first in his class in 1929. His wife, Jane Cheney, who was already involved in the Freudian zeal, influenced Spock through her interest in psychoanalysis, which attracted growing attention during that time. Even though he maintained a doubtful attitude toward psychoanalysis at first, he eventually became interested in psychoanalysis and Freudian ideas. After experiencing some training in psychoanalysis, Spock gradually got a sense of his own childhood and psyche.<sup>8</sup>

As a pediatrician, Spock had the chance to offer more broadly generalized guidance for childrearing since he believed that his professional information could improve the happiness of babies, children, and parents. By publishing his book, *Baby and Child Care* in 1946, Spock greatly influenced how parents raised their children in American society. His approach was different from what had been counseled before that time because he tried to convince Americans that there was a different method to apply for raising future citizens. Spock also used the ideas of psychoanalysis to try to understand the needs of babies and children, as well as family dynamics.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Introduction,” in D. W. Winnicott, *Babies and Their Mothers* by (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1987), vii.

<sup>8</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 34-122; Bloom, *Doctor Spock*, 28-73.

<sup>9</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 123-144; Bloom, *Doctor Spock*, 74-99.

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With the influential impact of his childrearing book on American society and his gradual interest in political matters such as participation in SANE (National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) and anti-war protest against the Vietnam War, conservatives and his political opponents accused him of having initiated the environment for the student protest movement of the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> In the late 1960s, *Newsweek* magazine stated that “in the eyes of affronted adults, today’s young appear to be a defiant, unruly breed. And many critics believed that the young got that way because they were brought up by the book—Benjamin Spock’s book of ‘Baby and Child Care.’”<sup>11</sup> Also, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew criticized Spock for spoiling the entire generation with his “permissive” childrearing rhetoric in his book.<sup>12</sup>

Even though he rejected these accusations and argued that they ignored many admonitions to parents in his book that they should “set limits,”<sup>13</sup> it was undeniable that this impression of the book—that it promoted permissiveness—was critically influential on the American public. The pervasive accusation that Spock made the entire generation unruly seems to me a proof that the rhetoric of permissiveness cast a long shadow over the entire generation coming of age after the mid-twentieth century in American society. Yet I believe the debate on Spock underway by the late 1960s is more evident of the need for a reconsideration of the debatable idea of his permissiveness. One of the underlying assumptions—one to explore in this dissertation—is that Spock’s seemingly permissive childrearing advice might actually have

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<sup>10</sup> The political debate over “permissiveness” in Dr. Spock’s child-rearing advice was discussed in Christopher Jencks, “Is It All Dr. Spock’s Fault?” *The New York Times Magazine*, March 3, 1968; Matt Clark, “Is Dr. Spock to Blame?” *Newsweek*, September 23, 1968; Katharine Davis Fishman, “The Less Permissive Dr. Spock,” *The New York Times Book Review*, February 16, 1969; Rita Kramer, “A Look Back in Wonder,” *The New York Times Magazine*, June 8, 1969; Philip E. Slater, “Spocklash: Age, Sex, Revolution,” *Washington Monthly* (February 1970); Richard D. Lyons, “Dr. Spock, Denying ‘Permissiveness,’ Says Agnew’s Gibes are ‘a Compliment,’” *The New York Times*, September 27, 1970; “Spock on Teens,” *Time*, November 16, 1970; Benjamin Spock, “Don’t Blame Me!” *Look*, January 26, 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Matt Clark, “Is Dr. Spock to Blame?” *Newsweek*, September 23, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 323.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Don’t Blame Me!” *Look*, January 26, 1971, 37-38.

helped lay the foundational ideas for invisible and sophisticated control in American society from the late 1940s to 1960s.

As I examine below in my review of the scholarly literature on Spock and relevant themes, his works must be understood in relation to the social and cultural context before and during that period. In the late nineteenth century, scientific fervor became stronger whereas belief in religious supremacy in general declined.<sup>14</sup> The decline of religious zeal seemed associated with the decline of belief in the certainty of life since greater certainty seemed guaranteed in the realm of science. Faith in science seemed a compelling basis for ensuring a more stable state of existence since it appeared more reasonable and measurable.

However, the powerful faith in science began to crack and doubt in the morality of science increased as the promising practices and disciplines turned out to be false or less scientific. As the twentieth century wore on, for example, in their turns, movements as diverse as eugenics, scientific racism, and the rise of psychoanalysis consequently saw declines after enjoying significant influence for some time. When these movements first arose, they were strongly believed to be disciplines with great potential for fulfilling the promise of scientific belief, but they encountered huge opposition because of their more unscientific elements, the suspected harm to humanity and society they might bring, and ultimately their very morality.<sup>15</sup>

As Philip Rieff pointed out in his *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, modern American culture had seen an erosion of faith in a common basis of morality. The profound contradictions between this perception of a loss of morality and the phenomenon of the psychologizing of educational advice was promulgated by Spock during that time. Spock's idea on proper discipline, replacing

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<sup>14</sup> Paula S. Fass and Mary Ann Mason, *Childhood in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 2-4.

<sup>15</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

the pre-existing idea of child care based on strict rules, inevitably lead us to a discussion on the increasing tendency toward seemingly informalized control.

This dissertation argues that Spock's childrearing idea was a stepping stone which led American society eventually to the therapeutic culture later. The paradoxical aspects of Spock's childrearing advice mentioned above might have acted as catalysts to lay the groundwork for a passage to a more self-centered moral norm in the therapeutic culture. Given the guidance that Spock gave to parents, he advised that parents and children should manage their sense of guilt very skillfully in order not to be aggressive to their own society. His advice was different from the previous ones in nature, which usually made people behave based on morality and conscience. In a more traditional sense, guilt was functioned as moral apparatus, which should be absolved by God or an authority. As opposed to this, Spock's advice inevitably weakened the power of guilt as moral apparatus or at least tried to deal with a sense of guilt though a more sophisticated form of control. Examining this, I hope, this dissertation can be instrumental in better understanding how Spock's childrearing ideas contributed to forming a new way of control.

## **Historiography**

In the age of progressivism in American society, roughly the 1890s through World War I, social control had its own characteristics, as has each era of human history. The scholarship on these themes is vast. My review here thus concentrates on three of the main subfields of the scholarship related to American intellectual and cultural history regarding the Progressive Era and its aftermath, the 1950s and 1960s, the most relevant period for my approach. The existing literature on these themes, I believe, can provide fundamental and significant guidance in exploring the questions suggested above. By examining some key issues in the existing

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scholarship on social control centered on socialization, the history of childhood, and Benjamin Spock, I will attempt to set the stage for my own study of the evolution of control through the historical perspective of this dissertation.

### *Changing Modes of Social Control*

Since sociologist E. A. Ross, in his pioneering work, posited the notion of an internalized form of social control over the individual of the society,<sup>16</sup> there has been a great deal of research on the matter of social control.<sup>17</sup> In briefly pointing to this literature, I would like to begin my focus with the process of medicalization regarding how the institutionalized form of control developed and changed. This is not only because it is useful to examine how the internalization of social norms or values operated in order to understand the development of control in the culture and lives of individuals, but also because my specific focus, Benjamin Spock's childrearing advice, is so closely related to the discipline of medicine, especially pediatrics and psychiatry.

As Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider put it in their *Deviance and Medicalization from Badness to Sickness*, it was the desire to control deviant behavior that led to the process of "medicalization." Conrad and Schneider discuss how behavior was defined in the course of medicalization and examine medicine as an institution of social control throughout American

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<sup>16</sup> Edward A. Ross, *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> Scott E. W. Bedford, *Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918); Alexander Clark and Jack P. Gibbs, "Social Control: A Reformulation," *Social Problems* 12 (4) (1965): 398-414; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Jack Gibbs, *Control: Sociology's Central Notion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Jack Gibbs, *A Theory about Control* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Richard T. LaPiere, *A Theory of Social Control* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954); George H. Mead, "The Genesis of the Self and Social Control," *International Journal of Ethics* 35(3) (1925): 251-277; George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. edit. C. W. Morris. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1934); Morris Jacobwitz, "Sociological Theory and Social Control," *American Journal of Sociology* (July 1975): 82-108.

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history. They trace the changing emphasis from the notion of badness to sickness by focusing on human behaviors, such as social deviance.<sup>18</sup> Conrad and Schneider show how the concept of morality as the overarching framework for thinking about human behavior declined and transformed to the rhetoric of medicine, and gradually took over the process of moralizing and normalization.

Similarly, Theresa Richardson deals with the “medicalization” of society in the United States since 1909 with the formal organization of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and in Canada since 1918 with the establishment of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene. Richardson sees the mental hygiene movement as the representation of a value system which showed a structure of authority. She appropriates Michel Foucault’s approach to history by using the notions of discourse and the analysis of the power dynamics of systems of ideas, paradigms, and knowledge in the American setting.<sup>19</sup>

Sol Cohen pays more specific attention to the mental hygiene movement since he uses psychoanalytic tools to interpret the same phenomenon by placing much emphasis on the modern idea of personality.<sup>20</sup> Exploring the impact of psychoanalysis and psychiatry on American education, he argues that the mental hygiene movement brought the “medicalization” of American education, and “provided the inspiration and driving force behind one of the most far-reaching yet little understood educational innovations of this century.”<sup>21</sup>

Along with the literature related to institutionalization and education, James Trent’s work interestingly shows the emergence of special schools touting hopeful theories in the early

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Conrad and Joseph W. Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization from Badness to Sickness* (St-Louis, Mo.; Toronto: C. V. Mosby, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> Richardson, Theresa R. *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Sol Cohen, “The Mental Hygiene Movement, the Development of Personality and the School: The Medicalization of American Education,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 23(2) (Summer 1983): 123-149.

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, “The Mental Hygiene Movement,” 124.

nineteenth century, particularly in the 1840s. Trent's main concern was more focused on the specific figure of Edward Seguin, who established and managed policies, programs and practices. In particular, Trent examines how Seguin's educational and social philosophy influenced the institutionalization of special education by looking at rising fears of the "menace of the feeble minded" fueled by the eugenics movement in the Progressive Era. Trent also claims that the concept of mental retardation was invented as a rationale for public policies that incorporated a need to provide care with a desire to institute formal social controls over individuals who represented a perceived threat to public order and safety.<sup>22</sup>

Along with these works, Jacques Donzelot's *Policing of Families* tries to capture the moment that the sector of "the social" took form and trace how its formation changed the relations between family and state. Even though it is not focused on the American setting, but rather on families in France, it highlights the beginning process of its institutionalization in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theories on power dynamics and their relation to society, Donzelot analyzes the history of social institutions that strengthened the inseparable relations between discourses and practices—knowledge and power. Donzelot shows how the modern family in France functions in the dynamics of power struggles, especially detailing the changing relationship between the family and the state since the rise of the bourgeoisie after the French Revolution.<sup>23</sup> Also, the differentiation of middle- and working-class families is interesting and compelling, as it raises the question of how class affected the course of institutionalization.

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<sup>22</sup> James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

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Andrew J. Polsky's *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* covers also how therapeutic ideas and practices were introduced and developed in the process of institutionalization. Through the examination of the development of therapeutic practices and the nature and extent of power exercised by therapeutic practitioners, Polsky examines the growth of the modern philanthropic movement from its beginnings in early charity organizations. He shows that mostly middle-class women participated in the movement since they wanted to 'help' other women, in particular working class women. He shows how, in the Progressive Era, philanthropy seized hold of institutions and social science programs in the universities. Interestingly, Polsky also claims that casework was actually associated with the will of the state as it helped produce an apparatus of paternalistic surveillance, thus allowing for a kind of invasion into the lives of working class families. The most important point that he made was how the early philanthropists appropriated the process of moralization and normalization in order to justify the interventions of the state.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of the issue of more sophisticated control, Sociologist Arlie R. Hochschild deals with problems in the management of human emotions in her *Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* by showing the examples of "emotional labor" such as airline flight attendants and bill collectors. Drawing on an examination of training procedures, work regulations, and interviews with flight attendants at Delta Airlines, Hochschild shows how feelings were commercialized in order to create the desired sense of satisfaction on the part of the customer. In this process of emotional management, Hochschild argues the way these workers alienated themselves from their own feelings could be problematic. By replicating emotions that they do not feel, they can be pestered by unremitting struggles with their inner resentments.<sup>25</sup> It is very

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<sup>24</sup> Andrew Joseph Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

interesting to see how human feelings can be regulated depending on the necessity of modern occupational demands. Also, it is noteworthy that a means of control pervaded the very internal realm of human emotions, as we see throughout Hochschild's examples.

Finally, Peter Stearns' *Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America* is an important study of examples of continuous and invisible control. Stearns mainly focuses on the issue of self-control by examining the self and its regulation. As opposed to the popular belief in the demise of the Victorian morals in the twentieth century, Stearns argues that recent American culture was not completely liberated from this older mode of control. In the twentieth century, instead, many Victorian standards were maintained with new rules of self-control such as those emanating from a medical model of emotional and physical control.<sup>26</sup> According to Stearns, for example, a greater emphasis on sexual "health" in modern America, rather than repression of sexual desire, required more individual control over sexual impulses.<sup>27</sup> He also suggests that the issue of weight control and the anti-smoking campaign can be examples of the moralization of health issues and shifting responsibility on individuals.<sup>28</sup> Stearns's work is quite significant for my interest in internalized and elaborate, and thus invisible control since he touches on each area of continuity of control from the Victorian era to modern America.

Through these scholarly studies, which are some of the key works on the theme of social control generally and a specific form of control that developed in modern America, we can see the ways in which social norms and value systems were deeply implicated in the moralization process and its control. In this process, it would seem that most social control efforts used very similar methods to impose the value system of the society as a whole or in part. These methods

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<sup>26</sup> Peter N. Stearns, *Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Stearns, *Battleground of Desire*, 208-210.

<sup>28</sup> Stearns, *Battleground of Desire*, 276-284; 286-290.

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of control were introduced, developed, and elaborated in the nineteenth century and the Progressive Era and set the groundwork for how the evolution of control evolved and operated after that.

### *Changing Ideas of Childhood*

The fact that the best-selling book in the Western world, after the Bible, is a handbook on childcare could in itself serve as proof for how enormous our interest in childhood and child-rearing has been in modern culture. Perhaps its popularity is inevitable anyway because our interest in children and their upbringing is closely related to deep-seated everyday concerns of our existence. From the second half of the nineteenth century, childhood became recognized as an important stage of the life cycle. In particular, the rise of psychoanalysis, psychology, and universal education shed light on growing awareness of the importance of childhood because it began to emphasize the stage of childhood as a critical period for the development of human psyche. The growing emphasis on personality development in the United States attracted more attention to childhood as well.

This advancing awareness of and perspective on childhood was detailed in a path-breaking work on the history of childhood in France. A seminal study published in the 1960s, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* by Philippe Ariès offered a sweeping portrait of the historical development of childhood. By using a variety of art forms as evidence of changed perspectives on childhood, Ariès reveals that artists in the twelfth century did not depict children in the same way as would occur later.<sup>29</sup> He claimed that childhood in Western society was only discovered in the beginning of the nineteenth century. While other scholars disagreed and much scholarly debate ensued, the importance of Ariès' interpretation lies in his illustration

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<sup>29</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

of the fact that the category of children and childhood has been shaped and transformed greatly over time.

Even before Ariès, increasing interest in childhood was shown in Grace Abbott's enormous volume, *The Child and the State*, published in the United States in 1938. Abbott's volume dealt mainly with legal matters related to childhood such as the legal status of the child in the family, apprenticeship and child legislation in Great Britain and the United States, the development of public care for dependent children, and the administration of child welfare services through an examination of laws, legal decisions, legal commentaries, commission findings, and reports of various public agencies dealing with the problems of childhood.<sup>30</sup> Even though her work attracted more attention regarding the expansion of social services when it first came out, it is very important not to overlook the significance of the subject itself—childhood—because it can be considered one of the first attempts to deal with children and childhood as important elements of society in the United States.

Another important account by Bernard W. Wishy concerns the relationship between child rearing and the modern state from the perspective of American cultural history. Wishy, in *The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture*, attempts to examine the literature of advice about how children ought to be reared. According to him, modern concepts of child care built on the notion of the innocent child. In the early nineteenth century, children were the ones who needed to be saved from the sins and errors of society since they were considered to be pure and innocent.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Grace Abbott, *The Child and the State* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938).

<sup>31</sup> Bernard W. Wishy, *The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967).

As Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner pointed out in the 1970s and early 1980s, there was at that time only a “widely scattered literature about the history of American children.”<sup>32</sup> Hawes and Hiner’s two books, *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* and *Growing up in America: Children in Historical Perspective*,<sup>33</sup> themselves proved this significant interest in the history of children and childhood existed. During this time and afterward, many volumes dealing with the overview of the history of childhood and children were published. John C. Sommerville’s *Rise and Fall of Childhood* also showed the outline of “changing cultural attitudes, expectations and fears adults have harbored about the young” from ancient Greece through modern America.<sup>34</sup>

Another vital account on the history of childhood is Steven Mintz’s *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*. He states that the goal of his book “is to strip away the myths, misconceptions, and nostalgia that contribute to pessimism about the young.”<sup>35</sup> Through his title, he conveys the precariousness of childhood, which can be partly controlled because “childhood is inevitably shaped and constrained by society, time, and circumstances.”<sup>36</sup> Thoroughly organized with three distinct time periods—the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern eras, Mintz’s volume shows different representations of children: imperfect adults in the pre-modern period; innocent and malleable beings in the modern period of transition; and an uncontrollable

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), x. Other books for the overview of childhood and children are as follows: Robert H Bremner, *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970); Barbara Kaye Greenleaf, *Children through the Ages: A History of Childhood* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978); Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985)

<sup>34</sup> C. John Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1982), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), vii.

<sup>36</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 5.

and unstable state of being in post-modern era.<sup>37</sup> As incomplete adults during the pre-modern era, children were more precarious and vulnerable than any other groups, so that childhood was seen as the stage to be overcome quickly in order for people to function in more mature roles in society. Instead of incomplete adults, the image of innocent and malleable children later made childhood a separate and valuable time of life that needed special protection. Mintz's account of baby boomers of the postwar era is particularly significant because it sheds light on how childhood could be interpreted in the period of ambivalence—conformity and anxiety—and why Spock's advice might have been widely accepted.

### *Benjamin Spock as a Child Expert*

William Graebner, in his 1980 article on Benjamin Spock, emphasized that Spock's central work, *Baby and Child Care*, reflected a cultural representation of American society in the interwar period. Spock's own view of the world had unstable ingredients inherited from the unstable elements at the time of the Great Depression, totalitarianism and the World Wars. Graebner saw Spock as one of the social engineers who wanted to regulate the situation and ease the uncertainty of the time "through control over the child-rearing process."<sup>38</sup> Also Graebner argues that Spock's view of the child, who is aggressive and unstable, was a negative one. Graebner points out that this was because of a pervasive interest at the time in aggression and its causes. According to Graebner, life in the United States in 1940 was too competitive, too modern, too lacking in history and tradition.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> William Graebner, "The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock: Social Engineering in a Democratic Culture, 1917-1950," *The Journal of American History* (December 1980): 613.

<sup>39</sup> Graebner, "The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock," 612-629.



Nancy Weiss provides a comparison of Spock's *Baby and Child Care* to *Infant Care*<sup>40</sup> of 1914 regarding women's responses to professional advice. Through this comparison, Weiss focuses on how the role of the mother regarding child-rearing practices differs over the two different periods and asks why mothers needed to have professional advice while they were raising their own children.<sup>41</sup> By examining women's responses to the advice they were given, Weiss shows how child-rearing patterns swiftly changed over the course of only three generations and how "the advice structures the life of the parents as well as child."<sup>42</sup>

Alan Petigny's *Permissive Society* is not mainly an account of Spock. Rather, Petigny deals with Spock as an example of his main argument that "during the latter half of the 1940s, and continuing throughout the 1950s, the popular ingestion of modern psychology, coupled with significant changes in child-rearing and religious practices, constituted an unprecedented challenge to traditional moral constraints through the permissive turn."<sup>43</sup> Petigny maintains that the influence of Freud and the rise of an interest in psychology and psychoanalysis continued despite the resistance of conservatives.<sup>44</sup> Petigny views Spock's works and practices as non-traditional and others with reservations about the new approaches in defiance of the existing norms of the society.

John Cleverley and D. C. Phillips' *Visions of Childhood: Influential Models from Locke to Spock* is somewhat similar to Petigny's volume in that these authors touched on Spock's advice and practice as an example of the developmental accounts of theories of childhood. They offer overviews of his works and practices and indicate where he would be positioned among

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<sup>40</sup> Mary M. West, *Infant Care* (Washington: Government Print. Off, 1914).

<sup>41</sup> Nancy Pottishman Weiss "Mother, the Invention of Necessity: Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care*," *American Quarterly*, 29(5) Special Issue: Reassessing Twentieth Century Documents (Winter 1977): 519-546.

<sup>42</sup> Weiss "Mother, the Invention of Necessity," 519.

<sup>43</sup> Alan Cecil Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> Petigny, *The Permissive Society*, 15-16.

philosophical and religious thinkers.<sup>45</sup> Even though Cleverley and Phillips examine Spock, who gave a philosophical perspective on childhood, their volume was not exactly on Spock on the whole.

Although it too does not entirely deal with Benjamin Spock, Ann Hulbert's *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children* thoroughly examines the history of child-rearing advice and experts from Dr. L. Emmett Holt and G. Stanley Hall to John B. Watson and Arnold Gesell, and to Benjamin Spock, Bruno Bettelheim, and T. Berry Brazelton. Her major argument is quite simple. She thinks that there is tension between two kinds of experts on child rearing throughout the century; one group advocated rigid control over children and the other a permissive way of raising children. Within this framework, Hulbert gives an overview of American childhood focusing on the perspectives, advice, and practices of the major experts.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly enough to me, Hulbert points out the irony in Spock's saying that "permissive" Spock was criticized by Gloria Steinem<sup>47</sup> as an oppressor of women whereas "brutal" Bruno Bettelheim sympathized with the idea of woman's role at home.<sup>48</sup> Her riveting interpretation of Spock provides an insight into his concept of permissiveness. Even though some critics accused him of making childrearing excessively permissive, it would never be fair or accurate to say that the influence of his advice was solely permissive.

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<sup>45</sup> John F. Cleverley and D C. Phillips, *Visions of Childhood: Influential Models from Locke to Spock* (New York, N.Y: Teachers College Press, 1986).

<sup>46</sup> Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> In the 1970s, Spock received harsh criticisms from the feminist left. Many feminists cast doubt on Spock's claim that he wanted to help mothers and improve their quality of life. From the feminist perspective, Spock's ideas in *Baby and Child Care* eventually led mothers to stay home, never getting away from private sphere. Gloria Steinem once mentioned that he was "considered a symbol of male oppression—just like Freud." Even though feminists acknowledged that his ideas were generated from the 1940s, their doubt was deepened by his publication of *Decent and Indecent*. In this volume, Spock demonstrated his old-fashioned belief in biological differences between men and women and emphasized natural motherhood as a bulwark of the society. Spock never seemed to understand why young women attacked his good intention. Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 352-356; Lily J. Goren, *You've Come a Long Way, Baby: Women Politics and Popular Culture* (Lexington, KY: Kentucky University Press, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Hulbert, *Raising America*, 256-290.

Thus, my dissertation seeks to unravel the complexities of this central theme in regard to the works and concepts of Spock. Throughout history, the perception of childhood has changed and developed, and so has the form of control thought to apply to and result from proper childrearing. In this sense, Spock's childrearing advice should be examined with consideration of the changing mode of control based on a unique perspective on childhood at play in mid-twentieth century America. Delving into a more delicate form of control emerging in that period's childrearing advice, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the dynamic between Spock's seeming permissive advice and the real essence of his supposed leniency. Through this examination, this study sheds light on Spock's childrearing ideas and advice as contributing factors to the promotion of a more complicated and subtler form of control through a new psychology.

### **Methods and Key Concepts**

This dissertation deals with the various aspects of childrearing ideas with the help of key concepts from psychoanalysis and a blend of archival research and an approach grounded in close textual reading. Through these means, the focus is on the "prescription" of the expert, Spock, not on the description of how readers perceived experts' advice. As historians of emotions have noted, there is increasing sensitivity "to the disparity between those emotional standards, established and maintained by a succession of writers and other experts, and the lived experience of men and women."<sup>49</sup> This dissertation's arduous main task is unraveling with intricate attention strands of Spock's advice not yet well understood, and not reception, the subject of extant scholarship; even so, it is informed by and draws deeply on letters from parents

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<sup>49</sup> Jan Lewis and Peter N. Stearns, "Introduction," *An Emotional History of the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

sent to Spock. Thus, the research is suggestive of the role Spock and his works played in the emerging mechanisms of cultural control operating at mid-twentieth century in the United States. The nature of this control is illuminated by a close look at Spock's approach within its cultural and historical context.

Laying out the typical desirable traits of children and parents at the same time, Spock's advice offered precepts for both.<sup>50</sup> In order to raise a sociable, agreeable, and popular child with natural feelings—someone who is not aggressive or rebellious at all—a parent should be friendly, mature and patient. While emphasizing self-control in fostering the desirable traits of both child and parent throughout his advice, his advice suggested a pivotal role for emotion regulation. As Cas Wouters argues in his *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890*, modern society made more sophisticated its mode of control from formality to informality through emotion regulation. He observed that “there was increasing ‘permissiveness,’ together with growing leniency in codes of social conduct and feeling, in Western societies.”<sup>51</sup> However, this leniency actually functions as a disguise of delicate control relating to self-control.

In Spock's encyclopedic book, *Baby and Child Care*, his advice demonstrated seeming contradictions, which might have come from the genre of popular book, and he later needed to clarify the information in the journal articles. In Spock's childrearing ideas, Spock asked mothers to trust their own instincts while he provided professionalized information. From his perspective, the form of control had to be self-generated, but the *process* and *contents* of control should be

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<sup>50</sup> Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 203. Norbert Elias mentioned that the transformation of how people displayed aggression “is already initiated in education, in conditioning precepts for young people,” while explaining how aggressiveness in the civilizing process was subdued.

<sup>51</sup> Cas Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 3; See also Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Race Experts: How Racial how racial etiquette, sensitivity training, and new age therapy hijacked the civil rights revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 35-38.

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supervised by experts. This dissertation offers a close-reading that has not yet been done of the precise process and contents that compromise revealing dynamics of that new form of control, and traces the contradictions and resolutions in Spock's childrearing ideas.

Also, there is an important concept embedded in this dissertation. As Philip Rieff discussed in his *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, any culture requires a system of controls including the beliefs, rituals and morality of the culture.<sup>52</sup> Modern America witnessed a general loss of faith in religious supremacy and tendency to replace it with science. Through a system of therapeutic control, culture still maintained its authority and influence absent the inherited controls of religion. As I briefly mentioned in the opening of this introduction, I believe that the mode of controlling the general sense of the uncertainty of life was transformed at this time into more elaborate forms that are not easy to recognize.

To understand Spock's motivation for becoming a baby doctor, his feeling of responsibility for the entire generation that he influenced, and the differences between his permissive advice and his rigid attitude toward his own children, I explore the feeling of guilt in detail in his life story, as background, and more centrally in his works and their cultural setting. This entails drawing on the definition that a few theorists provided and exploring the way it operated and generated in the dynamics of therapeutic culture. In addition to that, the feeling of guilt has also captured my attention since I believe that the sense of guilt played an important role in the dynamics of childrearing advice and in making Spock's advice influential.

In order to examine these elaborate forms of control embedded within Spock's idea, this dissertation is also indebted to psychoanalytic discussions in the scholarship, particularly

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<sup>52</sup> Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

drawing on the work of Sigmund Freud. In his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud suggests that our civilization and its repercussions did not bring a better state of mind.<sup>53</sup> For Freud, civilization brought unhappiness, or at least less happiness. This is because inevitably one has to establish “his control over nature”<sup>54</sup> in the civilizing process and, once undertaken, this soon turns out to be unachievable. In his discussion, our civilization has been maintained through a desire to be civilized. According to him, a longing to be civilized has an embedded assumption that being civilized is superior to being uncivilized. Freud also points to “beauty, cleanliness, and order”<sup>55</sup> as requirements for being civilized people, as moderns understand it.

In this sense, I assume that the civilizing process presupposes and strengthens the idea that mankind ‘should’ move onto this presumably better and superior level in order to complete the process. The voice of this ‘should,’ according to Freud, is “internalized through the establishment of a super-ego.”<sup>56</sup> He gives another explanation of guilt by stating his “intention to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization and to show that the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt.”<sup>57</sup> In this respect, to be civilized is supposed to entail certain characteristics. This establishment of the idea that there is a right and better state to achieve this ended up in fantasies of things the human being can or should reach or accomplish. Guilt is thus connected closely to the human longing for the ideal. Failure to adhere to the ideal behavior imagined by the superego, which has inculcated society’s ideals of what it means to be civilized, results in guilt.

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<sup>53</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961).

<sup>54</sup> Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent*, 47.

<sup>56</sup> Sigmund Freud and James Strachey. *The Ego and the Id* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962).

<sup>57</sup> Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent*, 86.

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Next, I will borrow the explanation of guilt by Melanie Klein, who was a leading figure of object relations theory and considered herself a faithful supporter of Freud's ideas despite her modification of some of the essential assumptions by Freud, in order to understand the dynamics of guilt more closely. Drawing from Klein's account, which built on Freud's, infants have the feeling of omnipotence at the very beginning of their lives or even before existing outside their mother's womb. In her interpretation, when they are born, they initially do not or cannot recognize the difference between themselves and the rest of world. As time goes on, they begin to feel discontented because they cannot get what they want at the exact time when they first need it. This experience leads to the gap between their feeling of omnipotence and their lack, so as a result, they desire to get this feeling back. The reality of the infants' existence is the impossibility of acquiring the sense of omnipotence which they once had.<sup>58</sup>

Also, in relationships with their mother, they eventually realize that the one that makes them satisfied is other than them, outside of themselves. The reality of their omnipotence actually does not match the reality for infants, who are not able to do anything else except with the helper, usually their mother. According to Klein, this gap puts the infant into an unsatisfying state and the infant realizes that it is his or her mother who can give them this discontentment. In this process, the infants have ambivalent feelings towards their mother, love and hate at the same time. These ambivalent feelings result in the sense of guilt for the infant because the infant believes that they 'should' love their mother, but they partly have 'hate' toward their mother.<sup>59</sup>

Through the explanations of the feeling of guilt that Freud and Klein provide, we can identify some of the elements to be presented in order to establish the sense of guilt. First of all,

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<sup>58</sup> Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," *Love, Guilt, and Reparation, and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 308-309.

<sup>59</sup> Klein, "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," 306-308; Melanie Klein, "On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt," *Envy and Gratitude & Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York: Delacorte Press/S. Lawrence, 1975), 25-47.

as we can find the unconscious feeling of ‘should’ in both Freud and Klein’s accounts, this would be something ‘ideal,’ which is considered to be perfect in one’s mind or at least better than what one has thought of oneself. Thus, I assume that initial element of the feeling of guilt is the existence of the concept of the ideal. Second, in order to establish the sense of guilt, it would be necessary to have a feeling of longing for the designated ‘ideal.’ So, the second element is a desire to be ‘ideal.’ And, finally, there is a feeling of despair, which comes from facing up to reality. Since most realities have a tendency to be disappointing and often less satisfying than one’s expectation, the gap between ideal and reality can create discontents and even a feeling of helplessness if the expectation is too high. In this respect, the last component for the establishment of guilt feeling is to realize that the ‘ideal’ is not possible to achieve.

I hope my insights about this dynamic help shed light on how and why Spock’s childrearing advice might have acquired such enormous influence on mothers in the mid-century United States. Spock’s advice was fundamentally focused on how to control this feeling of guilt for child and parent, which could generate a basis of potential negative feelings within their relationship. With the concept of self-control, I believe, there is a chance to demonstrate how Spock’s childrearing ideas cope with the seeming contradictions within them.

## **Approach**

Since the questions driving this study are large and broad ones concerning ideas and intellectual influences as well as the workings of culture, at the heart of my approach will be a careful, concerted focus on the texts of *Baby and Child Care*. To supplement my research in the archival and published sources, the method of close reading allows me to trace the ideas in detail. To explore invisible and more elaborate controls of society, this dissertation examines selected versions of *Baby and Child Care*—in 1946, 1957, 1968 and 1976. Through these four versions of

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the book most crucial for my time period, I expect to trace the concept of control depending on the development of Spock's advice. Through this, I would like to understand how his seemingly lenient advice permeated an invisible and subtler form in American childrearing ideas. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how the concept of control evolved and developed elaborately in the course of the development of Spock's works.

*~Archival Sources*

This project included deep immersion in the primary and secondary sources, residing in Syracuse University's Special Collection at Bird Library. The Benjamin Spock Papers inventory includes the Spock Papers, Lynn Z. Bloom's research, and the Benjamin Spock Symposium Collection. First of all, the Benjamin Spock Papers provide a considerable amount of information on Benjamin Spock's private life as well as on his professional life as a pediatrician, educator, and political activist. The collection offers five major sections including correspondence, medical reference files, memorabilia, subject files, and writings.

*~Published Sources*

Needless to say, it was *Baby and Child Care* that made Spock one of the prominent American authors during the 1950s. Among the Benjamin Spock Papers, there are various versions of this volume, which has gone through seven reprints. It was important for me to conduct very close readings of the text, with meticulous attention to the first edition and each of the ensuing versions of the book; for instance, I wished to determine his tone of voice, theories, information, and finally organization because the changes he made give clues to the subtlety of the rhetoric in his advice, such as the concept of permissiveness and the influence of Freud's ideas. Also, other sources written by Benjamin Spock are significant primary sources since he

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left plenty of volumes related to child-rearing guidance and advice.<sup>60</sup> These sources shed light on how Spock interacted with mothers and how subtle control operated through his advice to these mothers.

## Structure

This dissertation is about the contradiction embedded in Spock's childrearing advice. Each chapter dealt with seeming contrariness in his advice about the promotion of self-discipline in parent and child. Benjamin Spock's childrearing advice can be interpreted as an attempt to perpetuate more delicate control of individuals as opposed to the criticism that he contributed to the unruliness of the youth during the 1960s. Diverging from the pre-existing concept of childrearing during the early twentieth century, which mainly focused on how to instill proper traits in children based on parents' and society's pre-existing value judgments, through more direct imposition by parents, Spock's childrearing ideas stressed a subtler approach to raising a proper citizen, adopting the idea that real control has to be based on self-control.

The first chapter, "To Form a More Perfect Union," deals with the elements of basic care for a stable mother-child relationship during early development. Spock demonstrated that basic care was essential for babies to be equipped with basic trust and autonomy, or independence,

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Spock and Miriam E. Lowenberg, *Feeding Your Baby and Child* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1955); Benjamin Spock, John B. Reinhart, and Wayne Miller, *A Baby's First Year* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1955); Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers; Growth and Guidance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); Benjamin Spock, *Problems of parents* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); Benjamin Spock and Marion O. Lerrigo, *Caring for Your Disabled Child* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Benjamin Spock, *Decent and Indecent; Our Personal and Political Behavior* (New York: McCall Publishing Company, 1970) Benjamin Spock, *Raising Children in a Difficult Time; a Philosophy of Parental Leadership and High Ideals* (New York: Norton, 1974); Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock on Parenting: Sensible Advice from America's Most Trusted Child-Care Expert* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Benjamin Spock, *A Better World for Our Children: Rebuilding American Family Values* (Bethesda, MD: National Press Books, 1994); Benjamin Spock and martin T. Stein, *Dr. Spock's the First Two Years: the Emotional and Physical Needs of Children from Birth to Age Two* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001); Benjamin Spock and Martin T. Stein. 2001. *Dr. Spock's the School Years: The Emotional and Social Development of Children* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001).

which were preconditions for babies' self-discipline for later life. Advising parents to acknowledge these elements and informing parents how to promote them, Spock tried to advise parents to establish secure interactions with their infants. In emphasizing a more natural form of infant care—a demand schedule, breastfeeding, and permissive toilet training—Spock's advice guided parents to liberal new science, which replaced dictatorial old science.

The second chapter, "Forming the Citizen-Child," covers what the meaning of parenting was for Spock. His advice transformed the meaning of discipline by implementing subtler control over children, which seemed effective and practical from his perspective. Delving into his delicate style of discipline influenced by psychoanalytic theories, it examines Spock's disciplinary ideas, which appeared permissive to his critics, but implied more delicate control. Dismissing the authoritative types of discipline such as punishment and nagging, Spock embraced a more lenient way of interacting with children, which appeared permissive to the critics. However, this seeming leniency of Spock's advice on parenting, wittingly and unwittingly, stem from an attempt to promote tighter—effective and practical—control.

The third chapter, "Self-Government of the Citizen-Parent," concerns Spock's advice on parental self-control. His advice purveyed the idea that parents' self-discipline was an indispensable element for effective parenting. For a wholesome childrearing process and the happiness of parents, especially mothers, Spock argued that they needed to have subtler control over their own ideas, emotions, attitudes toward childrearing. Through this process, paradoxically, he highlighted the significance of parents' self-assurance, saying "Trust yourself," while he provided massive professionalized information in the "baby bible." This paradox was resolved in the way that Spock's advice aimed to lead mothers to train themselves as semi-experts for parenting, implying that mothers could trust their instincts through his intermediary

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help, the observation of themselves, and training their emotions. Spock assumed that parents could be trained to observe themselves in depth, but at the same time, Spock did not seem to expect the possibility that parents might suppress their own feelings and distress.

The last chapter, “The Common Sense of Baby and Child Care,” concerns the patterns of information that Spock’s advice provided and how the information was conveyed. Spock’s parenting advice, with various patterns, played a significant role in changing parents’ role in child care. His emphasis on preventative information opened more room for parents’ role in detecting, in advance, a child’s potential signs of underdevelopment. Also, by assigning parents to observe these signals, he also inevitably distributed professionalized knowledge to parents. Moreover, Spock’s *Baby and Child Care*, journal articles, and correspondence played an important role in a conversion in the way of conveying information and knowledge. Allowing parents to participate in an open discussion with him through these means, Spock created intentionally or unintentionally a kind of agora, or in today’s term a virtual space where parents experienced mutual interactions with him. Consequently, parents seemed to be asked to be a more active participant in a childrearing process, not just a recipient of the information from the previous generation, but, at the same time, their participation now came under experts’ supervision

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## Chapter One. To Form a More Perfect Union: Basic Care

Alfred Adler once wrote, “The business of transforming a human being is not a simple process.”<sup>1</sup> By “business” he did not mean childrearing, but the entire psychological treatment of a human being. Yet, once psychological concern began to prevail in the realm of childcare in the early twentieth century, the notion of transformation also came to be applied to it. The child became the object of this process of change. Thus, childrearing was now a process of transforming not only a child but simultaneously a parent.

Becoming a proper parent began to be considered a complicated transforming process because the role of a parent often demanded the process of transforming one’s own existence. The experience of being a parent involved creating a new and different relationship to others, which inevitably would necessitate a process of transformation as well. From deciding what they should be called to what they should do in their parental role, parents needed to change every single thing that they did previously without their baby. They needed to free up their time, effort, and space for their helpless one. Not only did they need share all they possessed, but parents also needed to become very different people from who they were previously. The parent-child relationship demanded that they become more mature human beings who could raise a proper member of society, and thus they sometimes needed to overcome a grave feeling of being overburdened with recognition of the fact that their beloved one could not survive without them.

In this regard, Spock emphasized parental self-control in order for parents to become more qualified as good caretakers. Spock demanded that parents cultivate their own emotional maturity because parents needed to be in control for the sake of their baby or child. His major

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (New York: Greenberg, 1927), 11.

objective was to increase parents' sense of control, which would make their real control over children more effective by preventing their situation from being uncontrollable. By reducing potential dangers that might cause hostile or defiant reactions in a baby, Spock wanted parents to focus on their own control.

At the same time, for Spock being a parent meant not only changing oneself, but also shaping a human being, which is the main concern of this chapter. As not only a proper member of society, but also the very person responsible for raising another proper and appropriate constituent of the society, a parent became an actor who could shape new members. This chapter focuses on the way in which Spock attempted through his childrearing advice to expand parents' sense of control beyond themselves to their child. As a means of perpetuating this sense in a child, I argue that Spock's advice ultimately centered on how to instill what he saw as essential values of development of trust, autonomy, and self-control in a child.

### **Mother and Child Union**

In Erik Erikson's stages of identity development, which he laid out in his famous 1964 book *Childhood and Society*, mothers serve as main providers who "create a sense of trust in their children." This is achieved "by that kind of administration which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their culture's life style."<sup>2</sup> It is the first stage of child development that determines the capability of basic social trust in the mind. This basic trust depends on how well a mother and her baby build up their mutual relationship at this stage. From the beginning of the birth, the underdevelopment of attachment causes infants to feel a sense of discomfort. This feeling of discomfort is eased through the gradual accumulation of mutual reactions between a

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<sup>2</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1964), 249.

mother and her baby once the baby grows more receptive to outside stimuli. If this process goes properly, infants can cope with their discontentment without their mother. Since a mother “has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability,” the infant no longer worries his or her mother’s absence. “Consistency, continuity, and sameness of experience” through the steady and stable relationship with his or her mother enable the infant to trust her, the caretaker.<sup>3</sup>

Imprinting her constant presence on her baby while maintaining ceaseless continuity and sameness in her nurturing, a mother has an indispensable role in building her baby’s capacity for *basic trust*. *Basic trust* is also critical for further development of ego identity. As Erikson states, “The general state of trust, furthermore, implies not only that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges.”<sup>4</sup> This means that basic trust in the first caretaker determines the further development of trust of oneself and one’s capability to control one’s inner desire. Through this psychic mechanism, the baby can acquire a basic means of communication, which enables him or her to relate to others and to the outside world beyond the self. Without basic trust, the infant may not only lose his or her trust of outside provider of care, but might also mistrust the self and its capability to manage its own impulses.

Similar to Erikson’s view of the stages of development, Spock put an effort into building a stable relationship between mothers and their babies, since the basic trust that comes from love and mutual interactions is the fundamental element of child development. Even though they cannot talk or move as they want, the babies need to feel their mothers’ love through mutual responses. But for this reciprocal process, babies are not able to grow up well: “If the neglect lasts too long, the responsiveness to life may be impossible to resuscitate and they may grow up

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<sup>3</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 247.

<sup>4</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 248.

apathetic, unloving people.”<sup>5</sup> Spock emphasizes the importance of being loved and its consistency: “Love is as vital as calories and that the baby’s personality is being shaped from the start by the mother’s and father’s attitude.”<sup>6</sup>

Because of this view, it seemed inevitable for Spock to focus on the first interaction between mother and baby, feeding/nursing. Nursing, for Spock, is not only a tool for gratification, but also a process of building a stable relationship. In his first published piece of professional writing, “The Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice,” a 1938 article, Spock explains feeding as a more sophisticated and complex process:

In other words, the baby not only enjoys nursing because it satisfies his hunger and because the sucking activity itself affords him pleasure but because it affords him pleasurable contact with the first person who he has come to love.<sup>7</sup>

Providing the experience of gratification, feeding plays a crucial role in generating mutual interplay. When the baby feels hunger, he cries. His crying is a signal of his need. In order to satisfy this need, the mother needs to respond to his sign. This seemingly natural and sometimes tedious act is a key to “consistency, continuity and sameness.” Mother’s constant reaction to her baby enables a mutual relationship to begin.

Mentioned above, basic trust is a key to opening a path to outside world. And yet, a mother might have difficulty interacting with her baby if a baby is equipped with basic trust. In this respect, Spock imposes the further meaning of parental care for an infant when he states:

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What We know About the Development of Healthy Personalities in Children,” *Canadian Welfare* (April 15, 1951): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Spock, “What We know About the Development of Healthy Personalities in Children,” 4.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Spock and Mabel Huschka, “The Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice,” *The Practitioners Library of Medicine and Surgery* 8 (1938): 764. This writing was written for practitioners in Pediatrics, not for the lay public.



He's getting a sense of how much you mean to each other all the time you're feeding him, bubbling him, bathing him, dressing him, changing his diapers, holding him, or just sitting in the room with him. When you hug him or make noises at him when you show him that you think he's the most wonderful baby in the world, it makes his spirit grow, just the way milk makes his bones grow.<sup>8</sup>

For Spock, nursing is not just about making a baby survive, but making him or her live with fundamental love through mutual interactions.

In this respect, Spock expands the meaning of feeding. Feeding is not just about literally nursing the baby, but an interactional process that establishes mutual trust between a mother and her baby. Beginning with his explanation about the origin of regular schedules at the beginning of the twentieth century in the "feeding" section of the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock tried to elucidate the fact that the invention of the regular schedule resulted from a scientific observation:

When medical scientists began to study the feeding of babies at the end of the last century, they had to make some order out of chaos. They discovered how much milk babies of different weights and ages needed on the average. They found that the average baby in the early months, if he had his fill of milk, would be satisfied for about 4 hours.<sup>9</sup>

Asking "Why were regular schedules invented?" Spock shows how medical scientists during the time discovered the perfect time duration. Professionals concluded that the 4-hour schedule is the

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<sup>8</sup> Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 25.

most natural and adequate duration of feeding by their observation. Spock mentions, “the baby is on a regular schedule which is not predetermined by the physician and mother.”<sup>10</sup>

Along with this, Spock adds a more scientific explanation about the reason why professionals introduced regular schedule. The reason that professionals emphasized the regular schedule was because of the high rate of infants’ illnesses and death around the turn of the century. The origins of “extreme regularity” came from “a natural development in a phase devoted to bringing scientific order out of the ignorance and confusion of the past.”<sup>11</sup> However, from his point of view, because of the advancement of medicine and the advent of processed milk, the emphasis on rigidity turned out to be somewhat obsolete.

In the first edition, he is almost scolding mothers by preaching against the possible disadvantages of 4-hour schedule and for the potential advantages of a self-demand schedule without providing much scientific explanation. He seems to say that a self-demand schedule can be a reasonable choice. Even in the paper that he presented at the Bureau of Child Hygiene of the New York City Department of Health, he attempted to assuage mothers’ fear by saying “If a mother can visualize this picture at all, it will help her to understand that a civilized baby might also be trusted to take only as much as he wants at each feeding, to understand that minor irregularities in schedule do not violate the laws of nature or create spoiled personalities.”<sup>12</sup> Also, in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* of 1954, Spock states, “It’s wise to remember that the spirit of rigid scheduling produced many other psychological problems, in mothers as well as babies”<sup>13</sup> even though he did not clarify what these psychological problems were.

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Avoiding Behavior Problems,” *The Journal of Pediatrics* 27(4) (October 1945): 364. Spock also explained professional’s desire to the pursuit of order by mentioning, “Infant feeding during the last forty years has been dominated by the idea of extreme regularity. This was a natural development in a phase devoted to bringing scientific order out of the ignorance and confusion of the past.”

<sup>11</sup> Spock, “Avoiding Behavior Problems,” 364

<sup>12</sup> Spock, “Avoiding Behavior Problems,” 365.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What Spoils a Child—and When?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (December, 1954): 156.

From the second edition onward, however, Spock does try to clarify his claim from the first edition that a strict schedule is not the only way to feed babies. He does this by changing not only the entire organization of his explanation but also the content, suggesting that mothers pay more attention to the fundamental meaning of a schedule, not its rigidity. He points out that the enthusiastic belief that a strict schedule is superior to a self-demand schedule is somewhat misleading because the emphasis on the regularity of the four-hour schedule came from misunderstanding about the origin of the schedule. Spock provides an explanation of why doctors chose regularity and strictness rather than flexibility:

Doctors did not know for sure the cause of the serious intestinal infections that afflicted tens of thousands of babies yearly. It was believed that these infections were caused not only by the contamination of milk (from carelessness in the dairy or in making the formula at home, or from insufficient refrigeration) but also by wrong proportions in the formula and by irregularity in feeding.<sup>14</sup>

Since they presumed irregular feeding was one of the reasons why babies were afflicted by infections, doctors and nurses inevitably highlighted the regularity of feeding.<sup>15</sup> What Spock seems to be emphasizing that an obsession with rigidity is actually not an ideal result of the 4-hour schedule. What he thinks proper is the regularity that results from flexible feeding as he

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<sup>14</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 52; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 60; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Spock also mentioned professionals' ongoing interest in the rigid attitude of the 1930s and even the 1940s in his *Redbook* article, "How My Ideas Have Changed" in October 1963. He stated "It seems strange to us now that this kind of unsympathetic rigidity could be practiced on infants at the very same time that newer concepts, such as the importance of love, the avoidance of excessive hostility and deprivation, the awareness of individual differences, were being recognized. The main reason was simple. Up into the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the principal physical danger to babies had been the severe diarrheal disease that killed hundreds of thousands of bottle-fed infants each year, particularly in summertime. No one knew for sure what the cause was. One theory blamed overfeeding, irregular feeding, improper formulas." Benjamin Spock, "How My Ideas Have Changed," *Redbook Magazine* (October 1963): 124.

expressed in his reply to Triky Nongaard, who was a Venezuelan mother with five children, on September 29, 1960.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the most important thing for Spock is not whether which schedule is right or wrong. What he points out is that mothers need to be alert to their baby's own readiness.<sup>17</sup> In order to observe and detect the baby's readiness, mothers should acknowledge the distinctiveness of their baby. He mentions that, "It is wrong to take the figures for an average baby too seriously when you are dealing with any one particular baby, or to try to fit every baby in the same mold." In this regard, his position seems somewhat ambivalent. Spock implies that a feeding schedule based on her own baby's wants can be a more effective way to satisfy needs rather than the three-hour or four-hour-schedule.<sup>18</sup> He was quite open to both options that mothers could go with when he writes, "I don't think myself it's very important whether a baby is fed purely according to his own demand or whether the mother is working toward a regular schedule—just as long as she is willing to be flexible and adjust to the baby's needs and happiness."<sup>19</sup> Unlike other experts who emphasized the regular feeding schedule, Spock opens the possibility of a more flexible choice for mothers regarding their baby's instinctual need and its satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> By adding his concerns about "misunderstandings about self-demand" in the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock argues that obsession about self-demand can result from the mother's misleading belief that self-demand is the opposite of 4-hour regular schedule.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Triky Nongaard, September 29, 1960 *Benjamin Spock Mary Morgan Papers* Box no. 7. Syracuse University Special Collections.

<sup>17</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Spock elucidated his position in his *Redbook* article in 1963 by stating "It set out very deliberately to counteract some of the rigidities of pediatric tradition, particularly in infant feeding. It emphasized the importance of making babies' feeding experiences generally satisfying, the great differences between individuals, the need for flexibility, the lack of the necessity to worry constantly about spoiling." Spock, "How My Ideas Have Changed," 124.

<sup>21</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 53; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 62; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 82.

Self-demand for Spock is more likely to be a process of figuring out “a reasonable number of feedings at predictable hours.”<sup>22</sup> What Spock is most concerned about is that whatever schedule is selected be exactly that—a schedule. With the regularity of schedule, parents can predict feeding times. Without this, feeding time inevitably becomes miserable because mothers have to be on call all the time.

Thus, Spock thinks that it would be better to have a regular schedule, but it does not have to be rigid 4-hour term. Depending on baby’s condition or his or her own digestive system, the readiness of the baby has to be determined. In mentioning that, “In the general enthusiasm for strictness, mothers were usually advised to ignore their baby except at feeding time,”<sup>23</sup> Spock also shows concern about the potential danger that babies could be neglected despite their desire. The significant thing to note here is that Spock tries to balance the baby’s needs and the mother’s convenience through his advice. From his perspective, the debate over which choice of feeding schedule is superior is unimportant. What matters is whether feeding can be a desirable experience, rather than a miserable one for both.

In addition to this, Spock points out that there is another instinct, which needs to be gratified: the sucking instinct. In the oral stage, in addition to hunger, a baby fulfills his sucking need while feeding. Like hunger, sucking is an instinctual activity for the baby as well. Spock describes the instinct: “His mouth makes sucking motions and his whole expression looks blissful. This all adds up to the fact that feeding is his great joy. He gets his early ideas about life from the way feeding goes. He gets his first ideas about the world of people from the person who feeds him.”<sup>24</sup> In this sense, feeding becomes more than just fulfilling his physical want. Feeding

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<sup>22</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 54; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 62; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 82.

<sup>23</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 52; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 60; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 81.

<sup>24</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 23.

functions not only as a tool of fulfilling his physical need for survival—hunger, in this case—, but also as a medium of satiating his instinctual wants for emotional well-being. This means that caretakers need to be more careful of watching their baby's signs of dissatisfied gratification of instinctual needs beyond hunger or thirst.

The demand for fulfilling a basic instinct opens a first door to interaction between caretaker and baby. Through the experience of gratification, the baby picks up a positive image of the outside world. This experience of gratification through feeding helps the baby realize that there is someone who helps meet his desires. At the same time, though, the baby realizes that he himself cannot fulfill his own desire. In order to get rid of his resultant discomfort, the baby tries to show what he or she wants. Usually crying can be a signal for baby's hunger and his physical discomfort in general. His parent or a caretaker is someone who can satiate his or her wants, but at the same time it would not be possible to satisfy all of the baby's needs. When unsatisfactory gratification of his instinctual needs comes into play, the baby would show a different signal:

...he loves to suck. If you feed him plenty, but don't give him enough chance to suck, he'll feel unsatisfied in his sucking craving and try to suck something else—his fist, or his thumb, or the clothes. It's important to give him a long enough nursing period at each feeding and to have a sufficient number of feedings each day.<sup>25</sup>

For this reason, Spock highlights thumb-sucking as an indicator for fulfillment or lack of gratification. If the baby begins trying to suck something else, he suggests, the mother should at least adjust her nursing schedule to the baby's want.

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<sup>25</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 24.

However, after a baby does engage in thumb-sucking, there does not seem to be an effective solution for a mother. Thus, Spock disagrees with using any restraint for stopping thumb-sucking or preventing a baby from sucking his thumb because it is not a fundamental way to solve the problem. Since it is not a habit, but more of an instinct, any use of restraints would not be effective to lessen a baby's symptoms. From Spock's preventative point of view, eliminating or reducing external symptoms after occurrence is not only ineffective, but also futile. For the baby, the use of restraints "frustrates him, and that isn't good for him. There's no more logic to it than putting adhesive tape across his mouth to cure him of hunger." Since adhesive tape is not used to cure baby's hunger, and hunger is not a symptom to cure, an attempt to use restraints seems absurd. Rather than trying to eliminate the symptoms themselves, Spock asks parents to focus on the real meaning and causes of the problem. In his mind, the only interest is "to make the child's life more satisfying"<sup>26</sup> because this stage is very significant to develop trust in babies and children.

In this regard, it is not difficult to find places where Spock tried to emphasize a more preventative method instead of focusing on remedies after problems have already occurred. For example, he first brings up pacifiers in his *Ladies Home Journal* article in July, 1954, beginning with a question that he has been asked: "Why didn't you say anything about pacifiers in your book?" Spock confesses that his reluctance to recommend pacifiers was because of a negative impression on pacifiers—they were "unhygienic, germ-laden, habit-forming, tooth-deforming, disgusting"—that lasted several decades. Convinced that pacifiers can be effective to prevent thumb sucking despite the complications of using them, Spock asks mothers to send in their experiences on using pacifiers.<sup>27</sup> After he received lots of feedback about pacifiers from readers

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<sup>26</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 142-143; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 210-211; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 222; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 256.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Pacifiers" *Ladies Home Journal* (July 1954), 49.

as responses of his July article,<sup>28</sup> he introduced the potential advantages of using pacifiers based on what he heard from mothers via mail in his November article in *Ladies Home Journal*.<sup>29</sup>

Spock's input into the discussion of using pacifiers was influential from then on. The information about pacifiers appears beginning with the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*. Stating a pre-existing negative impression of pacifiers, Spock suggests that mothers not try to use a pacifier if they have a negative opinion or feeling about it in his second edition. He states, "if you are disgusted by the appearance of a pacifier in a baby's or child's mouth, you'd better not use one. It wouldn't be good for you or for your feelings for the child."<sup>30</sup> He seems to get increased confidence to preach in favor of the usefulness of pacifiers later as he eventually omitted his concern about parents' reluctance to use pacifiers from the third edition.<sup>31</sup>

Informing mothers of the utility of pacifiers, Spock wants them to understand the real purpose of using pacifiers. When he points out the usefulness of pacifiers, he does not include the information for the mother's convenience. He disagrees that it is "used regularly as a sort of sedative for a baby who doesn't need sedation."<sup>32</sup> He knew its effectiveness in quieting down a baby, but he did not want it to be used for that reason. Pacifiers had to be used as a preventative method for thumb-sucking, not a stopgap. Using a pacifier as a sedative is unacceptable for

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<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Most Babies Must Put Things in Their Mouths" *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1954), 152; See also Benjamin Spock, Letter to L.F. Rittelmeyer, Jr., M. D., December 27, 1954, *Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan Papers*. Syracuse University Library; There were hundreds of letters flooding from mothers, with both positive and negative feedback. On their positive experience, see R. H. Pickard, Letter to author, August 3, 1954, Richard Graiwell, Letter to author, August 5, 1954, C. G. Kelcey, Letter to author, August, 5, 1954, John and Jean Studer, Letter to author, August 8, 1954, T. Fraser, Letter to author, August 10, 1954, Charles E. Kearns, Letter to author, September 1, 1954, William Michel, Letter to author, October 18, 1954; On an unsuccessful experience, see Gordon P, Sutherland, Letter to author, August 20, 1954.

<sup>29</sup> Spock, "Most Babies Must Put Things in Their Mouths," 152.

<sup>30</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 215.

<sup>31</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 224-228.

<sup>32</sup> Spock, "Most Babies Put Things in Their Mouths," 152; see also Benjamin Spock, Letter to Melvin Ivey, November 8, 1962, *Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan Papers*, Syracuse University.

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Spock because of his core belief, the Freudian theory that children's proper emotional development relies on the gratification of needs.

Since the prevention of love deficiency and the fulfillment of a baby's desire was crucial to the stability of the relationship between mother and baby, which was in turn vital to the baby's emotional development, Spock's preference in feeding was breastfeeding.<sup>33</sup> From his point of view, breast feeding rather than bottle feeding had many more psychological and emotional advantages. Spock does not confirm the superiority of breast feeding in general,<sup>34</sup> but, from his early writings including the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, he acknowledges the potential importance of breastfeeding for intimate care from the psychological and emotional perspective:

From another angle we know for certain that neglected babies may wither emotionally and physically from insufficient cuddling and affectionate attention.

This does not prove that breast feeding is essential but it surely shows that the kind of physical affectionate closeness of which breast feeding is one form, is of the utmost value.<sup>35</sup>

He prefers breast feeding because it can naturally give a certain amount of affection which is essential to baby's health even in the absence of further efforts. Spock does not show any objection to bottle feeding in case that mothers abhor breast feeding or her condition does not permit it. He does not even believe that breast feeding is a tool for mothers to prove their essential love. However, he implies that mothers who prefers bottle feeding should consider other kinds of care that can complement intimate care such as bathing, getting him/her to bed, caressing, and other opportunities for closeness.<sup>36</sup> Especially from the 1950s on, with his *Ladies*

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Vernon Edmond on June 3, 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Is the Bread-fed Baby More Secure Than the Bottle-Fed?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (May 1955).

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Emotional Aspect of Breast Feeding," Unpublished. (1948).

<sup>36</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 67; 3rd edition, 75-76.

*Home Journal* articles and the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock emphasizes breast feeding as a process of developing the relationship between mother and child, deemphasizing the potential difficulties of breast feeding.<sup>37</sup>

Given his point of view regarding the advantage of intimate care, in his books and articles, Spock gives much input on how to be successful with breast feeding. Initially, in the 1940s, he actually seemed somewhat skeptical about the prospect of breast feeding. In his unpublished writing, he pointed out:

The weakening of religious belief and of other idealistic convictions which have a deep sense of purpose to the lives of former generations, has left an emptiness in many today. They attempt to fill it with pursuit of money, entertainment, preservation of bodily beauty, all of which are harder to achieve, less satisfying, and not conducive to breast feeding.<sup>38</sup>

Acknowledging existing aversion to breast feeding, his analysis did not sound so promising.

As his idea developed, however, he meticulously sought the origins of this antipathy toward breastfeeding. Considering the question of why many thought breast feeding undesirable and difficult. In his 1960s *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Redbook Magazine* articles, in which he dealt with a negative impression of breast feeding and its reasons, his ideas boiled down to a couple of emotional terms: caretaker's doubt, anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence. These feelings were causing such difficulties that it would not be easy to overcome their own doubts about breast feeding, which people perceived it as obsolete and uncommon. For those who did choose breast feeding during the 1940s, many could be very self-conscious of what others

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<sup>37</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 65-66; see also Benjamin Spock, "Breast Feeding," *Ladies Home Journal* (April 1957).

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Emotional aspect of Breast feeding," 4.

thought. For a while, since bottle feeding had been considered more modern than breast feeding, someone who wanted to breastfeed could feel that they went against the stream. Also, some mothers had anxiety about being deprived of their free time because of breast feeding and “the fear of what it may do to the shapeliness of their breasts.” Emotionally, being confined with nursing was unbearable for some mothers because they might feel deprived of their freedom.<sup>39</sup> This potential discontentment and uncertainty of mothers must have been an obstacle for successful breast feeding.

Thus, even though he maintained his stance of preference for breast feeding, Spock did not force mothers to follow his preference. He knew that certainty and satisfaction in mothers’ minds did not come only with his endorsement. Since mothers’ doubt and hesitancy could prevent carrying out a successful job, Spock approached this matter in a subtler way. Highlighting the benefits of breast feeding such as naturalness and emotional satisfaction, he continues to preach the gospel of breast feeding:

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.<sup>40</sup>

More direct physical contact can generate intimacy and a connected feeling for both mother and child, which can promote basic trust. Telling mothers that their job is emotionally rewarding both

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<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Spock, “The Whys and Why Nots of Breast Feeding,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, (July & August 1963): 22-23; Benjamin Spock, “Difficulties in Breast Feeding,” *Redbook Magazine* (June 1964).

<sup>40</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 33; see also Spock, “Emotional Aspects of Breast Feeding.” Later in his *Redbook Magazine* article, Spock demonstrated his preference of breast feeding more explicitly: “The main reason I’m strongly in favor of breast feeding for the mothers who want to do it is that so many of them have told me a afterward of the intense gratification they received from being able themselves to provide this for their babies, from feeling the intimate and pleasurable physical bond that’s established, from seeing the babies’ satisfaction.” Spock, “Difficulties in Breast Feeding,” 20.

to themselves and babies, Spock wanted mothers to be persuaded, not forced to join in his preference.

In addition to this benefit, Spock pointed out a more practical advantage of breast feeding for weaning. He mentioned several times in his writings and replies to mothers about the fact that few breast-fed babies are having difficulty weaning to a cup.<sup>41</sup> Weaning problems often occurred in bottle-fed babies. He traced this to the idea that bottles could become “transitional objects,” to which babies felt attachment, resting his analysis on D. W. Winnicott’s idea:

Doctor Winnicott did not include nursing bottles among the transitional objects.

But it struck me that the bottle which a child takes to bed is similar to the transitional object. It becomes precious to him at the same age—six months. He needs it most when he is tired and sleepy, when he wants to retreat to that earlier age at which he wasn’t trying to be independent.<sup>42</sup>

Once the bottle becomes baby’s transitional object, he barely feels the necessity to be independent—to wean to a cup. In one of Spock’s writings in the 1960s, he mentioned that, “In our current Child Rearing Study the dozen babies who were breast fed for six months all showed the usual early readiness for weaning.”<sup>43</sup> These advantages enabled him to become an advocate for breast feeding. For Spock, it was more natural to establish a stable relationship between mother and baby for basic trust.

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<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to John D. Kaster, M.D., March 2, 1951, *Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan Papers*, Syracuse University Special Collections; see also Lee Hawkins, Letter to authors, September. 15, 1960; John Benjamin, Letter to Author, April 9, 1962; Benjamin Spock, “The Striving for Autonomy and Regressive Object Relationships,” *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 18 (1963): 361.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Why Some Babies Become Too Attached to Their Bottles,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, (September 1963): 21; see also Benjamin Spock, “At What Age Should a Baby Be Weaned?” *Redbook Magazine* (February 1976): 40.

<sup>43</sup> Spock, “The Striving for Autonomy and Regressive Object Relationships,” 362.

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For a smoother start to breast feeding, he introduced “rooming-in” since many mothers gave birth in a hospital rather than at home. In an unpublished paper in 1953, Spock laid out the advantages of rooming-in to breast feeding and even to fathers: “The baby’s crib remains in the mother’s room, so that she can become familiar with his noises, moods, movements and appetite, and so that she can feed him on the breast when he is hungry, rather than according to the clock.” To prevent babies from adjusting hospitals’ 4 hour-schedule right after their birth, mothers can nurse babies in their room even before mothers’ milk comes. Also, the rooming-in arrangement can enable fathers to feel more free to visit and “think of himself as an acceptable member of the family at this formative stage of his [his baby’s] development.”<sup>44</sup>

Spock included advice on what to do if mothers thinks their milk insufficient. When mothers wanted to continue or at least try again with patience despite seemingly failing attempts, they could refer to the information regarding how to improve emotional and physical condition for themselves in *Baby and Child Care*. Providing more practical ideas of how mothers can cope with discouraging situations, he sought to help more mothers succeed in breast feeding.<sup>45</sup>

Meticulously explaining how to try to continue breast feeding, Spock pointed out to another advantage of breast feeding: “It’s more adapted to satisfying the baby’s sucking instinct. At the breast, he can suck as long as he feels the need. I think that there is less thumb-sucking among breast-fed babies, for that reason.”<sup>46</sup> With bottle feeding, in which the quantity of formula is often less flexible, feeding can be finished even before the baby satisfies his wants. This concern was expressed clearly in the section of “Thumb-Sucking,” where Spock elucidated his

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<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Spock, “The Right Start Toward Mental Health,” unpublished. (1953); Spock, “Breast Feeding.”; Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 41-42; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 56-57; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 77-78; Spock, “What We know About the Development of Healthy personalities in Children,” on physicians’ interest in rooming-in; see also Benjamin Spock, “A New Awareness of an Age-old concern,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1956).

<sup>45</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 41-45, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 79-86, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 87-94; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 108-115.

<sup>46</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 34; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 63; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 72; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 93.

belief that thumb-sucking is “showing a need to suck longer at the breast or bottle.”<sup>47</sup> He also states, “The main reason that a young baby begins to suck his thumb is that he hasn’t had enough sucking at the breast or bottle to satisfy his sucking instinct.”<sup>48</sup>

Spock’s favor of breast feeding is also based on what he heard from mothers. The mother’s own gratification during feeding is one of the advantages:

The main reason I’m strongly in favor of breast feeding for the mothers who want to do it is that so many of them have told me afterward of the intense gratification they received from being able themselves to provide this for their babies, from feeling the intimate and pleasurable physical bond that’s established, from seeing the babies’ satisfaction.<sup>49</sup>

Through this advice and his interpretation, Spock invited both a parent and a baby to an unprecedented mutual relationship. Spock paid attention to the feelings of caretakers that come from the relationship. By emphasizing interactional feelings that can help pave the path for basic trust, Spock displayed what he saw as the real meaning of feeding. Only through a reciprocal bond can basic trust be instilled and both a baby and a mother become active participants in the mother-baby relationship.

### **Declaring Independence: Toward Autonomy**

The mother-baby relationship needs to be constant and stable, established through building up a mutual bond for a baby to maintain a feeling of trust. As a baby grows, the way of preserving a healthy bond becomes more complicated. Responding to babies’ signals becomes insufficient to satisfy their advanced—oftentimes ambivalent—emotional needs. After the initial

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<sup>47</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 138; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 207; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 220; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 254.

<sup>48</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 137; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 207; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 218; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 253.

<sup>49</sup> Spock, “Difficulties in Breast Feeding,” 18.

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stage, when sending their signals depending on their own desire was the only thing that they could do, babies gradually gain more control over their body and their choices.<sup>50</sup> Turning to five or six months, when basic trust gets stabilized within them, babies tries to have a more autonomous feeling. Spock observes, “He senses he is a separate person, entitled to wishes and a will of his own.... It seems as though he has a compulsive need to exercise his will power, for its own sake.”<sup>51</sup> As they start to be able to use own muscles quite freely, babies seem more ready for more independence.

But, at the same time, babies are not fully ready for complete independence at this age. As he mentions in his unpublished writing, babies of this age show an ambivalent attitude toward their mother:

As he becomes more insistent on his independence from his mother, he simultaneously becomes aware of his dependence. He may cry each time she leaves him alone. If he is allowed freedom to explore in the house, he scrambles back to her at regular intervals for reassurance.<sup>52</sup>

The babies’ ambivalence becomes a very significant clue for how a parent should react. During this period, parents often encounter quite new situations involving a baby’s emotional development. Spock did not clearly mention this until the 1970s, but in his *Redbook Magazine* article, he eventually elucidated his idea about this ambivalent emotional development occurring around five or six months:

Then at five or six months they begin to feel the urge to do things for themselves—sit up, stand, hold the bottle and other objects. The beginning sense

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<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Spock, “A Baby Has So Much to Learn,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (August 1956): 36, 82.

<sup>51</sup> Spock, “The Right Start Toward Mental Health,” 5.

<sup>52</sup> Spock, “The Right Start Toward Mental Health,” 6.

of independence from the parents is insistent and exciting and precious. But there is a problem. When the babies are tired or unhappy they want to be enveloped in the parent's arms again, sucking and stroking.<sup>53</sup>

Though they gradually experience more autonomous and independent feelings by learning how to handle their body, babies still need their own safe zone for temporary regression.

Because of the emotional instability of babies, weaning, from breast feeding, requires a bit more tact and skill for mothers since it starts with a baby's feeling of independence, but at the same time he or she needs to maintain emotional stability. In this regard, Spock explains the meaning of weaning for babies: weaning should adopt a more delicate approach because "the baby is going through a major deprivation at the time of weaning."<sup>54</sup> This idea also resonates with Erikson's observation:

Weaning, therefore, should not mean sudden loss of the breast and loss of the mother's reassuring presence too, unless, of course, the cultural situation is a homogeneous one and other women can be depended on to sound and feel pretty much like the mother. A drastic loss of accustomed mother love without proper substitution at this time can lead (under otherwise aggravating conditions) to acute infantile depression or to a mild but chronic state of mourning which may give a depressive undertone to the whole remainder of life.<sup>55</sup>

A mother's constant love, provided by feeding and essential to basic trust, now becomes a double-edged sword since it fulfills babies' needs, but, at the same time, it causes deprivation in the absence of it.

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<sup>53</sup> Spock, "At What Age Should a Baby Be Weaned?" 40; About the ambivalent aspect of one-year old babies, see Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 204; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 265; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 270; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 304.

<sup>54</sup> Spock and Huschka, "The Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice," 766.

<sup>55</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 80.



Thus, in order to minimize the potential influence of the abrupt absence, Spock wrote that “When weaning begins it should proceed slowly, the bottle being gradually substituted for the breast and the whole process being carried on with patience and gentleness.”<sup>56</sup> Emphasizing how weaning should be carried out, Spock also implied the potential influence of weaning for babies and mothers physically and emotionally from the second edition:

Weaning is important not only for the baby but for the mother, and not only physically but emotionally. A mother who has set great store by nursing may feel mildly let down and depressed after she stops—as if she has lost some of her closeness to the baby or as if she has become a less worthwhile person. This is an additional reason for making weaning a gradual process whenever possible.<sup>57</sup>

Since weaning can influence babies’ later life significantly, Spock thinks that the process itself should be very delicate. Because of this, gradual weaning at any time when babies are ready is required from his perspective.

Spock’s emphasis on gradual weaning shows how he perceived the weaning process. This demonstrates that weaning has more meaning than just a training or practice to accomplish. For him, it is a process of making a pathway to a stable and more mature relationship between mother and baby. Traditionally, as in the case of feeding, professionals and mothers focused on the appropriate time to wean. Some doctors said it should take place before a year of age, others said after that. Whatever their thoughts on when it should be, there were the established ideas fixed on whether it was the proper or right time. Parting ways from the established ideas, Spock’s emphasis turned more to the baby’s readiness, especially when it came to the matter of weaning from breast to cup. To figure out the most suitable time for a baby, a mother should

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<sup>56</sup> Spock and Huschka. “The Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice,” 765.

<sup>57</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 96; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 103; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 125.

know whether her baby is satisfied or not while being fed. A baby's satisfaction does not only mean gratifying his or her physical needs, but also his psychological needs. In laying out the issue of weaning, Spock emphasizes this point more clearly. When the time to wean comes closer, what the mother should consider most is whether her baby is ready for it, not the appropriate time schedule. He mentions, "I think it is preferable to have a baby weaned from the breast by a year if he seems ready for it; if not, as early in the second year as he is ready."<sup>58</sup> This remark demonstrates Spock's belief that baby's readiness would be a perfect indicator of their natural development. In the fourth edition, he eventually did not specify even an approximate time. He mentioned, "Best of all, most natural of all, is to nurse until the baby is ready for weaning to the cup."<sup>59</sup>

In this regard, Spock wanted parents, by informing them of the psychological aspect of weaning, to understand their child's readiness more deeply. To figure out the time of the baby's readiness, Spock thought that mothers should not use a coercive means of weaning. From his first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock kept warning mothers not to force their baby to wean from breast feeding if he or she is not willing to do so: "Don't rush him. His willingness to be weaned may not progress steadily. If he gets into a period when he is miserable from teething or illness, he may want to retreat a little,"<sup>60</sup> Spock clearly opposes urging or forcing babies to eat and informs mothers of potential regression with an abrupt change.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 51; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 98; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 105; The changes of wording in this sentences shows Spock's perception of weaning as well. He eventually changed an approximate time of baby's readiness from "by a year" in the first and second edition to "by 6 or 7 months" in the third edition. This demonstrates that Spock opened the possibility of figuring out what would be the appropriate time for weaning from breast to cup.

<sup>59</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 126.

<sup>60</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 50-51; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 98; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 104-105; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 126-127; from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, he took out "Don't rush him." It becomes to sound more informative rather than hortatory.

<sup>61</sup> Spock was basically opposed to forcing babies to eat; in a letter to Mrs. Richard S. Dufton on October 24, 1961, he clearly mentioned that, "In any case you can't increase her solids by forcing or arguing and would only increase her obstinacy by trying." About the negative suggestion of foods, see also Benjamin Spock, Letter to M.I. Saks, December, 20, 1965; Benjamin Spock, Letter to Maxine Westmoreland, May 31, 1967; Benjamin Spock, Letter to

If forcing the baby is not an appropriate way to wean, what should mothers do? Since there is nothing that their baby has to accomplish when it comes to weaning from Spock's perspective, his advice focuses on how to enhance mothers' emotional strength. If mothers think that weaning time is a competition or some kind of accomplishment, and their baby does not reach the goal that is aimed at, that situation may cause anxiety or worry in mothers. Spock thinks that the timing of a baby's weaning is proof of neither a mother's capability nor her role as a good mother. For him, being a good mother means building up a good and healthy relationship with her baby.

Thus, we can find the reason Spock highlights the "readiness" of a baby. Mother's role is neither just projecting her will onto her baby or making an accomplishment in the field of child care. The real meaning of child care is that mothers need to observe their baby and his or her needs, not for the purpose of monitoring him/her but for the purpose of mutual exchange. In order to observe whether the baby is ready for weaning, the mother has to look at the infant's subtle changes, signals, or discontentment. Through mothers' close interest in their baby's emotional and physical reaction based on maternal love, Spock believed that the baby could grow up well.

However, Spock's advice on weaning seems still quite vague, even about the exact time when mothers should wait and observe.<sup>62</sup> Although he maintained his basic position about the baby's readiness for weaning, he eventually set a limit to waiting. His advice about the time of weaning becomes clearer with his revisions to his classic work and his scholarly articles. In the

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Connie Johnson, June 10, 1966, He also states, "Certainly the first rule is not to try to force or urge what a child doesn't want, because that only further diminishes the appetite."

<sup>62</sup> In the 1940s, Spock did not clarify when should be the appropriate time for weaning. He mentioned, "How should weaning be managed and at what age? Experience suggests that there is no simple or single answer." Spock, "Avoiding Behavior Problems," 367.

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*Ladies' Home Journal* article in the 1960s, Spock maintains, "I think it preferable that a baby be weaned to the cup by a year because he is ready for the cup then. If a child is encouraged in some infantile habit long beyond when he could have outgrown it, it may hamper him in his emotional development."<sup>63</sup> Since delayed development may cause another intervening factor for further emotional development, he later clarified his position about weaning time in the 1970s again even though he demonstrates some specific methods to prevent babies' emotional development from slowing down in the second edition. In his *Redbook Magazine* article in 1976, he writes:

I think it's a sound psychological principle to encourage children to graduate from phase to phase when they show readiness. If children are encouraged to lag behind in one aspect of development, this may in certain cases contribute to a more general slowing of emotional maturation.<sup>64</sup>

With this clarification, Spock suggested that around a year would be the appropriate period of weaning to a cup regardless of whether a baby was breast-fed or bottle-fed. A delay in development could make the ensuing level of development run late as well, so, in this case, late weaning could cause a disturbance in the process of acquiring independence.

For the timely development of children, Spock also pays increasing attention to bottle-fed babies, "many of whom are unwilling to give up the bottle until they are will over a year old."<sup>65</sup> Spock, in the first edition, acknowledged that bottle-fed babies are more reluctant to weaning, but he did not clearly provide further explanation on that. In the second edition, even though he offered more specific information about the reason for a delayed weaning for bottle-fed babies and new advice on "Avoiding a bedtime bottle through the second year,"<sup>66</sup> Spock left this matter

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<sup>63</sup> Spock, "Why Some Babies Become Too Attached to Their Bottles," 21.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How Mothers Learn to Love Their Newborn Babies," *Redbook Magazine* (May 1976): 42.

<sup>65</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 50.

<sup>66</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 122; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 126.

on mothers' hand. While warning that "This pattern is a handy one for putting babies to sleep, but in the long run it makes it impossible for some of them to go to sleep without a bottle,"<sup>67</sup> Spock also mentioned, "Many late weaners insist on a bedtime bottle till about 2 years of age, and I don't think there is any harm in this."<sup>68</sup> It seems to me that Spock thought it better to leave this issue optional since there could be different opinions among mothers about how and when their baby should be weaned. Yet, his advice during the 1950s on the night-time bottle still sounded vague and less confident depending on some point of view.

This position slightly changed in the writings of the 1960s. Spock began to include his suggestion for bottle-fed babies in detail. In one of his articles at the time, Spock tried to find out the reason babies became reliant on the bottle, which could be the cause of the delayed weaning to cup from bottle feeding:

As a result of observations of weaning behavior I came to the hypothesis many years ago that perhaps the most influential factor in readiness for weaning is not the lessening of the baby's need to suck but his urge to outgrow the totally dependent and closely cuddled relationship with his mother. That is to say, he gives up the breast—or the bottle which his mother holds—because he cannot use it apart from her. When he takes a bottle to bed, he can have his sucking pleasure and his autonomy too.<sup>69</sup>

In this remark, Spock observes that not only the baby's decreasing sucking instinct but also the baby's desire to be independent are the significant reasons for the stage of ambivalence toward

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<sup>67</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 122; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 126.

<sup>68</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 147.

<sup>69</sup> Spock, "The Striving for Autonomy and Regressive Object Relationships," 362-363.

independence. Since they could still enjoy their autonomous feeling with their bottle in bed, babies' urge to move on to the cup inevitably decreases.

Citing D. W. Winnicott's concept of transitional objects in another article, Spock also tried to figure out another reason a bottle-fed baby has a higher tendency to be more difficult to wean to cup than a breast-fed baby. He claimed that the nursing bottle itself played a role in comforting and soothing a baby's suffering from an unsatisfactory state: "It becomes precious to him at the same age—six months. He needs it most when he is tired and sleepy, when he wants to retreat to that earlier age at which he wasn't trying to be independent."<sup>70</sup> For this reason, once the baby gets adjusted to a bottle, which is considered as a transitional object in Spock's view, he or she becomes inevitably unwilling to accept the cup. Spock suggests that mothers not use a bottle as a tool to calm or silence their baby. In particular, he explicitly mentions the bottle-in-bed, stating:

If a mother wishes to wean her baby to cup before a year she had better not give him his bottle in bed. If she does, he may become so dependent on it that he won't be able to go to sleep without it, whereas a bottle given to the baby in the mother's lap cannot become a mother-substitute.<sup>71</sup>

In correspondence with Winnicott,<sup>72</sup> Spock seemed to want to get Winnicott's feedback about the idea he presented in the article. Although Winnicott expressed a rather scholarly and tentative attitude to Spock's idea showing his concern that it could be perceived as somewhat judgmental, Winnicott left room for open discussion with Spock on the matter.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Spock, "Why Some Babies Become Too Attached to Their Bottles," 21.

<sup>71</sup> Spock, "Why Some Babies Become Too Attached to Their Bottles," 21.

<sup>72</sup> There was no copy of Spock's mail found in his collection.

<sup>73</sup> In 1962, Spock and Winnicott exchanged their ideas via mail. In response to Spock's letter with his paper on the transitional objects, Winnicott showed interest in Spock's interpretation and his new perspective on a night-time bottle, but he was more or less skeptical of Spock's attempt to "detect what is normal" using the concept of transitional objects. D. W. Winnicott, Letter to author, March 22, 1962.

Eventually, from the third edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock omitted the phrase, “I don’t think there is any harm in this,” which might have caused confusion to mothers. And he changed the wording of the section “Avoiding a bedtime bottle through the second year” more definitive. In the second edition, Spock wrote, “I’m not saying that if you avoid the bottle in bed, your baby will surely be willing to be weaned early—but it should help somewhat. Let him hold his own bottle, on your lap or in his chair, and then put him to bed afterward”<sup>74</sup> But, in the third edition, he specified his position: “If you want your baby to be weaned from the bottle before a year of age—and I think this is preferable—let him continue to take his bottle on your lap.”<sup>75</sup> Also, Spock added a new sub-section dealing with the potential problems of night-time bottles.<sup>76</sup> With this development of his idea on the night-time bottle, he also shows a more decisive position in the third edition. In the 1976 *Redbook Magazine* article, he implied why the use of night-time bottles should be restrained:

I think it’s a sound psychological principle to encourage children to graduate from phase to phase when they show readiness. If children are encouraged to lag behind in one aspect of development, this may in certain cases contribute to a more general slowing of emotional maturation.<sup>77</sup>

Concerning about the relation between proper weaning and a baby’s emotional maturity, parents should be aware of the possibility that delayed weaning might potentially affect a baby’s emotional development in his view. In the same article, Spock included other objects such as pacifiers, thumbs, and night-time bottles as transitional objects in the 1976 article as well by mentioning, “I believe now that the pacifiers and thumbs—and not only the bottles—that some

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<sup>74</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 122.

<sup>75</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 126; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 183.

<sup>76</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 150-151; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 180.

<sup>77</sup> Spock, “At What Age Should a Baby Be Weaned?” 42.

babies demand beyond six, eight or ten months are for security when tired or frustrated, not for sucking satisfaction itself.”<sup>78</sup>

With all his suggestions above, we can get an idea of why Spock preferred breast feeding. He believed that breast feeding could make for a more natural process of weaning because a mother nursed her baby in their arms while nursing. This gave a clear chance to see when her baby might be ready to be more independent. That is to say, it would be when the baby refused to be nursed. Contrary to this, bottles could be carried away by the baby, which means that he or she can get his partial independence without going through weaning. The real issue for Spock is that the baby can be attached to the bottle and is not willing to wean, which could prevent him/her from moving onto the next level.

For Spock, weaning had a special meaning in terms of babies’ development. In addition to the idea that weaning is one of the significant processes to develop babies’ physical development, Spock points out, even from his earlier writing, that weaning could become a very important experience of actually overcoming unsatisfactory feelings for babies. He once mentioned this in the 1930s, writing:

He has made his first fundamental step in dealing with his inner conflicts and fears and in the opinion of many child psychiatrists, he has thus learned his first lessons in making a satisfactory adjustment to frustration.<sup>79</sup>

Spock’s remark indicates that babies’ early experiences, if successfully resolved, become a stepping stone for moving forward to the next level of emotional/psychological development as well. By dealing with new feelings, babies themselves gradually learn how to assuage their discomfort and acquire a sense of accomplishment in interaction with their mother.

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<sup>78</sup> Spock, “At What Age Should a Baby Be Weaned?” 40.

<sup>79</sup> Spock and Huschka, “The Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice,” 767.



## Forming an Independent State

Equipped with basic trust through a stable relationship with the mother despite his or her consistent, ambivalent attempt to be independent and dependent, a baby is gaining more confidence to separate themselves from his or her mother: “He gradually goes longer distances from his mother. He is testing the world, he is testing and exercising his own skills, he is building self-confidence and independence.”<sup>80</sup> During this course of development, babies start testing themselves and adjusting their autonomous feeling. However, being autonomous for babies during this period does not mean total independence from their caretaker, as discussed above. According to Spock, babies of one to two-years-old are “not only acquiring a general sense of autonomy,” but also “finding the exact degree to which he wants to be separate from and close to his mother.”<sup>81</sup>

Because of this somewhat ambivalent state, toilet training oftentimes becomes another arena to build up further independence or dependence for babies. In the writings of the 1940s, including the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock questioned the established idea of “training” the bowel movement itself. Spock pointed out how people think about training, implying the existing idea that “the only way that a baby becomes trained is by the parent’s strenuous efforts” was wrong.<sup>82</sup> Since mothers already paid enough, or even too much, attention to how bowel training should be carried out, Spock’s advice appeared very different from previous suggestions from experts. His remark, “guide them a little,”<sup>83</sup> in the first edition

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<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What We know about the Development of Healthy Personalities in Children,” *Canadian Welfare* (April 1951): 5.

<sup>81</sup> Spock, “What We know about the Development of Healthy Personalities in Children,” 5

<sup>82</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 245; on the history of how early and vigorous training became the rule of training Benjamin Spock, “What is the Best Time for Toilet Training,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (February 1957): 44.

<sup>83</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193.

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epitomized his basic idea on bowel training for mothers in his early writings. Spock posed another question on the appropriate time of training as well by touching on the idea that bowel training is not a competition to be hasty. Introducing psychoanalysts' opinions, he demonstrated a skeptic view about the idea of training bowel movements in infants at a very early age. Before the second year, since babies are hardly aware of what they are doing, an attempt to train them could not be real training.<sup>84</sup>

Along with maintaining his stance that real training comes with a baby's awareness of what he is doing,<sup>85</sup> Spock's advice resonates with Erikson's idea of ego development, explaining why the baby gets more obstinate and wants more autonomy when turning to the second year of age. According to Erikson's theory, this stage is of great importance for the child's ego identity development for this reason:

Stage, therefore, becomes decisive for the ratio of love and hate, cooperation and willfulness, freedom of self-expression and its suppression. From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign overcontrol[sic.] comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame.<sup>86</sup>

In consideration of this delicate struggle, inevitably the role of a caretaker needed to become more refined as well. In this regard, we will observe that Spock's advice on toilet training is meticulously designed in accordance with the second stage of Erikson's Ego Identity theory.

The role of a caretakers, in this situation, is to foster their baby's potential autonomy. During early childhood, especially from after eighteen months to three years of age, according to

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<sup>84</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193.

<sup>85</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193-194.

<sup>86</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 254.

the Erikson's ego identity development, a child needs to develop a certain sense of independence. Once a child gains more control over physical skills, he or she becomes able to experience "two conflicting modes"— "retentive and eliminative"—resulting from a bowel movement. With these modalities, the child potentially gets a sense of more "power over the environment in the ability to reach out and hold on, to throw and to push away, to appropriate things and to keep them at a distance."<sup>87</sup> With these experiences of power and control, Erikson pointed out, "This whole stage, then, which the Germans called the stage of stubbornness, becomes a battle for autonomy."<sup>88</sup> This battle enables the child to expand his development to a more interactional one, but, at the same time, it puts him into a more complex struggle. As he develops his personal control using physical skills, the child comes across potential difficulties from both inside and outside. Erikson described this aspect in his *Childhood and Society*:

If outer control by too rigid or too early training insist on robbing the child of his attempt gradually to control his bowels and other ambivalent functions by his free choice and will, he will again be faced with a double rebellion and a double defeat. Powerless in his own body (and often fearing his feces as if they were hostile monsters inhabiting his insides) and powerless outside, he will again be forced to seek satisfaction and control either by regression or by false progression.<sup>89</sup>

Once children could acquire more control over their movement, they would be highly likely to reject their mother's training efforts if they were demanding. The reason for children's defiance can be interpreted as a demonstration of their reaction toward something that restricts

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<sup>87</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 81-82.

<sup>88</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 82.

<sup>89</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 82.

and controls their will and actions. Following others' order or rules could sometimes mean losing control as well as sense of control. In other words, conforming to the mother's order or rules could mean the deprivation of their sense of independence, which they were about to gain. It might or might not be so natural for the child to be rebellious against his mother's intervention. What Spock wanted to get from his explanation of this particular rebellion was not a piece of information—that children get angry and defiant during this age with no reason—but that there should be a reasonable cause directly related to children's development.

In this regard, Spock lays out the potential indicators of the children's resistance to their mother's demand for training. First of all, the baby may restrain his bowel movement in the short term when the mother makes him sit on a potty chair or else. Spock describes, "Many a baby shows his resistance in a polite way. He sits down obediently but never has a movement as long as he stays there. But right after getting up, he moves his bowels in the corner or in his pants."<sup>90</sup> This subtle resistance is common, so that mothers often do not think it an occasional mistake. He interprets this signal as the baby's assertion of his own capability and demonstration of possessive feeling rather than a mistake that the child made. For Spock, unlike what many mothers usually thought, this resistance was not a problem of a child to fix, but an indication of becoming "wiser and more independent."<sup>91</sup>

Another sign of rebellion is showing hatred toward the toilet with crying or a defiant attitude. This is a more direct expression of their rebelliousness. In this case, Spock considered a previous painful experience with a bowel movement as a potential reason for this recalcitrant

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<sup>90</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194; Spock maintains the explanation in the second, third and fourth edition as well. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 252; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 288.

<sup>91</sup> This can only be found in the first edition. Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194; From the second edition, he explained that "his possessive feeling about his movements has become stronger than ever and that he's simply unwilling to give them up so readily to the potty or toilet or to his mother. Besides, he wants to do everything by himself, in his own way, at this age, and that goes for moving his bowels, too." Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 252; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 288.

attitude. Spock understands this hatred as his avoidance of the fear of being hurt. If the infant felt pain, his or her mother's request for toilet training sounds like "Come now, it's time to hurt yourself"<sup>92</sup> to the baby. Showing the psychological meaning of his defiance, Spock tries to convince parents to have a different perspective on their child's actions. By providing an idea of what the baby really feels, Spock guides parents in understanding the baby better.

The last kind of resistance is holding his movement for a longer time. This reaction may cause baby to have constipation, which can lead to further difficult situations for both mother and baby.<sup>93</sup> Spock pointed out that it is highly possible for a child to have a psychological reason for his constipation. He suggested as potential cause: "This holding back can develop just because the mother is showing too much persistence in going at his training, but it's more apt to follow painfully hard movements."<sup>94</sup> Thus, for Spock, using methods such as repositories and enemas to fix these problems is not a fundamental solution since children's defiance has more complicated consequences,

The sensible training that Spock suggested is to leave bowel training "almost entirely up to you [their] baby."<sup>95</sup> In the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, it seems to me that Spock's advice mainly focuses on how to handle baby's defiance caused by too early strict training. Though he briefly dealt with how babies can feel about their mother's unilateral rigid training and how it might deprive the baby of an autonomous feeling,<sup>96</sup> Spock does not go further than this in the edition. For example, Spock slightly mentions the first potential sign of a baby's development in this area:

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<sup>92</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194-195.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.; Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 253; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 257-258; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 293.

<sup>94</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 195. In different wording, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 253; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 257-258; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 293.

<sup>95</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 195.

<sup>96</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194.

When a baby is 1 to 1.5 years old, he begins to be interested in his own bowel function, and to gain more control. He can hold back on the movement at one time and push with a will at another. He's also getting more independent. He comes to realize that the movement is his own. He feels kind of proud of it.<sup>97</sup>

Informing parents of the characteristics of the age, Spock briefly highlights further development of baby's readiness. However, he did not mention detailed information on what to do with this. Rather, he suggests mothers do as little as possible.

In his professional article in 1948, Spock began to put an emphasis on "the reaction of the child and the attitude of the mother during the precarious second year."<sup>98</sup> He illustrates that a child in the second year feels and reacts in these terms:

He is generally opinionated and touchy. He becomes increasingly aware of his bowel function and takes a possessive and proprietary attitude toward it.... Whatever the cause of the initial resistance, the mother's insistence increases the child's obstinacy, anxiety and guiltiness.<sup>99</sup>

Since this writing was for professionals, his advice focused on what advice pediatricians could give to parents. But, at least, we can get a glimpse of his later idea on "prophylactic advice."<sup>100</sup>

Along with the advice directed at doctors, Spock implies a potential change of his advice in his *Ladies' Home Journal* article released right before the publication of the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*:

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<sup>97</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193-194; His description of the baby's readiness of the second year became more detailed with later editions. Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 251; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 287.

<sup>98</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Common Behavior Disturbances in the First Two Year of Life," *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 136 (March 1948): 815.

<sup>99</sup> Spock, "Common Behavior Disturbances," 816.

<sup>100</sup> Spock, "Common Behavior Disturbances," 816.

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In the two years since then I have talked with some more parents who have had no success either with training efforts or with waiting for self-training. I have talked with child psychiatrists who have dealt with many training problems. I have talked to and corresponded with pediatricians who are interested in this question. And I've come to the conclusion that my previous advice as somewhat one-sided and that it occasionally led parents astray.<sup>101</sup>

Stating that his previous advice did not provide enough guidance about how to handle different situations, Spock admits that he had focused somewhat too much on the negative side of the second year's characteristic— "balkiness [*sic*]." <sup>102</sup> Since he mostly touched on the problems that mothers could face when they pressed toilet training on their baby against his or her will, mothers inevitably had not been able to get other information of how to deal with the situation in advance.

Thus, Spock's advice on how to prevent children's defiance began to be more refined and detailed in the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*. He came to focus more on individual readiness of training, which can be acted on as an indication to start training, rather than how to deal with child's rebelliousness stressed in his first edition. Spock changed the entire structure of the "Toilet Training" section. Starting with the title, "Readiness for toileting depends on age and the individual child," he tried to give more detailed advice by age and asked mothers to expect potential exceptions depending on individual baby's traits. Rather than saying "guide them a little," this time Spock asked a mother "to watch her child—to see what stage of readiness he is in." because "there are real differences at different ages and between different babies, in how the

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<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What Shapes a Child's Personality?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (February 1957): 44, 47.

<sup>102</sup> Spock, "What Shapes a Child's Personality?" 47.

bowels and bladder function and in the child's attitude."<sup>103</sup> Giving further explanation of why he opposed to early training in the second edition, Spock gives a more detailed explanation of training.<sup>104</sup>

The real meaning of training for Spock begins with a baby's recognition of his or her capacity. Thus, Spock believes that an impetuous attempt to train during the first year might be harmful for babies' development,<sup>105</sup> and it could be futile to attempt to train them if their movements are not stable.<sup>106</sup> Thus, distinguishing "regular" and "irregular" babies during the first year, Spock believes that their time of training should be different. If a baby's movements are irregular during this time, it is not a suitable time to start training.<sup>107</sup> Also for babies who are regular, he did not believe that the mother could train the baby during the first year even though it seems that she could catch the movements of her baby.<sup>108</sup> Though mothers could detect the regular movement during the first year, from his perspective, "it is more the mother who is trained than the baby."<sup>109</sup> Since the baby's regular movements during this age are not under his or her control, it is precisely not his own from Spock's point of view. Since the baby does not

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<sup>103</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 245.

<sup>104</sup> In the second edition, Spock pointed out the futility of early training when the baby's movement is irregular; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 246. However, in the third edition, Spock showed a more radical change about early training in a new section, "What is Readiness for Training? The first Year." Explaining the idea of "early conditioning," he says that some "degree of training, in the first year" might help "the baby become somewhat accustomed to sitting on the toilet and to having his bowels move there," and make progress in the voluntary control of his bowels and bladder in his second year"; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 249-250. His 1960s *Ladies' Home Journal* article foreshadowed this change. While mentioning mothers' tendency to wait indefinitely for bowel training, Spock seems regretful that he might have contributed this tendency. Benjamin Spock, "Over-permissiveness," *Ladies' Home Journal* (December 1960) Draft version; But, again, in the fourth edition, he omitted his explanation of potential advantages of early training, and mentioned, "I don't recommend any training efforts in the first year"; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 287.

<sup>105</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193; Spock, "What it's the Best Time for Toilet Training," 44.

<sup>106</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246.

<sup>107</sup> Though he took out his explanation in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Spock detailed the emotional impact on both mothers and babies when mothers tried to train an irregular baby. He states, "When a mother tries to catch the movements of an irregular baby she many become quite frustrated, which is not good for her. Or she may get chronically irritated at the baby, which is not god for either of them." Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 250.

<sup>108</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 245.

<sup>109</sup> Spock, "Avoiding Behavior Problems," 370; Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 245.



know what he or she is exactly doing, the regularity during this age is not what mothers desire to achieve.

Acknowledging the existing belief in early and vigorous training, Spock was concerned that “a widespread but unfounded belief” in the relation between good health and the rigid regularity of bowel movement<sup>110</sup> could make mothers easily disregard “how their baby really feels about it.” Some mothers during the period were much more interested in the achievement of regularity in bowel training than the reactions of their baby from Spock’s point of view. He was concerned that mothers’ wish to achieve early or regular training might interfere with the process of child development based on a mutual relationship between mother and child. Also, Spock calls attention to the fact that “Americans and Europeans have grown up in a kind of society that for many centuries has considered early toileting darned important—not just as a health matter but as almost a moral matter.”<sup>111</sup>

Spock warned that giving excessive guidance could be a contributing factor to baby’s defiance to parents’ order or guidance<sup>112</sup> and “permanent distortions of the personality.”<sup>113</sup> This implication appears in his letter to Charles Hendee Smith, M.D. in 1957 as well:

Of course the thing that later steered me away from overly vigorous toilet training was evidence from psychiatric work of the harmful personality effect in some cases. At the time I took psychoanalytic training the emphasis was on the harmfulness of not only over vigorous but too early training. I decided, after ten years of practice, that the earliness was not important in itself. The important

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<sup>110</sup> Spock, “Avoiding Behavior Problems,” 370; see also Benjamin Spock, “What is the Best Time for Toilet Training,” 44.

<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Spock, “When Can You Start Toilet Training?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1955): 116.

<sup>112</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 247.

<sup>113</sup> Spock, “Avoiding Behavior Problems,” 370.

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thing was the attitude of baby and mother in the second year when the baby became aware that it was his movement and began to resist giving it up on the potty, especially if the mother was tactless.<sup>114</sup>

With this consideration, Spock's advice was emboldened with preventative thinking to keep babies from being rebellious in advance.

In this regard, Spock gradually gave more detailed advice about how to accomplish toilet training itself rather than how to deal with defiant situations after they arose. Spock thinks that "the most important factors are how the mother goes about it and how the baby feels about it during the second year."<sup>115</sup> For this reason, instead of advising to impose pressure on a child about early training, Spock suggests parents detect their child's initial signals for subtle changes regarding the bowel movement during the second year: "the earliness at which training efforts are begun is much less important than the reaction of the child and the attitude of the mother during the precarious second year."<sup>116</sup>

Compared to the first edition of *Baby and Child Care* and his writings in the 1940s, Spock's advice in the second edition and other writings, which underlined the characteristics of the second year more, strengthened his explanation of the physical and emotional developments and changes of two-year-old babies as a tool to figure out babies' readiness. This tendency appears first in 1955 in a *Ladies' Home Journal* article. Spock enumerates babies' traits in these terms.: "This is the age when children become much more aware of themselves, or their bodies, of their wishes, of their rights, of their dignity."<sup>117</sup> Along with this, a baby of the second year

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<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Spock, Feb. 20, 1957 Letter to Charles Hendee Smith, M.D.

<sup>115</sup> Spock, "Avoiding Behavior Problems," 371.

<sup>116</sup> Spock, "Common Behavior Disturbances," 811; Spock, "Avoiding Behavior Problems," 370.

<sup>117</sup> Spock, "When Can You Start Toilet Training?" 116; see also Spock, "The Right Start Toward Mental Health."

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“becomes gradually more aware of his fondness for his mother and enjoys pleasing her,”<sup>118</sup> and “his possessive feeling about his movements has become stronger.”<sup>119</sup> Spock assumes that these two features might cause a baby to have a motive to be trained with the mother’s friendly attitude, or to show defiance toward the mother because of his or her possessive feeling. Even though both traits might obstruct smooth training, Spock was relatively optimistic about the possibility of babies’ self-training with “imitativeness” and signaling.<sup>120</sup>

However, in one of *Ladies’ Home Journal* articles, released in the same year of publication as the second edition, a subtle change was detected in the attitude he maintained that mothers should wait depending on their children’s readiness. He wrote that, “I recommended that mothers wait for their children to practically train themselves through signals or imitation. But again time proved that this was not a universal solution,”<sup>121</sup> expressing concerns about the increase of unexpected and unsuccessful cases. Though he did not explicitly give up his position,<sup>122</sup> this concern foreshadowed his temporary modification of his advice toward assertiveness in the 1960s writings.

In the third edition, Spock’s suggestion on bowel training was not entirely defensive. Whereas he preached that mothers should wait until they detected babies’ readiness for bowel training in the second edition, Spock advised that mothers should watch for an opportunity to induce babies’ cooperation. Even though their baby displayed defiance to sitting on a potty or toilet at times, Spock argued, mothers did not need to give in to the resistance right away. He recommended that mothers could try to make their child sit on it later again and stay with their

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<sup>118</sup> This appeared in the second edition only, and then was omitted from the third edition. Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246.

<sup>119</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 246.

<sup>120</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 247.

<sup>121</sup> Spock, “What is the Best Time for Toilet Training?” 44; see also Spock, “Bowel Training,” *Redbook Magazine* (May 1963).

<sup>122</sup> Spock, “What is the Best Time for Toilet Training?” 170.

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child “for 15 or even 30 minutes, to keep him from leaping up or forgetting what he was there for” with their remark of “assurance about all the advantages of being a big boy.”<sup>123</sup> However, interestingly enough, Spock eliminated related advice in the fourth edition.

The reason for this temporary modification can be traced in several journal articles that Spock wrote in the early 1960s. He brought up a group study project conducted in 1959, which was directed at college educated mothers who had bowel training problems of their babies. This project posed a question about why educated mothers who absorbed psychological or psychoanalytic knowledge often encountered more difficult situations than uneducated mothers. The conclusion was that educated mothers tended to be more reluctant to push their guidance or training for fear of making their child rebellious.<sup>124</sup> Spock and Mary Bergen elucidated how these mothers failed to train their children more often: “All the mothers ignored, in their apprehension, some of the evidences of their children’s general readiness and several of them even ignored specific signals of bowel or bladder urgency.”<sup>125</sup> Adding a new section about this in the third edition as well, Spock does not dissuade mothers from giving up training easily.<sup>126</sup>

Also, in terms of these babies’ characteristics in the first half of the second year, in the third edition, Spock added an explanation on “new development in the child’s attitude toward his movements, which might or might not aid in training.”<sup>127</sup> Spock pointed out “the idea of giving presents” and babies’ fondness of “putting things in containers.” If mothers knew these characteristics of the second year and learned how to react to their baby properly, Spock believed that mothers could have less chance of encountering unnecessary resistance from their baby.

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<sup>123</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 253.

<sup>124</sup> Spock, “Bowel Training”; Benjamin Spock, “Toilet Training,” *Redbook Magazine* (November 1963); Benjamin Spock M.D. and Mary Bergen, M.S.W. “Parents’ Fear of Conflict in Toilet Training,” *Pediatrics* (July 1964).

<sup>125</sup> Spock and Bergen, “Parents’ Fear of Conflict,” 113.

<sup>126</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 258-259; In the fourth edition, this information was taken out.

<sup>127</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 251.

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Informing mothers of potential behaviors, signals, and reactions, Spock expected mothers to know the reasons for babies' potential resistance. This way mothers could consider a possible preventive method to deal with the situations.

Ultimately, as he had been preaching, Spock thought "doing it all by himself" to be the final stage of training.<sup>128</sup> Previously, in his first edition and other writings, he argued that it was to interrupt babies at the least, but, in the third edition, Spock advised that mothers should give more opportunities of training themselves to babies.<sup>129</sup> In addition to providing the information of how to deal with the problems that already happened, he offered a variety of babies' traits, such as resentment or procrastination, which can indicate potential reasons for particular challenging reactions. Before turning to problems, he wants mothers to have information about what is going on with their baby.

In this regard, Spock provides the idea of how mothers should respond to various developments and traits of their baby after figuring out the readiness of their child. What mothers needed to do is to realize that there are a variety of ways of training, which means that mothers do not need to obsess about the only one proper method. But, at the same time, among the various methods, there should be a better or more appropriate method for her own baby. Mentioning that "what works for one parent may not for another, and certainly what works for one child may not be right for another,"<sup>130</sup> Spock reminded parents of the significance of individualized training and wanted them to establish their own relationship with their own measures. Figuring out what was the best method for her own baby is what the mother must do.

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<sup>128</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 248; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 257.

<sup>129</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 257.

<sup>130</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 249.

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To construct a stable and effective relationship for training, the most important thing, other than a mother's recognition and learning about her own baby, is the baby's role as a participant in training. In the process of toilet training, a mother should not "forget that the chief aim should be to secure the child's cooperation." Since the right time for baby's readiness is when "the baby realizes what the purpose is or has a chance to cooperate voluntarily,"<sup>131</sup> the process itself should not be coercive. This emphasis on the meaning of the process resonates with his advice that the purpose of bowel training is not to get training accomplished as early as possible, but to build a healthy relationship with mother, which does not make the baby the object of the relationship, but an active participant within it. When the baby reaches the point of regularity with his or her bowel movements, and thus can stay on the seat for several minutes or so, the baby can eventually be engaged in the process. Spock describes this process:

When he has a movement there, it makes some impression on him, and his mother can increase his satisfaction with her compliments. He is apt, as the weeks go by, to take more pride in his accomplishment. This is coming closer to real training, because he's getting the idea that he's doing a job and that this is where the movement belongs.<sup>132</sup>

The real training would give comforting feelings for both mother and child, which enabled both to feel confidence in the end.

On top of this, Spock focuses on how to make babies part of this process. What really makes the baby take pride in the process was encouragement. Even before he published his second edition, Spock pointed out the necessity of a positive reaction from mothers in these words: "I have learned from child psychiatrists who have worked with many cases of resistance

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<sup>131</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 249.

<sup>132</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 250.

the importance of continued positive suggestions to the child.”<sup>133</sup> In the second edition, he detailed how to use encouragement as an effective tool to make the child give a signal of an oncoming bowel movement.<sup>134</sup> When he replied to L. C. Webster Jr., Spock shows how to give a positive remark to boost the child’s pride: “the main approach is to keep reminding him—each time he wets or soils—that he is a big boy now, that he can use the potty or toilet just like Mommy and Daddy, that next time he should (at 2 1/2 years) go by himself.”<sup>135</sup> In another letter, Spock motivates a mother to use an assuaging remark for her baby to convey a possessive feeling.<sup>136</sup> Spock believes that positive encouragement is a key to carrying out the process of training successfully.<sup>137</sup>

However, for some mothers, it would be difficult to give positive reactions despite her baby’s futile attempts or rebelliousness. Here, Spock wanted mothers to change their perspective. For instance, in his advice on “psychological constipation,” Spock tried to alleviate mothers’ potential anxiety by saying that they should take resistance as a sign of “how concerned the child feels”<sup>138</sup> rather than a problem of the child to eliminate. If mothers take that as a problem, they often become fretful or impatient in order to suppress baby’s resistance. However, what Spock suggests here is to see a more fundamental reason that may help to alleviate baby’s symptoms of resistance.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Spock, “What is The Best Time for Toilet Training?” 47.

<sup>134</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 251-252.

<sup>135</sup> Benjamin Spock, Reply to L.C. Webster Jr., January 10, 1962.

<sup>136</sup> Spock states, I think you are doing the most important thing by reminding him regularly that you expect him to grow up in this respect, that it’s only babies who think they have to keep their B.M.’s to themselves. Remind him that there is no harm giving up the movement, there will be another one every day.” Benjamin Spock, Letter to Jeanne Leader, October 7, 1966.

<sup>137</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 245; Spock, “What is The Best Time for Toilet Training?” 47.

<sup>138</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 253.

<sup>139</sup> I will discuss this in the next chapter in detail.

The reason behind this advice is actually related to the characteristic of the second year. In the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock also mentions this concern. “It’s wise to keep in mind the child’s sensitivity about his rights and dignity at this age, especially if he’s the assertive type, to be tactful and friendly and encouraging about the toilet, rather than bossy,”<sup>140</sup> states Spock. Due to this trait, mother’s negative reaction may make the baby more defiant. In another article, Spock warns the potential negative consequence of mother’s insistence, stating “Whatever the cause of the initial resistance, a mother’s insistence increases the child’s obstinacy, anxiety and guiltiness.”<sup>141</sup>

Spock tries to understand what mothers could feel about his advice. Spock believes that there are mothers who can naturally wait for baby’s readiness even until the end of the second year, but at the same time there is mothers who cannot bear with it. So, he states, “I also realized that in our kind of civilization, which for so long has expected children to be trained early, it is unfair to expect some mothers to be able to wait agreeably for two years.”<sup>142</sup> Considering potential social pressures and influences that mother can get, Spock signals his change in his idea on self-training. In this regard, Spock suggests mothers that they do not need to wait for baby’s readiness until the two year if they cannot agree with his advice. Though he maintained his basic position that “letting a child train himself is a natural and handy way to accomplish the job,”<sup>143</sup> Spock thinks that involuntary cooperation of parents is also not ideal for the situation.

Spock seems to compromise on the inevitability of early training that mothers had been claiming. In the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock talks about the potential origins of parent’s impatience. He mentions, “These differences in attitude can often be traced back to

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<sup>140</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 251.

<sup>141</sup> Spock, “The Right Start Toward Mental Health.”

<sup>142</sup> Spock, “What is the Best Time for Toilet Training?”

<sup>143</sup> Spock, “Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1955): 116.



our own childhood, to how much emphasis was put on our own training. Most of us are inclined to bring up our children about the same way we were brought up, and this is as it should be.”<sup>144</sup> He cannot deny the critical influence of mother’s own upbringing/training style and tries to figure out what would be the cause of mother’s insistence on their impatience. As a compromise, Spock decides not to push mothers who are not ready for voluntary cooperation. An interesting thing here is that Spock’s advice was not only for a baby but a mother too. As he demands that mothers to wait for their baby’s voluntary cooperation, Spock also wants the mother’s full voluntary cooperation.

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<sup>144</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 248.

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## Chapter 2. Forming the Citizen-Child

*By discipline I mean all the factors that, put together, make a child behave himself. This includes the child's basic attitudes and methods.*<sup>1</sup>  
 —Benjamin Spock

When a three-month-old baby girl, Kelli, refused milk, her mother, Connie Johnson felt frustrated. Since she was a working mom, her mother, who had been a foster mother for nearly 25 years, had been taking care of her granddaughter. Kelli seemed to be saying “CAN’T STAND MILK!!!”<sup>2</sup> Within two weeks, she began turning down milk entirely. There seemed to be no problem regarding malnutrition or thinness because Kelli was already on solid food. The problem was not just a dislike of milk, but hate, acting as if she was trying to protect herself from poison. Johnson was worried about the aggravation of her decreased appetite even though her pediatrician said there was no need to worry about Kelli’s physical development. In replying to Johnson’s letter, Spock stated, “Certainly the first rule is not to try to force or urge what a child doesn’t want, because that only further diminishes the appetite.”<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, Johnson tried many things—“Putting sugar in her milk; making her milk warmer; making her milk cooler; teaspooning it to her; letting her drink from a glass; letting her drink while she was eating—from the bottle, glass and teaspoon; hold her and feeding her; propping her bottle and letting her take it laying on her stomach in her crib”<sup>4</sup>—that she and her mother thought that it might work for curing her daughter’s symptoms. However, these efforts were to no avail, and rather caused a reverse effect on Kelli’s feeding.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What Makes Children Behave,” *The American Weekly* (July 11, 1954): 6.

<sup>2</sup> Connie Johnson, Letter to the Author, May 25, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Connie Johnson, June 10, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Connie Johnson, Letter to author, May 25, 1966.

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In 1961, Spock's main concern in his *Decent and Indecent* was "how to bring up children to be well adjusted and happy."<sup>5</sup> This remark, if we look at it closely, intimated his double goals: taking care of children's well-being and training those who could do this job. With this in consideration, the *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* was ultimately not just for children but also a book for parents. The latter is all but an indispensable step for the former. Informing parents of his own advice of how to raise a well-adjusted and happy child, Spock preached his own trademark discipline.

Because of the changing view of the well-being of children, the role of parents shifted culturally during the twentieth century. The parents who understood Spock's advice properly had to be different from those who were trained with Holt's and Watson's advice in their style of discipline. What was different from previous experts' advice was not just the tone of voice or manners of conveying his ideas. Spock had a very different view of how to discipline children. Throughout his writings, including *Baby and Child Care*, it is not difficult to find that Spock emphasized a more extensive concept of discipline than did earlier advisers: "By 'discipline' I don't meant just punishment, but the much larger matter of managing and leading a child successfully."<sup>6</sup> Later in his letter to Eugene Watts on January 4, 1962, Spock implied the starting point of discipline in this remark: "I think discipline begins in the first year in not letting a baby become a sleep problem or spoiled. At one year it's not letting the baby bite or pull the hair of the mother, teaching him gradually not to touch certain things. These are covered in my book but not under the heading of 'discipline.'"<sup>7</sup> Extending the scope of the term, Spock believed that

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Spock, *Decent and Indecent: Our Personal and Political Behavior* (New York: McCall Publishing Company, 1970), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What is the Effect on Children When a Father Takes Little Part in Discipline?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (April 1955): 83.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Eugene Watts, January 4, 1962.

discipline was not just about training children to be more obedient as their parents wanted him to be by using punishment, but letting them grow up by inspiring them to be “well-adjusted and happy.”<sup>8</sup>

Spock thought that good discipline should be self-discipline. Preaching the necessity of self-discipline, he stressed the idea that effective discipline should emerge from within the individual:

The teachers in a good school know well that every child needs to develop self-discipline to be a useful adult. But they have learned that you can't snap discipline onto him from the outside like handcuffs; it's something that he has to develop inside, like a backbone, by first understanding the purpose of his work and feeling a sense of responsibility to others in how he performs it.<sup>9</sup>

His words here epitomized his thought that discipline did not just involve rules or orders from outside and punishing children depending on the parent's judgment, but promoting children's natural and voluntary cooperation that grows inside.

In another article of *The American weekly*, Spock elaborated the effectiveness of self-discipline introducing “experiments on the effects of different kinds of adult leadership on the discipline of children” conducted by psychologists at the University of Iowa.<sup>10</sup> Experts there placed children with three different types of leaders: authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire. Children with the authoritative leader seemed to show good performance in the presence of the person on the collective job they were assigned to do, but they stopped working their job without

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<sup>8</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 328; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 400; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 401; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 444; See also Spock, “What Makes Children Behave,” 7; Benjamin Spock, “The Effects of Three Kinds of Discipline,” *Redbook Magazine* (February 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Spock, “How Your Child Disciplines Himself,” *The American Weekly* (July 25, 1954): 9.

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the leader present. On the contrary, children with the democratic leader learned the process of the work slowly, yet they kept carrying out their job regardless of the leaders' presence. Children in the laissez-faire group tried to organize their process, but without any guidance, the result of their performance was not decent. With this example, Spock pointed out that the democratic leadership that left children an opportunity of a choice give them a sense of responsibility and sustainability of the work as well. He also expressed his support for the democratic method since it could contribute to building a stable democratic society by stating, "it's clear that self-discipline, the kind that gradually develops as a part of the child's character, is the kind we need in a democracy, the kind that will make a good parent, a responsible worker and a public-spirited citizen."<sup>11</sup>

Spock pondered what the role of parents in raising children was when he laid out the ideal characteristics of the good nursery school in *Baby and Child Care*. His remark elucidated what he wanted parents to do with their own children. He emphasized well-rounded care by stating that "The good ones have been run by people who try to understand children's needs, love them, give them attention, affection, things to play with, freedom to develop."<sup>12</sup> As in this ideal school in his imagination, parents would nurture happy children by creating a more amiable relationship with them.

Childrearing for Spock is to observe child's inborn temperament and bring him up to be a valued citizen by building up a stable relationship between mother and child. In a *Ladies' Home Journal* article in 1956, when he dealt with the elements of shaping a child's personality, Spock touched on the fundamental basis of his idea on discipline: "Sure, children's personalities have definite shape by two or three—they'd be quite colorless otherwise. The shapes vary a lot, as a

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<sup>11</sup> Spock, "How Your Child Disciplines Himself," 9.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 289; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 308; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 384.

result of the interplay between whatever is inborn temperament and the environment that each child finds after arrival.”<sup>13</sup> In this remark, Spock defined what real discipline was.

By examining four editions of *Baby and Child Care*, journal articles, and his other volumes, this chapter explores Spock’s concept of discipline and how it developed, changed, and coalesced. Spock’s advice on discipline, I argue, moved in a drastically different direction from previous childrearing advice, and has unique traits in terms of its psychological concerns and direction. Spock did not hold that there were right rules that should be imposed on children. We can assume that his entire idea of discipline did not have the purpose of regulating children with parents’ moral values, but freeing children from various limits imposed by parental rearing.

### **A Big Bossy Giant: On Punishment**

Beginning with a question “Is punishment necessary?” in the first edition, Spock opens a long-lasting debate on physical, psychological, and verbal punishments. Spock, who suggested a more delicate approach to discipline, may well have disagreed with some coercive means of punishment such as scolding, threats, isolation, or spanking. As expected, Spock was not a big fan of punishment.<sup>14</sup> In the first edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock maintained a disapproving stance toward punishment, asserting that “people who have specialized in child care feel that it is seldom required.”<sup>15</sup> He assumed that “most parents” might feel the inevitability of punishment at times, but Spock denied the fundamental necessity of punishment: just because

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What Shapes a Child’s Personality?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (February 1956): 217.

<sup>14</sup> Spock used fairly moderate language about his stance on punishment in *Baby and Child Care* up until the 1970s even though he disagreed with using any coercive means. However, he connected the idea of violence in American society during the time and physical punishment in *Dr. Spock on Parenting* in 1988. Even though my focus is the mid-twentieth century, I want to add this stance since he used *Redbook Magazine* articles for publishing this book. Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock on Parenting* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 270.

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parents feel the urge, “that doesn’t prove that children themselves need a certain amount of punishment” like food as a source of essential nutrients.<sup>16</sup>

Spock strongly took issue “with the grim or irritable parent who seriously believes that punishment is a good regular method of controlling a child.”<sup>17</sup> In this regard, Spock asked parents to be mindful to see the purpose of punishment. Punishment should not be used to make children obedient to rules, so Spock reminded parents that, “The job of a parent is to keep him from getting into trouble, rather than act as a severe judge after it’s happened.”<sup>18</sup> For him, it was not appropriate if a parent used punishment as a tool to judge the child’s behavior or mistakes. Punishment should be, a helpful method—though he did not fully support it—to let children live a safe and happy life. It should not be a method of control.

In the same vein, he demonstrated his general belief that proper behavior should come from only a self-motivated feeling: “The thing that keeps us all from doing ‘bad’ things to each other is the feelings we have of liking people and wanting them to like us.”<sup>19</sup> He went on to say that, “In general, remember that what makes your child behave well is not threats or punishment but loving you for your agreeableness and respecting you for knowing your rights and his.”<sup>20</sup> With a coercive means of discipline, Spock believed it would be nearly impossible for parents to make their child agreeable. What makes the child really listen to the parents was not a strict rule imposed from outside but his own inner feeling of love.

Although this position could contribute to his childrearing advice being labeled “permissiveness” by his critics later on, there were legitimate reasons for him to insist on a more

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<sup>16</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 269.

<sup>17</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 270.

<sup>18</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271.

<sup>19</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 270.

<sup>20</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 272.

delicate application of any physical or psychological punishment. From his perspective, punishment could be futile to build the cordial relationship necessary for children's emotional health, and ineffective as a controlling method, so that it should be applied very tactfully. Spock touched on the examples of scolding, "take-the consequences kind of punishment," spanking, confinement, and threats, and dispensed suggestions for how to deal with each of these.

First, Spock elucidated what to do with situations like children's breaking things or tearing clothes as a result of an accident or clumsiness. In this case, Spock tells mothers that "If he gets along well with his parents, he feels just as unhappy as they to, and no punishment is needed."<sup>21</sup> Scolding the child in this case could backfire because chastising "a child who feels sorry already sometimes banishes his remorse, and makes him argue."<sup>22</sup> Rather, imposing responsibility for their mistake was recommended in this case if the child was over six years old. Thus, for children at the age of six or more, this method could be more or less effective, but it might not be the case for younger ones. If he or she is under 6 years old, the child was not ready for "a sense of justice" and does not yet see "the fairness of reasonable penalties." For this reason, Spock states, "I'd go light on the legalistic, 'take-the-consequences' kind of punishment before 6, and I wouldn't try to use it at all before the age of 3."<sup>23</sup>

Also, though he did not deal with this matter in detail, Spock did not fully agree with the idea of confining children to their rooms. He thought that children's room should be a place of comfort, not a place akin to a prison cell. Since the room should be a place for sleeping or playing, Spock believed that it was not a good idea to make it a miserable or undesirable spot.<sup>24</sup> However, from the second edition on, Spock mentioned that a limited period of isolation in a

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<sup>21</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 333; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 373.

<sup>22</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 334; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>23</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 334; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Spock, "In Spanking Necessary?" *The American Weekly* (August 15, 1954): 8.



certain place might be effective for temporary disciplining. He stated, “Having the young child sit in a special chair for a few minutes is an effective reminder in some families.”<sup>25</sup> Even while not mentioning it in *Baby and Child Care*, he also added certain age groups conducive to this method of restraint in *Redbook Magazine* in 1966: “Nursery-School teachers find isolation a particularly appropriate method for dealing with the three-, four- or five-year-old child who has lost control of his feelings and behavior and is being unfairly aggressive.”<sup>26</sup> As a controlling method for an aggressive child, isolation could be occasionally effective with limited use.

In addition to isolation, Spock opposed any attempt to make scary threats or false threats that could not be carried out because fake threats could make parents’ discipline invalid and ineffectual.<sup>27</sup> Spock demonstrated his doubt in unrealistic threats:

It certainly is silly, and quickly destroys all a parent’s (checked) authority, to make threats that aren’t ever carried out or that can’t be carried out. Scary threats, such as bogiemen and cops, are 100 percent wrong in all cases.<sup>28</sup>

In this remark, he showed unprecedented firmness toward parents with his phrase “100 percent wrong.” In *The American Weekly* article, he made clear that unrealistic and “meaningless threats” could be ineffective because threats that parents have “little intention of carrying out” soon need to “get worse and worse to have any effect” and, thus, children will eventually know the emptiness of those threats.<sup>29</sup> Given his stance toward punishment in general, it would not be odd for Spock to oppose any physical punishment. However, although he showed his reluctance to encourage physical punishment methods in general from the beginning, Spock maintained a

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<sup>25</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 334; 34d edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Controlling Young Children,” *Redbook Magazine* (November 1966): 25.

<sup>27</sup> In his unpublished writing, Spock writes, “Threatening without enforcement is of no value. Kindly consistent discipline is a necessity.” Benjamin Spock, “Discipline,” Unpublished. (1952)

<sup>28</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 334-335; 34d edition, 339; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>29</sup> Spock, “In Spanking Necessary?” 8.

nuanced stance on spanking. He found that parents often suppressed their feeling since spanking was considered shameful. Being reluctant to show their anger, parents could often react in other ways. Acknowledging the possibility that parents could repress their feeling of resentment, Spock was concerned about the potential consequences of this temporary repression. Spock assumed that this suppressed anger could be a cause of later long-lasting nagging of the child or antipathy towards him. Even though he did not support spanking in general, Spock judged a short expression “less poisonous than lengthy disapproval.”<sup>30</sup> He mentioned,

This kind of meaningless argument and explanation doesn't make him a more cooperative child or give him respect for his mother as a reasonable person. He would be happier and get more security from her if she had an air of self-confidence and steered him in a friendly, automatic way through the routines of the day.<sup>31</sup>

In another article as well, Spock explained the reason why shorter punishment was better than longer: “an indignant slap on the behind or the hand, performed by a generally fair parent, is apt to clear the air for the child and the parent.”<sup>32</sup>

For a similar reason, he was also skeptical about delayed punishment. It was a commonplace to say, “Never strike a child in anger,” so that parents often concluded that they should punish their child after controlling their feelings or temper. However, from Spock's perspective, “it takes a pretty grim parent to whip a child when the anger is gone.”<sup>33</sup> Though punishment should not be carried out while losing one's control, the parent did not have to be

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<sup>30</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 334; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>31</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 267; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 329-330; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 334; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 370.

<sup>32</sup> Spock, “In Spanking Necessary?” 17; similar remarks were made in Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 334; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

<sup>33</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 334; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 374.

like a robot. In addition, Spock pointed out the potential advantage of parents' expressions of their feelings. For instance, in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, when he talked about fathers' role in childrearing, Spock stated that fathers also needed to demonstrate their anger sometimes. He believed that if fathers and child resolved the situation well, it could help to strengthen the relationship further:

He has learned once more that his father's indignation is reliable, unpleasant but not fatal. The boy even develops more self-confidence of a sort each time he comes through a scrape with his old man and finds himself still safe and sound.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Spock suggested that the prompt application of punishment after the incident could be better, implying a potential negative effect of "delayed judgment and delayed punishment."<sup>35</sup> For him, this deferred action might put parent and child in prolonged distress. Thus went the careful reasoning of an advisor who had been seeking a psychologically healthy life for both children and parents.

For Spock, the frequency of discipline mattered as well. He considered frequent punishment a sign of "something definitely wrong in his [child's] life" or that the mother is "using the wrong method" in the first edition.<sup>36</sup> If punishment becomes a habitual aspect of parental discipline, it is no longer an ideal situation for both sides. If parents want to use it more effectively, they must determine how well past punishments worked:

The best test of a punishment is whether it accomplishes what you are after, without having other serious effects. If it makes a child furious, defiant, and worse

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<sup>34</sup> Spock, "What is the Effect on Children When a Father Takes Little Part in Discipline?" 83; Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers: Growth and Guidance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 119.

<sup>35</sup> Spock, "However Good a Child's Intentions, He's Still a Child," *Ladies' Home Journal* (November 1956).

<sup>36</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 272.

behaved than before, then it certainly is missing fire and doing more harm than good.<sup>37</sup>

For Spock, the use of punishment had to be related to its effectiveness in establishing a stable relationship between parents and children.

Considering this, Spock was very reluctant to encourage parents to use punishment of their child. He intensified his position by laying out many “ifs” that might indicate a potential success or failure for those who still wanted to use punishment as their major method of discipline:

If the relationship is generally sound, if the justification is clear, if the punishment is appropriate to the individual child, then the effect is usually wholesome. If a parent is having to punish a great deal, if the relationship between parent and child is a strained one, if the punishments leave the child resentful or intimidated (or if they leave the parent feeling chronically guilty), if they lead to no improvement in behavior, then they are not working right at all.<sup>38</sup>

By providing this guidance, Spock maintained that the use of punishment had to be limited in certain conditions because he thought that the purpose of discipline was not child’s obedience, and even observed that total obedience of children was not essential for their development.<sup>39</sup>

For instance, in a *Ladies’ Home Journal* article in November, 1956, a year before the revised second edition came out, Spock contributed a more detailed discussion on discipline, and especially punishment. He gave more details in this article about his opinions on parents’

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<sup>37</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 271; from the second edition, he omitted “doing more harm than good.” 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 333; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 338; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 373.

<sup>38</sup> Spock, “However Good a Child’s Intentions, He’s Still a Child.”

<sup>39</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 269-270.

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negative reactions, his reasons for why he was reluctant to condone parents' use punishment, and the meaning of punishment as a disciplinary method:

There's something unhealthy in this obsession. Actually such overemphasis on the subject of punishment is nonsense.... What is really important in the development of good discipline is the feeling of the parent toward the child and of the child toward the parent.<sup>40</sup>

This remark shows how his advice was distinguished from other disciplinary advice because it changes the concept of punishment itself. By pointing out that the feelings of both parent and child are the key elements of proper discipline, Spock implies that children are no longer the objects of direct and visible control. If parents want to manage their children well, they should use a more subtle and delicate method and employ knowledge based on psychoanalytic and psychological theories and practices.

In this regard, his writings of the 1950s, including the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, dealt with punishment as a disciplinary method in a more nuanced and sophisticated way.<sup>41</sup> From the second edition on, he did not show a direct antipathy toward punishment or strong contempt toward parents who wanted to use punishment, seeming to acknowledge negative responses to his opposition to any punishments. Rather, he tried to explain why some parents wanted to maintain punishment as their method of discipline. Pointing out that, "A lot depends

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<sup>40</sup> Spock, "However Good a Child's Intentions, He's Still a Child," 50; Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 331-332; On punishment in the second edition, Spock adds a diversified explanation of parents' positions and examples of problems that they can encounter during their childcare. But his basic idea of discipline—that punishments are not an ideal type of discipline—was maintained. In his letter to Leroy Sandstrom in 1961, Spock states, "Like you, I don't think paddling is the ideal form of discipline for a principal any more than for a parent." Benjamin Spock, Letter to LeRoy Sandstrom, April 17, 1961.

on how the parents were brought up,”<sup>42</sup> Spock attributed some parents’ preference for punishment to their childhood experience:

Those parents brought up with very little punishment or none at all, because their parents had been able to maintain discipline by positive guidance and firmness alone, have usually absorbed the same attitudes of leadership and find punishment rarely necessary.<sup>43</sup>

By embracing the fact that there were quite a number of parents who had different opinions about punishment, Spock had seemed to leave the necessity of punishment an open question and a decision left to parents’ discretion as to whether they should use it or not<sup>44</sup>—until he eventually expressed his firm opinion against punishment in the 1980s. Instead of pushing hard to persuade parents refrain completely from leaning on punishment as their method of discipline, Spock warned that punishment must be optional. Contending that “Punishment alone has never made a bad character into a good one, or even insured temporary good behavior,”<sup>45</sup> Spock was skeptical about the effectiveness of punishment.<sup>46</sup>

### **A Nervous Giantess: On “Urging” Children**

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<sup>42</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 331; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 336; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 372.

<sup>43</sup> Spock “He’s Still a Child,” 121; Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 109.

<sup>44</sup> When he mentions, “So we can’t say either that punishment always works or that lack of it always works,” I do not think that he meant to leave the debate on the usefulness of punishment in an ambivalent or unresolved state. I think that he intended to push the debate further to the meaning of good discipline by debilitating the power of the controversy about the necessity issue. Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 332.

<sup>45</sup> Spock “He’s Still a Child,” 121; Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 111.

<sup>46</sup> Especially regarding the matter of discipline, Spock’s idea did not change greatly through revision. His stance on physical punishment and the basic elements of advice on discipline were mostly maintained up to the fourth edition. The second edition embraced more understanding of parents’ position, especially his advice on how to discipline, and especially punish, their children. In the first edition, Spock paid less attention to parents’ opinion about punishment. However, from the second edition to the fourth edition, by diversifying the perspectives of parents, Spock seemed to try to demonstrate that he was not merely on children’s side but on the parents’ side as well. This seems to be because of the criticism he got since the publication of the first edition.

Defending his position that physical punishment had to be “the substitute, emergency method when the regular system of discipline breaks down,”<sup>47</sup> Spock was also quite skeptical about parents’ verbal expression of their impatience.<sup>48</sup> Looking through his advice, it would not be difficult to find frequent suggestions that parents should keep themselves from *urging*, nagging, or rushing their child to do something that they wanted him or her to do. Spock chided them: “Sometimes you nag children because you don’t have the courage to be definite. Instead of making them do something, or making them stop doing something, you just keep gnawing at them.”<sup>49</sup> Indicating that parents’ prodding comes from lack of firmness, Spock maintained his critical view that parents’ expressions, coming from their uneasiness, could prevent themselves from looking carefully at their child’s reactions.

His cynical position on these verbal expressions was based on their futility as a disciplinary method, as well as their potential side effects for children. *Urging* or pushing was never an effective method with which to discipline children tactfully. There could be two possibilities for what children could take away when they encountered coercive expressions: resistance or repression—renunciation of self-motivated interest. Either way that is taken will obstruct the path of figuring out what children’s own values are, what they like to do, or what their selves really call out for.

Spock’s main concern was how to prevent children’s defiance, as caused by mothers’ insistence. Thus, he constantly pinpointed the provoking effect of mother’s *urging* to children. For example, he advised parents not to urge their baby in any situation during the oral stage, mainly when feeding. Spock believed that parents’ pressing might influence their baby’s

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<sup>47</sup> Spock “He’s Still a Child,” 121; Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> This chapter focuses on how and why Spock opposed parents’ impatient expressions in this chapter, and the next discusses Spock’s advice on parents’ patience.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Discipline: Where Fathers Fail,” *Redbook Magazine* (July 1964):106.

disposition and further development. During bottle feeding, Spock did not want parents to urge their baby to finish since the act of *urging* could make him or her “indifferent and balky.”<sup>50</sup> To reduce the possibility of instigating children’s anger, he advised parents not to “urge to take water if he doesn’t want it.”<sup>51</sup>

On the matter of the feeding and diet schedule as well, Spock suggested that parents should not push their children if they did not like to eat something such as cereal or vegetables.<sup>52</sup> From the advice on children of one-year-old or older, we can see that Spock thought it necessary to avoid *urging* or hurrying a child to eat his or her meal while dealing with feeding problems.<sup>53</sup> Spock pointed out that parents’ action of nagging did not make their child behave as they wished, quite the opposite. When the baby suddenly disliked vegetables that he had seemed like last week, Spock suggested parents let the situation continue for a while. If they force the child to eat the vegetables that the child hates, the parents “turn their turn a temporary dislike into a permanent hate.”<sup>54</sup>

On bowel training, in the first place, Spock’s doubtful view of parents’ vigorous efforts kept them from trying to push their child for an early training. The time of training should be up to children’s pace of development, not parents’ wishful thinking about an appropriate time. Since babies around age two typically shows possessive feelings, their resistance might not be uncommon, so “If a mother is demanding in her training efforts, she goes right against her baby’s grain at this age.”<sup>55</sup> As a result, Spock advised mothers not to prod children into training too far because it might provoke “his conviction that he must hold onto his possession more

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<sup>50</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 82; from the second edition, the word “balky” was omitted. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 121, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 125; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 153.

<sup>51</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 89; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 125; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 129; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 158.

<sup>52</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 168, 170; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 129; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 134; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 165.

<sup>53</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 220; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 278; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 282; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 316.

<sup>54</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 218; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 277; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 281; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 315.

<sup>55</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 194.



obstinately.”<sup>56</sup> As opposed to what parents initially intended, parents would lose control, not advance training.

There are other examples of the way in which a child’s possessive feeling could unintentionally be strengthened by parents’ verbal persuasion:

If you make him give up his treasured cart whenever another child wants it, you will only give him the feeling that the whole world is out to get his things away from him—not just the children but the grownups, too. This will make him more possessive, instead of less.<sup>57</sup>

Describing how babies would feel in the situation, Spock warned mothers not to take actions that will backfire. In a section on “Jealousy,” he pointed out a similar case when a baby had a conflict with his or her sibling:

Should he be urged or compelled to share his toys with the baby? Never.

Generosity that has any meaning must come from inside, and a person must feel secure and loving first. Forcing a child to share his possessions when he is insecure and selfish makes those traits stronger and more lasting.<sup>58</sup>

Being deprived forcefully could not make any child voluntarily give up the things that once belonged to him or her. Just saying “be generous” does not make him or her generous. Since generosity, for Spock, is not something that could be merely imposed outside, the mother’s request for sharing can be a futile attempt and a catalyst to make the child more obstinate and self-centered.

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<sup>56</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 247. This part did not appear from the third edition. As examined in the first chapter, in the third edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock’s advice on bowel training had added a temporary transition to push children to get used to earlier training; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 252-253.

<sup>57</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 250; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 307; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 311; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 347, where we see a change in possessive nouns from he/him to she/her.

<sup>58</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 277-278; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 343; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 347; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 383.

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If a child goes with resistance, parents inevitably lose their control anyway. Spock described how the defiant attitude of children could be intensified even at the age of six or older: “It’s the nagging tone, the bossiness that he finds irritating, and that spurs him on unconsciously to further balkiness.”<sup>59</sup> Despite its subtlety, nagging still exerts its influence during this age.

The reason for Spock’s concern about rebelliousness resulting from parents’ pushing was because not only did this make parents’ discipline more difficult and ineffective, but also this was actually detrimental to children’s psychological development, especially regarding the pursuit of self-discipline. For instance, in the first year, parents should read the signs of whether their baby is ready for weaning or not while they were trying to wean from bottle to cup. If the parent forced the baby to take the cup, this would meet resistance or regression. In this case, Spock provided what the baby would think by stating, “Every time he has to decline it, it makes him more determined he doesn’t want it.”<sup>60</sup> While babies are trying to defy their parent’s unreasonable—from their literally infantile point of view—demand, they are deprived of a chance to see what they really want. Concerning feeding problems, Spock revisited the theme of balkiness:

The trouble is that a child is also born with an instinct to get balky if he is pushed too hard, and an instinct to get disgusted with food that he’s had unpleasant experiences with.... All feeding problems don’t start from urging. A child may stop eating because of jealousy of a new baby, or worries of many kinds. But whatever the original cause, the mother’s anxiety and urging usually make it worse, and keep the appetite from returning.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 315; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 387; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 390; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 432.

<sup>60</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 219; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 278; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 282; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 316.

<sup>61</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 350; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 424; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 437; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 481.

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Even before children try to find what they like, inevitably they learn what to hate or resist liking. If so, there should be little room for their own choice, which would give them a sense of independence or self-control. Busy resisting what is imposed by parents, a child would lose a chance to figure out his or her own interest.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the possibility of losing interest, another consequence of *urging* was that it could lead children to lose some of their “positive feeling for life.” For instance, as mentioned in the previous chapter, feeding was not just for babies’ survival but for building up a supportive image of the world outside. If their first interaction with their mother goes sour, their impression of the other world in which they will exist for life inevitably turns unfavorable. Spock also acknowledged this influence:

In the long run, urging does more than destroy appetite and make a thin child. It robs him of some of his positive feeling for life. A baby is meant to spend his first year getting hungry, demanding food, enjoying it, reaching satisfaction—a lusty success story, repeated at least three times a day, week after week. It builds into him self-confidence, outgoingness, trust in his mother. But if mealtime becomes a struggle, if feeding becomes something that is done to him, he goes on the defensive and builds up a balky, suspicious attitude toward life and toward people.<sup>63</sup>

Since these interactional experiences could give babies a sense of engaging in the outside world including their mother, Spock thought that this process should be protected for children’s smooth development. If the child wanted to feed himself or herself, Spock suggested the mother let him do so. What Spock cared most about was that the mother should acknowledge the meaning of

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<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Independence Comes from Security as well as Freedom,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (July 1955).

<sup>63</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 81; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 120; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 124; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 152.

their actions. Ultimately, the point was not to trigger a defensive reaction: “But the main thing is to keep him from getting the feeling that you are *urging* the cup on him against his wishes.”<sup>64</sup>

Interestingly enough, if we look at his exhortation, we find that Spock interpreted parents’ pushing as an interference, not a helping hand for children. While discussing contrary characteristic of the age of two and three, such as “signs of balkiness and other inner tension,”<sup>65</sup> Spock informed parents of children’s contradictory reactions. Compared to the one-year-old, children during this age continue to show balkiness at this age, but in a more complex way. Rather than just saying “no” as at the age of one, children now become very sensitive about what they are doing. Spock painted a more specific picture to give parents greater understanding about their child: “He is insistent about doing things just so, doing them his own way, doing them exactly as he has always done them before. It makes him furious to have anyone interfere in one of his jobs, or rearrange his possessions.”<sup>66</sup> Pointing out that mothers’ verbal encouragement might be read as an intervention by their child, Spock believed that discipline during this age demanded increasingly tactful skill and patience. Describing this age “as though the child’s nature between 2 and 3 is *urging* him to decide things for himself, and to resist pressure from other people,” Spock asked parents not to intervene in what their child was doing unduly or even urge him to do it fast.<sup>67</sup>

Spock’s interest in the role of a parent as a tactful helper—not as an interventionist—continued with his advice on a first baby. In several writings, including *Baby and Child Care*, he spared room for the explanation of why the first child was particularly dependent, less outgoing,

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<sup>64</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 186.

<sup>65</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 284.

<sup>66</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 285; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 353; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 357; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 393.

<sup>67</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 285; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 353; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 357; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 393.

or even timid.<sup>68</sup> Spock elucidated what might be the consequences of too much attention in the child:

One trouble is that the first baby in some families gets more fussing over than is good for him, especially after the age of 6 months, when he begins to be able to amuse himself. The parents may be noticing him, suggesting things to him, picking him up, more than is necessary. This gives him too little chance to develop his own interests.<sup>69</sup>

Typically, in many cases, parents with their first child became an example of excessive intervention since they cannot control their enthusiasm about their baby in the first place.

According to Spock, excessive attention and interventions often makes children inevitably only react to outside stimuli from their parent. In doing so, the children can either be more self-centered or lose their motive to figure out their “own fun or how to be outgoing and appealing to people.”<sup>70</sup> Thinking both options undesirable, Spock gives an example of a first child who often becomes less sociable than a second or third one:

Of course, the answer is not to ignore a first child. He needs affection and responsiveness in good measure. But let him play his own games as long as he is interested and happy, with the least possible interference, bossing, scolding and anxious concern. Give him a chance to start the conversation sometimes, when visitors come, let him make up to them himself. When he comes to you for play or

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<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Spock, “The Youngest and the Oldest Child in the Family,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (December 1955); Benjamin Spock, “The First Child and His Special Position,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (August 1957); Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 61-80.

<sup>69</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 256; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 308; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 312; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 348.

<sup>70</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 256; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 308; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 312; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 348.

for affection, be warm and friendly, but let him go when he turns back to his own pursuits.<sup>71</sup>

He advised mothers to treat him or her more skillfully by adjusting their attention and affection in order not to make their child unsociable.

Another example of a contributor to the deprivation of children's initiative was procrastination. Similar to the previous advice, Spock asked mothers to see the problem from a different angle. Typically, parents thought that dawdling itself was an issue for parents to deal with or a problem for them to eradicate. However, Spock implied that children's dawdling might be a result of an attitude taken toward them. The baby is "made that way gradually, in most cases, by constant pushing," when Spock's counsel: "Parents say they have to nag, or the child wouldn't get anywhere. It's a vicious circle, but the parents start it,"<sup>72</sup> Spock alluded to the notion that parents' *urging* might be the factor causing children to procrastinate. He added his advice from the second edition that a mother should realize "how much initiative she tends to take away from her son."<sup>73</sup> It could be the parents' side that opened the way to a quagmire of *urging*.

Accordingly, Spock's stress on children's initiative was inevitable. Making an environment for children's spontaneous and voluntary attitude was one major goal of Spock's discipline.<sup>74</sup> Especially with his advice on how to help children acquire good manners in the section "Good Manners Come Naturally"<sup>75</sup> of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock showed his

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<sup>71</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 256; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 308; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 312; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 348.

<sup>72</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

<sup>73</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

<sup>74</sup> Spock, "Discipline," (1955) Draft Version. *Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan Papers*, Special Collection Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

<sup>75</sup> What he meant by "naturally" does not really mean something unrefined or totally according to nature. He reveals two underlying assumptions. Throughout his advice, he presupposes what parents should keep in mind when exerting discipline. First, each step of physical and psychological development takes place in due time. In this regard, if parents push their child to do something much earlier than he or she is ready, they will encounter

consistency. It could be a useless attempt to exhort good manners to a child unless teaching surface manners was parents' purpose. More important to consider was "to have him like people." Without children's genuine feeling of liking people, it was nearly impossible to teach them how to behave.<sup>76</sup> Thus, parents had to understand that it is their child who should learn manners. Also, when he talked about teaching children manners appropriate to the occasion of a party, he gave a similar advice:

When I suggest that parents not push party manners at two and three it's only because I think you make a small child self-conscious and leery of strangers by forcing him to say 'How d'do' or give his name and age, right after being introduced. You're reducing instead of developing his enjoyment of people.<sup>77</sup>

It is not possible for the child to like something or someone by force. If the parent is even successful at teaching surface manners, the point here is the attitude or action is not the child's own inclination and thus is undesirable.

Also, his preaching on behalf of natural feeling goes with his advice on feeding: "Try hard not to talk about his eating, either with threats or encouragement. With practice you should be able to stop thinking about it, and that's real progress."<sup>78</sup> He goes somewhat further, proposing how to deal with the situation. The way to boost a child's "natural" appetite, contrary to the conventional disciplinary guidance, is actually through parents' indifference. Spock first advised parents not to show their interest and then went further to ask them not to be bothered by thinking about it. Also, he advised that parents maintain their calmness and kindness even in

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resistance. Second, they should wait until their child is ready to feel the necessity of doing something. If the child's behavior or even feeling does not come from the child's heart, the parent would possibly face the consequences of their untimely persuasion.

<sup>76</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 264; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 322; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 327; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 363.

<sup>77</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Good Manners Are Often Just a Question of Taste," *Ladies' Home Journal* (March 1956): 81.

<sup>78</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 352; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 426; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 439; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 483.

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the face of their child's rejection: "Whenever he loses interest in his food, assume he's had enough, let him down from his chair, and take the food away without calling attention to it. Stay friendly."<sup>79</sup> This can be read as support for lack of interest even on the part of the child. The reason why he advocated this strategy was that it would not be that effective to have the child eat:

All this kind of persuasion seems at the moment to be making the child eat a few more mouthfuls. But in the long run it takes his appetite away more and more.

The parents have to keep raising the bribe to get the same results.<sup>80</sup>

Because it was neither a fundamental solution for fixing children's unstable appetite nor even an effective method to improve the situation, Spock maintained throughout his advice that it would be ideal for parents to wait until children eventually thought of food as something he desires.<sup>81</sup>

Another strategy for parents who encountered the situation of resistance was to wait and see until their children finally had a spontaneous initiative. Emphasizing the due course of children's emotional development, Spock cast parents' tactful attitude toward their child's emotional readiness as necessary. For example, if children finally showed the signs of willingness to do their duties, parents should "step out of the picture as fast as you can."<sup>82</sup> Before showing the signs of readiness, he advised that parents needed to guide the child if necessary

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<sup>79</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 222. From the second edition, there is a slight change to "take the food away. It's right to be firm, but you don't need to get mad." 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 280; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 283; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 317.

<sup>80</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 356.

<sup>81</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 354.

<sup>82</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

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without pushing too much.<sup>83</sup> “It’s the nagging, belittling tone that kills all pride in a job,”<sup>84</sup> chides Spock. In this spirit, Spock demanded “a lot of tact” of parents when dressing children:

If you don’t let him do the parts he is able to, or interfere too much, it’s apt to make him angry. If he never has a chance to learn at the age when it appeals to him, he may lose the desire. Yet, if you don’t help him at all, he’ll never be dressed, and he may get frustrated at his own failure.<sup>85</sup>

Depending on the readiness of children, parents needed to help them tactfully. If they pushed too hard, parents might encounter a reverse effect.

In trying to dissuade parents from *urging* or even feeling the desire to urge, Spock acknowledged that the information he provided about child development could be a double-edged sword for parents. He seemed to know that it could be not only a helpful method to acquire prior information, but a major cause of worry to them:

Don’t take this all so seriously that you think there is only one right age, or worry because your baby is not making sufficient progress, or try to force him to feed himself when he’s not ready or not eager. That would only create other problems.<sup>86</sup>

Even though it seemed somewhat contradictory to say not to be bothered by it after providing the information about the proper developmental stages and the proper ways to react to them, Spock

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<sup>83</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362. In the first edition, Spock mentioned, “I’m only making the point that if he’s led, not pushed too much, he’ll usually want to do these things himself.” But, from the second edition, he changed his wording, adding more specific advice on how to do. He states, “I’m only making the point that if he’s allowed to use his own initiative most of the time, reminded in a matter-of-fact way when he’s clearly failed to do something on his own, not prodded unnecessarily in advance.”

<sup>84</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 319; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 325; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 361. Added from the second edition.

<sup>85</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 262, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 320; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 325; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 361.

<sup>86</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 225; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 283; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 287; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 321.

appeared to care more about the fundamental prevention of urging and “other problems” caused by urging or forcing a child to eat. At the same time, this was double jeopardy for parents.

However, this was not the only way forward that Spock suggested. He mentioned a couple of tips for parents in situations of resistance. For example, when the child is too little, it is not effective to give him or her a choice every time asking whether he or she wants to do something. This can lead the child to answer “no” to every option, which can make the parents feel rejected again and again.<sup>87</sup> Also, he was not opposed to the idea of parents saying what they want “reasonably, not too irritably.”<sup>88</sup> This could be a lesson from Spock’s own experience with his son Mike. He recalled, in his autobiography *Spock on Spock*, that he regretted showing “the intensity of my disapproval” to his son.<sup>89</sup>

Spock was against pushing children for its parent-centeredness. Most of all, he continued to discourage parents from constant urging or pressuring because he thought it stemmed from either their wish to make their baby into someone they wanted the baby to be based on their own value judgements. While he was giving advice about how to raise a bright child in school, Spock gave a glimpse of this idea:

Parents wouldn’t be good parents if they weren’t delighted with their children’s fine qualities. But it’s necessary to distinguish between which are the children’s interests and which are the parents’ eager hopes. If parents who are naturally competitive can admit it honestly to themselves, and be on guard against using it to run their children’s lives, the children will grow up happier, abler, and more of a credit to their parents in the end. This applies not only to early reading and

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<sup>87</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 265.

<sup>88</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 270.

<sup>89</sup> Spock and Morgan, *Spock on Spock*, 123.

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writing but to putting pressure on a child at any age, whether it's in schoolwork, music lessons, dancing lessons, athletics, or social life.<sup>90</sup>

What Spock pointed out here was parents' unwitting assumption that what they consider good was ideal for their child. They would hardly think the other way around. Since childrearing had been a pretty effective tool to pass down the values and prejudice of parents, or those of the previous generations in general, this habit of thought had not perhaps often been questioned. However, for Spock, the most ideal discipline was to observe and figure out what a child wanted, not parents' or society's wants.<sup>91</sup>

However, achieving self-control cannot be entirely the job of the child especially when he is little. This becomes the parents' task. They must create a suitable nurturing environment so the child might grow up to be a happy and useful adult. In order to be a mature adult, self-control is essential. The reason why Spock was vigilant about children's *balkiness* can be explained this way: Children's defiance can make parents' nurturing process uneasy and ineffective, but also prevent children themselves from having their own emotional changes come to fruition and their self-formation. In order to tame their aggressive inner feelings, this is imperative for Spock.

However here we turn to another purpose of Spock's advice regarding a method of childrearing and the reason behind it. As mentioned above, childrearing is not simply making children more or perfectly obedient to the external rules from society or parents for Spock.<sup>92</sup> Ultimately, Spock also wanted children to have self-control, but it was too early to consider their spontaneous self-control, especially in the range of his interest, the development of babies and children. In addition to the indispensable devices that I discussed in the previous chapter—self-

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<sup>90</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 335; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 406; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 407; 4<sup>th</sup> edition 449-450.

<sup>91</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Do Parents Teach Prejudice?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (January 1962).

<sup>92</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 330.

trust and independence or autonomy—to be instilled on early development, there should be further steps for parents to discipline their child.

### **The Pursuit of Happiness: Love**

If punishment or exhortation, which had been considered typical disciplinary methods, are not an ideal form of discipline, what would be? Spock's advice led parents in quite a different direction. From the second edition onward, he revised the first part of the section on "Discipline" by adding his explanation of the most important and basic element of regular discipline.

As a kind of a prerequisite of ideal discipline, Spock chose "love" as a main element in discipline. Stating that "many of the ones who get into the most trouble are suffering from lack of affection rather than from lack of punishment,"<sup>93</sup> Spock emphasized the importance of children's experience of their parents' love. He elaborated on the nature of the love that played the most significant role in the parent-child relationship:

We know that the most vital element of all is that the parents love the child in the sense of being devoted to him, wanting him to turn out well, enjoying his good qualities (not his bad ones). The warmth of their love is what fosters in him lovingness and loveliness [sic].<sup>94</sup>

Even though children can show meanness or possessiveness at a certain age, what parents should do is to encourage their children to move on to the next level through their development. An internal motivation and sincerity alone make children grow, not forcible punishment. In this regard, parental love and children's desire to imitate adult behavior can be key elements to behave well.

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<sup>93</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 323; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 328; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 364; see also Benjamin Spock, Letter to Frances E. Ono, January 7, 1958.

<sup>94</sup> Spock, "He's Still a Child," 50; Spock, *Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers*, 107.

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Just as mutual trust between mother and baby was the most important element in the infant's survival and further development as discussed in the previous chapter, here love was a fundamental factor for discipline in Spock's schema. He considered love not necessarily the sole element for discipline, but a vital prerequisite. In *The American Weekly* in 1954, he indicated what would happen if children grew up without love:

Though love isn't all there is to discipline, nevertheless if a person wasn't loved deeply in his early childhood and if he wasn't deeply aware of it, he'll have no real love for others and, therefore, no interest in winning their approval, no shame when he disappoints them. So without love there is no basis for discipline.<sup>95</sup>

Emphasizing a psychological aspect to love, Spock implied *a deeper meaning of love*.

For Spock, love was a reciprocal tie between parent and child, which enabled the relationship between them to go smoothly and parents' discipline to be effective. Without love from parents in early childhood, the young seldom have their own love for parents.<sup>96</sup> Thus, they grow up with the possibility of being easily defiant, rebellious, or even unrepentant since the absence or lack of love might cause children to have no reason to listen to a parent. Since they have little desire to admire or gain the parent's support, any means of discipline cannot be practical. In this regard, Spock shed light on how discipline can be built upon love of children for their parent:

Underneath all techniques of discipline, supporting them all, there must be the child's love of his parents, his desire to please them, his desire to be like them.

This love develops in the child in response to his parents' love of him. If mutual

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<sup>95</sup> Spock, "What Makes Children Behave," 7; See also Benjamin Spock, "Your Child Imitates You," *The American Weekly* (July 18, 1954): 7.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Spock, "A Child Must Feel He Belongs," *Ladies' Home Journal* (January 1958): 16.

love isn't there, all the other forms of control just roll off the child's back, and the more severe forms of discipline will only anger him and harden his heart.<sup>97</sup>

For the efficacy of discipline, love should be securely installed within the relationship between them. According to Spock, love can be “the main leverage parents have in controlling or motivating their children” since punishment “represents a temporary loss of approval and love.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, those who have never been loved would not be afraid of losing their parents' support or affection, so that any attempt to control them by force would not be practical.

Spock also pointed out what parents could do with regular discipline by stating, “In automobile terms, the child supplies the power but the parents have to do the steering.”<sup>99</sup> To steer children, Spock argued that parents needed to maintain their firmness and consistency in their attitude. These elements could be the criteria of effective discipline:

How well the guidance works depends on such factors as whether the parent is reasonably consistent (nobody can be completely consistent), whether she means what she says (is not just sounding off), and whether she is directing or prohibiting the child for a good reason (not just because she's feeling mean or bossy).<sup>100</sup>

Consequently, throughout his advice, Spock was preaching that parents should be consistent and firm to their child. Often, parents missed the point that love is somewhat self-sacrificing or even submissive to the child. However, from his perspective, firmness was an indispensable element for good discipline. Since it was another type of true love, children would eventually understand

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<sup>97</sup> Spock, “Controlling Young Children,” 22.

<sup>98</sup> Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock on Parenting* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 133.

<sup>99</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 333; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 337; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 373.

<sup>100</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 333; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 337; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 373.

the nature of it: “They sense that firmness and reasonable limits, far from being the opposite of love, are one of the ways that parents show true love.”<sup>101</sup>

He urged parents to take several steps. First, they should make sure their action was congruous with their words. For effective discipline and control, Spock emphasized that real discipline was to show children how they behaved, not just tell them what to do. In a section on “Democracy builds discipline,” his fundamental idea for discipline was boiled down:

Another thing that a good school wants to teach is democracy, not just as a patriotic motto but as a way of living and getting things done. A good teacher knows that she can’t teach democracy out of a book if she’s acting like a dictator in person. She encourages her pupils to help decide how they are going to tackle certain projects and the difficulties they later run into, let them help figure out among themselves which one is to do this part of the job and which one that.

That’s how they learn to appreciate each other. That’s how they learn to get things done, not just in school, but in the outside world, too.<sup>102</sup>

Parents’ consistency should be the same as described here. Since children learn how to behave, especially from three to five years old, by imitating the manners of their parents, it becomes important for parents to maintain their behavior congruously with what they say or seek. This natural process can hardly be controlled by parents all the time; Spock implied that parents’ manners might also need to be tuned to their genuine feeling.

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<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What Spoils a Child,” *American Weekly* (August 8, 1954): 13. In a letter to Taylor Caldwell, Spock mentioned, “Children sense that wholesome parental love includes control, insistence [sic], or politeness, and duties...Proper controls can be applied brusquely or gently—that’s a matter of style.” Benjamin Spock, Letter to Taylor Caldwell, April 21, 1960.

<sup>102</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 329; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 402; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 403; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 445-446.

In this sense, the parents are teaching their young children manners all day long without necessarily mentioning them or even noticing them and in this sense they can't really teach their children anything that they themselves aren't feeling.<sup>103</sup>

Many parents understood consistency as the steady application of rules and enforcement, yet, from Spock's perspective, "a more significant consistency is between what the parents say they want the child to do and what they really see to it that he does."<sup>104</sup> In his reply to Nancy Hausman on July 1, 1958, Spock wrote, "I'd tell them with utmost firmness that they are not ever to play with fire or the stove or the furnace. In other words they shouldn't feel that fire is fascinating but that it is absolutely forbidden and you mean it."<sup>105</sup> Showing the firmness of parents' words and their consistency of reaction would help build an effective means of parental control. He did not mean that parents should be harsh.<sup>106</sup> In order to show parents' firmness to their child, Spock suggested a private conversation with children when they did not behave well. In another letter in 1961, he replied:

If a child were fooling around too much and neglecting his school work I'd speak firmly to him and if a child were highly conscientious but a dreamer who couldn't seem to help dawdling, I'd certainly want to have a friendly, earnest talk with him, so that he would know that the school and I were concerned, and so that he could offer any explanation of his own or ask for help.<sup>107</sup>

Spock wanted parents to show how they are serious about matters like this.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Spock, "Good Manners are Often Just a Question of Taste," 176.

<sup>104</sup> Spock, "Controlling Young Children," 22.

<sup>105</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Nancy Hausman, July 1, 1958.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Patricia Gresham, May 3, 1963.

<sup>107</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Robert Garner, March 29, 1961.

<sup>108</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 312; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 318; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 354.



However, Spock also let parents know how firm they should be. In Spock's sense, parents' firmness should consist of more delicate manners because their actions constantly influence their child's emotions. An example of parents' firm attitude was shown with his advice on a child who tried to take other child's toy or possessions. Pointing out that this might be because of children's possessive feelings at age two, Spock advised how to intervene in a potentially serious situation that parents might encounter:

If your child is hurting another or looks as if he were planning murder, pull him away in a matter-of-fact manner and get him interested in something else. It's better not to heap shame on him—that only makes him feel abandoned, and more aggressive.<sup>109</sup>

Though they need to show their determined attitude to stop the child's unacceptable act, parents do not have to make the child feel guilty.

In the same vein, Spock elucidated that showing firmness did not mean that parents could show anger toward them or use a forceful way to control their child. In advice on sleeping problems, he opposed both means. The reason why children cannot easily go to sleep could be “loneliness, fear of being left alone, fear of the dark, fear of nightmares, fear of wetting his bed, excitement from stimulating experiences,”<sup>110</sup> and such, according to Spock. Thus, getting angry can make children's anxiety worse, so that it would be no use in helping them get to sleep. Besides, if parents used forcible ways such as locking, “in some cases it leads to real terror and prolongs the insecurity”<sup>111</sup> of the child.

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<sup>109</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 250; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 307; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 311; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 347.

<sup>110</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 260; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 318; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 323; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 359.

<sup>111</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 261; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 319; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 324; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 360.

While refining the concept of discipline, Spock was concerned about parents' over-permissiveness as a result of misunderstanding his advice on discipline or parents' own reasons. In this regard, Spock claimed that parents should intervene in their child's potential unruly or unlimited behaviors in advance:

All that's usually necessary, for the child who meets overpatience with provocativeness is to be firm early. It's a matter of having a sharper parental eye out for the early stages of the struggle and to interrupt it with firmness before the child has had a chance to make a real nuisance of himself and before he has had the time to enrage his parent.<sup>112</sup>

Before children overstep the line, it would be parents' task to prevent them from doing so since they are mostly too young to know the proper limits. Also, he advises parents to keep children in check when they want to join in parents' conversation all the time. Especially, children from three to six years old, might want to know about every matter their parents share, resulted from their jealousy toward the parent of the opposite sex. Yet, "I think it is a mistake to let him come to think that he deserves to have a place in every conversation and is entitled to demand it,"<sup>113</sup> Spock opined, guiding parents to a path of more tactful control.

Spock might think that it was unfair to receive harsh and sweeping criticisms for making the whole generation permissive. In his writing on "over-permissiveness" in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1960, Spock dealt with the potential reasons for many parents' over-permissiveness. Explaining how the idea of discipline and childcare changed throughout history, he implied that many parents' lenient discipline might have resulted from their own upbringing, not only from

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<sup>112</sup> Spock, "What Spoils a Child," 13.

<sup>113</sup> Benjamin Spock, "The Child Who Tries to Control His Parents," *Redbook Magazine* (January 1966).

his advice.<sup>114</sup> Spock pointed out two cases of parents being too flexible in their discipline. First, some parents who had been exposed to their parents' anger and harshness in their own childhood "had grown up with insufficient confidence in themselves, a bit too much irritability in their makeup, a lingering resentment against some of their own parents' attitudes."<sup>115</sup> In this case, because of immanent guilt and doubt in themselves, the parents often could not display a determined attitude toward their child, wishing to avoid antagonizing them. On the other hand, those who had been extremely polite and conscientious might just allow their child to be unruly and rude since they had secretly felt a sense of release from their long-lasting repression.<sup>116</sup>

Even though Spock already showed his negative opinion of urging a child in early infancy with feeding as suggested above, such an idea was epitomized in his advice on the child of age two and three. These ages are closely related to what Erik Erikson designated as the second basic conflict—Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. With successful development, the child establishes feelings of autonomy. If this fails, he could fall into feelings of shame and doubt. The goal for childcare of this stage is for parents to promote a sense of autonomy by adopting a more effective means of discipline. According to Spock, bringing up a child entails helping him to have a sense of autonomy based on his experiencing a sense of personal control and a sense of independence, both of which should come from inside, rather than instilling a parent's values into a child unilaterally. As we already know, Spock believes that a child has to learn how to

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<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Over-permissiveness," *Ladies' Home Journal* (December 1960).

<sup>115</sup> Spock, "Over-permissiveness," 6. Draft version.

<sup>116</sup> Spock, "Over-permissiveness," 7. Draft version. Spock laid out "secret enjoyment of the badness, angeriness at the badness, guilt about the angeriness, which leads right around the circle to permitting more badness" as complicated feelings that parents might have in this situation. Benjamin Spock, "Good Manners Are Often Just a Question of Taste," *Ladies' Home Journal* (March 1956): 176.

gain self-control effectively over the aggressiveness of human nature. This requires participating in their own development by acquiring self-discipline in the end.<sup>117</sup>

### **Instilling Self-Government**

*~ Put Yourself in Their Shoes*

Mentioned above, proper discipline for Spock is promoting children's self-control by letting children do as they want with parents' least intervention. He thought that urging or punishment was not effective to inculcate in children a sense of self-control and a feeling of autonomy or initiative. Since these forcible forms of discipline could make children blindly resistant to parents' guidance, Spock did not recommend them. From his view, the reason behind the act of urging or punishment was that parents usually had their own moral values and they often wanted to cultivate good characteristics in their children's personality based on their values. Elucidating a new meaning of discipline, Spock suggested that parents should understand children's reactions better. Perhaps, comprehending children's way of behaving could mean putting parents in their children's shoes. Thus, Spock kept asking that parents should think reflect on what their child might be thinking of in a certain situation. From Spock's point of view, the purpose of discipline was not instilling parents' values, but finding out the meaning of their children's behavior and words in their own minds.

Parents could easily ignore the fact that their child grew at his own rate while they were concerning themselves with the time of proper development. To understand children's behavior properly, parents should recognize the due development of children, yet not only to encourage

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<sup>117</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Aggression and its Control in Childhood," *Redbook Magazine* (February 1970): 35. On the idea of self-discipline, Spock explicitly expressed his thoughts in the series of articles on discipline. See *Discipline, 1955, Writings: Articles, Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.*

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children to keep up the pace of development. Indeed, some parents might insist that there should be due development for children. However, from Spock's point of view, the acknowledgement of children's development should be used as a means of figuring out whether the child is ready for particular stimuli rather than a tool for parents to coerce the child to excel and outgrow other children's development.

Spock's advice on children's play sheds light on this aspect of children's readiness. Play seems trivial and easy for parents, but this is "serious business"<sup>118</sup> to develop children's essential skills for future development. At the same time, it also "stimulates a child's imagination" and creativity.<sup>119</sup> Thus, play became an important activity for children's development since it was not just spending time purely for fun, but for practice.<sup>120</sup> Spock had something in particular in mind when referring to play:

A child loves his play not because it's easy, but because it's hard. He is striving every hour of every day to graduate to more difficult achievements, and to do what the older kids and grownups do.<sup>121</sup>

This remark indicates a notion that the proper development of children can occur with appropriate play at their own rate as opposed to the belief that children should be motivated to compete by advanced play. However, Spock found this somewhat misleading based on his own experience with his two sons: "A child, in order to enjoy play and to mature from it, must be permitted to take the initiative himself and to follow his own imagination."<sup>122</sup> He went on: "Children usually love simple toys best and play with them longest. This isn't because children

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<sup>118</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 247; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 304; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 308; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 344.

<sup>119</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Playthings," *Ladies' Home Journal* (December 1961): 1. Draft version.

<sup>120</sup> Spock, "What Toys Mean to Children," *Redbook Magazine* (December 1963): 47.

<sup>121</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 247; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 304; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 308; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 344.

<sup>122</sup> Spock, "Playthings," 3. Draft version.

are simple—it's because they have so much imagination,"<sup>123</sup> clarifying that loving simple toys did not mean that children are uncomplicated and underdeveloped.

Spock asked parents not to attempt to lead their child to the level that they thought ideal or advanced. Though he empathized with parents' urge to say "Oh, no, not like that. See, you do it this way," Spock offered a fresh perception of parents' role in playing with children by saying, "let children play at their own level."<sup>124</sup> Since parents' frequent intervention or demonstration of their high expectations could keep children from determining what they wanted to do or undermine their will to have autonomy, parents needed to be aware of a negative aspect to their interference, however helpful it was intended to be. He noted that the role of parents in children's play is not to give tight guidance of how to play, but just to stand by:

A child will become interested in dressing dolls properly, coloring carefully, playing trains realistically, each at a certain stage of his development. You can't hurry him. When you try, you only make him feel incompetent. Your children love to have you play with them if you are willing to play at their level. Let them show you how. Help them if they ask for it. If you've bought them a toy that is too complicated, either let them misuse it in their own way or tactfully hide it until they're older.<sup>125</sup>

As shown here, the initiative of play should begin with a child's will. If the play is too easily mastered, children lose interest. Thus, from the start, parents should neither make play more complicated or difficult nor meddle or instruct.

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<sup>123</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 247; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 304; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 308; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 344.

<sup>124</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 249; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 306; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 310; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 346.

<sup>125</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 249-250; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 306-307; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 310; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 346-347.

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With all this in sight, we can see that Spock's guidance was heading toward an idea we might now describe more abstractly as understanding others. As part of this, Spock's advice on feeding problems proposes that parents "put themselves in the child's place for a minute."<sup>126</sup> Spock interestingly shows how he thinks a child might feel when the parent made him or her eat something that he or she did not want to eat:

To get in the mood, think back to the last time you weren't very hungry. Perhaps it was a muggy day, or you were worried, or you had a stomach upset. Now imagine that a nervous giantess is sitting beside you, watching every mouthful. You have eaten a little of the foods that appeal to you most and have put your fork down, feeling plenty full. But she looks worried and says, "you haven't touched your turnips." You explain that you don't want any, but she doesn't seem to understand how you feel, acts as if you are being bad on purpose.<sup>127</sup>

This description of the child's emotional reaction toward the parent's coercive form of persuasion gives a potential example of something any child could feel. By imagining just how children might feel, Spock seems to play a role of mirroring through the lens of children. A very similar imaginative rendering of how a baby might feel appeared in the section on weaning as well:

Think how you'd feel if a big bossy giant, who had you in his power and who didn't understand your language, kept trying to take your coffee away and make you drink warm water out of a pitcher.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 351; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 424; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 437.

<sup>127</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 351; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 424-425; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 437.

<sup>128</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 184; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 147; omitted from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

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Asking parents to put themselves in their child's shoes and think of how they would feel about things they are being asked to do, Spock is teaching parents how to empathize with their child.

Spock's interest in developing an engaging parental attitude continues with other matters. At the age of two, possessive feelings cause children to have difficulties giving up their possessions. If a parent urges one child to give an item to another, the child can feel antipathy toward his or her mother and to the world outside. Giving a specific example relating this case, Spock states, "if you make him give up his treasured cart whenever another child wants it, you will only give him the feeling that the whole world is out to get his things away from him—not just the children but the grownups, too."<sup>129</sup> For Spock, understanding children's stance and perspective was an important task for parents. By adding his projection of how children would feel based on psychology, Spock wants parents to angle their focus toward their child's emotional state.

Another suggestion for how to understand children better is to empathize with children's feelings. Since it is impossible for us indeed to feel others' emotions firsthand, we inevitably must identify or empathize with others to sense their feelings. For example, children of three or four years old typically have imaginary worries and fears. Due to this, children often develop unrealistic anxieties "of the dark, of dogs, of fire engines, of death, of cripples."<sup>130</sup> Since these concerns appear unreasonable or senseless for parents, it would be not easy to be in tune to these feelings. But Spock demanded that parents try to accept their child's fear as it is. For instance, when a child is afraid of the dark, what parents must do is not deny of the child's feeling, but embrace it:

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<sup>129</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 250; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 307; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 311; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 347.

<sup>130</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 296; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 363; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 368; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 405.



This is more a matter of your manner than your words. Don't make fun of him, or be impatient with him, or try to argue him out of his fear. If he wants to talk about it, as a few children do, let him. Give him the feeling that you want to understand, but that you are sure nothing bad will happen to him. This is the time for extra hugs and comforting reminders that you love him very much and will always protect him.<sup>131</sup>

Although parents cannot feel the fear of the child, they should not be so sure that there is no such thing. What they need to acknowledge is that the aim of discipline is not inquiring into the actual state of things, but seeking for the way to rear children well. Spock strongly believed that, in order to do so, parents were the ones who should care how their child feels.

Similar advice was leant on children's "nervousness" at school. Children might not want to go to school at times for several reasons, which seems like trivial matters from the parents' perspective. However, Spock provided his alternative position:

In the early grades, particularly, he may be afraid of a bully or a barking dog on the way to school, of the school janitor, of a severe-looking teacher, of having to ask permission to go to the toilet, of reciting before the class. These seem like small matters to an adult, but to a timid 6- or 7-year-old they may be terrifying enough to paralyze his thinking.<sup>132</sup>

Explaining how serious the child could feel about these matters, Spock advised that parents should not disregard or dismiss their child's reactions easily.

The meaning of putting themselves in their child's shoes could lead into a very different dimension of thought. Understanding their child in this case expands the extent and scope of

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<sup>131</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 297; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 364; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 368; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 406.

<sup>132</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 336; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 406; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 407; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 450.

parents' acceptance. In other words, they might need to renounce their formerly maintained judgment, at least temporarily, since they cannot choose a good thing on behalf of their child at a certain age. For example, on the matter of "helping a child to be sociable and popular," Spock told parents to invite their child's friends— "who your child wants to be friends"—to "weekend trips, picnics, excursions, movies, and other shows."<sup>133</sup> Here, Spock implied that the value that parents had maintained should not be automatically asserted in a certain situation, and they need to regard their choice or preference. In a similar vein, about "children's fascination with the radio,"<sup>134</sup> Spock advised that parents should not make a judgment on children's preference based on their own.

Remember that these stories of amazing adventures, which sound like trash to you, are deeply moving and even character-building experiences for him.

Remember also that it's part of his social life to discuss them with his friends, just the way grownups discuss books and plays and the news.<sup>135</sup>

From Spock's perspective, understanding their children indeed necessitates perceiving them as they are. In order to do so, temporarily giving in at times is inevitable.

~ *Comprehension of the Underlying Reasons*

The last, but not least, pattern of his advice centered on an analytic attitude toward children. Spock argued that parents should comprehend what might be the underlying reasons for the child's behaviors, habits, or disorders in order to put their problems right. For a long time, experts also advised that parents should impose stricter rules for children to abide or follow. Diverging from this position, Spock opposed any coercive means of fixing or correcting the

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<sup>133</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 319; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 389; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 392; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 434.

<sup>134</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 321; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 394; omitted from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

<sup>135</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 322; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 395.

problems by rigid regimentation or visible prevention/interventions. Rather, Spock suggested parents not focus on phenomena themselves, but to figure out what is the real reason behind them. This thought was expressed in a remark in *The American Weekly*: “You have to look under the surface to see that this kind of behavior is only the by-product of a new phase of disciplining, more exactly a phase of self-disciplining to the standards of other kids and outside adults.”<sup>136</sup> Instead of trying to focus on the occurrence, parents had to think of potential reasons why it happened.

For example, with the advice for nail-biting, Spock pointed out that an attempt to control the uncontrollable habits could be futile:

Nagging or punishing a nail-biter never stops him for longer than half a minute, because he seldom realizes he is doing it. In the long run, it only increases his tension. Bitter medicine on the nails rarely helps. The better course is to find out what some of the pressures on the child are and try to relieve them.<sup>137</sup>

This remark demonstrated his idea that a coercive method to stop the habit is just an expedient, not an effective and long-term solution. He does not seem to think that nail-biting is a huge problem. What concerns him most is not nail-biting itself, but what caused it. The solution to the habit for him is “to find out what some of the pressures on the child are and try to relive them.”<sup>138</sup>

This pattern of advice appeared throughout his suggestions. With the advice for feeding problems, Spock repeated his stance on the process of problem solving. He clearly stated the purpose of parents’ intervention on the feeding problem by stating that “The aim is not to make

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<sup>136</sup> Spock, “How Your Child Disciplines Himself,” 8.

<sup>137</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 288; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 356; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 360; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 396.

<sup>138</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 288; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 356; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 360; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 396.

the child eat, but to let his natural appetite come to the surface so that he will want to eat.”<sup>139</sup> The only reason why parents should intervene to solve the problem had to be related to the fundamental solution, not aimed at eradicating the surface symptoms. He presupposed that there should be a more fundamental reason when the child refused to eat. What his parent should do was to figure out that fundamental reason.

On bowel training as well, what Spock wanted parents to see about children’s defiance was the more fundamental reasons behind actions, to perceive them differently, and to react to them accordingly. With Spock’s different view of a child’s resistance to a parent’s training, especially in the case of bowel movements, parents could have more clues if thinking that there could be some other reasons behind his expression. Since these signals were not problems which needed to be cured or trained, the parents no longer needed to suppress these phenomena themselves. What they needed to do first was find out the real cause. Parents’ perception could this way be changed. And with a revised view of their child’s rebellion, finally, Spock demanded that they react to the expression based on what they learned from Spock.

In this case, interestingly enough, Spock gave a clue to understand the underlying reason of this defiance based on psychological dynamics:

The little child knows in his bones that he’s dependent on his mother’s love and approval. When he antagonizes her it makes him feel uneasy and guilty underneath, especially at this early, impressionable age. If his mother is trying to make him feel naughty about soiling himself with the movement, he may come to dread all kinds of dirtiness.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 352; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 426; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 439; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 483.

<sup>140</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 195.

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Baby's persistent rebelliousness can begin with his guilty feeling that comes from being disobedient to someone upon whom he is dependent at the moment. Since the child already acknowledges the inevitability of his or her dependence, the mother's disapproval could exacerbate the realization of his powerlessness. A mother's negative reaction may generate her baby's anxiety as well. By laying out the potential reason for a baby's being defiant, Spock seems want to persuade a mother to give a more mature reaction toward her baby.

With the advice on children of three to six, Spock's suggestion of focusing on the embedded causes was maintained. Highlighting the notion that lying during this age was not intentional, Spock repeated his advice that parents should try to understand the hidden reasons for children's behavior. For instance, even with the lies that become regular, Spock did not believe that the child should be punished. Rather, Spock implies:

When he lies regularly, it means that he is under too much pressure of some kind. If he is failing in his schoolwork and lying about it, it isn't because he doesn't care. His lying shows that he cares. Is the work too hard for him? Is he confused in his mind by other worries, so that he can't concentrate? Are his parents setting too high standards?<sup>141</sup>

Guiding parents to mull over why the phenomenon arose, Spock suggested that parents fathom the reason behind it rather than act with an immediate reaction.

On the issue of stealing, Spock also demonstrated his focus on the underlying emotional reason that causes the child to steal. First of all, not forgetting to show his empathetic remark about how parents could feel about their child's stealing, he counseled parents should not "to jump on him hard and fill him with a sense of shame."<sup>142</sup> Rather than apply a moralistic view on

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<sup>141</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 296; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 363; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 367; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 405.

<sup>142</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 323; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 396; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 398; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 439.

stealing, Spock's suggestion was more based on analytical reasoning. He enumerated potential reasons for stealing for children from six to eleven. According to his advice, stealing in early childhood has to be treated with less tension, since small children "don't have any clear sense of what belongs to them."<sup>143</sup> But children at a later age who knows stealing is an undesirable thing to do should be treated otherwise.

What he suggested first was to figure out what the possible psychological origin of stealing was at this age. Using the example of a child of seven who grew up with dedicated parents, he tried to figure out the underlying reasons of his or her deed. Even with an upbringing with enough toys and possessions, the child in his example stole something. In this case, Spock indicated that the mother should trace underlying psychological and emotional reasons rather than a visible reason. Often, parents think that the abundance of material possessions may satisfy children's needs, but this is not always the case. Stealing may be caused by children's loneliness or unhappiness. In the case of the child who stole even with plenty of possessions, he claimed mothers needed to figure out what the child really wanted. "He seems to have a blind craving for something, and tries to satisfy it by taking an object he doesn't really need,"<sup>144</sup> Spock wrote, implying that there was a more complicated psychological process of treating the emotional aspects of the child that was necessary in childrearing.

Spock's advice on how to treat children's stealing was the only part that he revised from the second edition. In the first edition, as expected, his solution was not punishing or shaming children, but considering "whether he needs more affection and approval at home, and help in making closer friendships outside."<sup>145</sup> Since he thought that stealing could come from children's

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<sup>143</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 323; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 396; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 397; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 439.

<sup>144</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 324; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 396; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 398; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 440.

<sup>145</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 324; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 396; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 398; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 440.

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emotional dissatisfaction or distress, Spock wanted mothers to relieve this potential emotional problem. On top of this advice, Spock added that parents needed to show a firmer attitude toward the action itself. Though they do not need to show disgust or strong disapproval of the child's deeds, the parents should block the possibility of lying or hiding what the child did. In this regard, he mentioned, "it's not necessary to humiliate the child who steals, only to make it crystal-clear that it can't be permitted."<sup>146</sup>

Similar advice continued with his advice on children who had adjustment problems to school. Pointing out that there are various possible "reasons for poor adjustment," Spock again emphasized the importance of finding an answer to "where the trouble lies" rather than reacting with punishment.<sup>147</sup> He enumerated the actual examples of the reasons behind the children's laziness in order to show there could be some other reasons for children's idleness, which parents had not yet discovered.

The 'lazy' child who won't try to do his lessons usually isn't lazy at all. Children appear to be lazy in school for a number of reasons. One is balky from having been pushed too much all his life. You'll find him eager enough about his own private hobbies. Sometimes a child is afraid to try in school (or anywhere) for fear of failing. This may be because his family has always been critical of his accomplishments, or set too high standards.<sup>148</sup>

Implying that children's being lazy does not always result from children's indolence, Spock opened another realm in which parents should search for the reasons behind their child's behaviors.

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<sup>146</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 397; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 399; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 440.

<sup>147</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 333; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 404; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 405; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 448.

<sup>148</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 336; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 406; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 407; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 450.

Along with this, Spock extended the scope of parents' search for the truth. As a reply to mother's letter asking his help for her children's messiness and her distress about their uncooperative attitude, Spock stated, "The big question is where the boy's resistance is coming from: something else out of kilter in them? Wrong expectations in you? Wrong methods?"<sup>149</sup> Pointing out that the underlying reasons of children's problems could be found parents as well as children, Spock was about to extend his discipline to parents.

As discussed above, Spock did not believe that parents were able to instill desirable characteristics in their child. Such a manipulative concept of discipline struck him as old-fashioned. In his article in *Ladies' Home Journal*, he emphasized once again that it was nearly impossible to mold children's characteristic by parents' hand: "Certainly it would be foolish and risky for any parent or professional person to think he could deliberately create a certain preconceived type or degree of individuality in a child by applying special pressure." And he continued, "We can give our children security. We can set reasonable limits on their general behavior in such matters as politeness and dutifulness. We will influence them greatly by our example. But we can't succeed in forcing them into a specific mold."<sup>150</sup> Spock highlighted what parents could do with their child: "The child does 75 percent of the work of this character formation. The parents' main job is to just be themselves (and hope that they are good examples). The other 25 per cent consist of distraction, reminders, firmness, occasional scolding and, perhaps punishment."<sup>151</sup>

Spock thought that discipline perhaps was a process for parents of attempting to understand their children—as the separate individual their child was becoming. Through the

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<sup>149</sup> G. A. Moore, Letter to Author, January 18, 1958; Benjamin Spock, Letter to G. A. Moore, February 28, 1958.

<sup>150</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Conformity," *Ladies' Home Journal* (October 1959): 8. Draft version.

<sup>151</sup> Spock, "Your Child Imitates You," 14; See also Benjamin Spock, "How Do I Make Him Mind?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (October 1956): 20, 123.

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process of comprehending the other's situation, behavior, and feelings, Spock's version of discipline seems like a path to search after the truth about their child. Through the process of comprehending a child as the other, parents inevitably experienced a deeper interaction with the other. And, through this, they also encounter, at the same time, their own selves.

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### Chapter Three. Forming the Citizen-Parent

*“Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.”*  
-Benjamin Spock

In advocating natural feeding, Spock wrote, “Try hard not to talk about his eating, either with their threats or encouragement. With practice you should be able to stop thinking about it, and that’s real progress.” In a similar vein, Spock’s emphasis was also on mothers’ feeling of contentment with children’s “gradual progress.”<sup>1</sup> While a child is trying to dress or undress himself, mothers usually feel the urge to help him. However, Spock advised them of the necessity of minimal intervention even when the child is stuck in his tangled clothes.<sup>2</sup> It is very significant to let them solve their own task for themselves since this will develop the core personality of the child. In both cases, Spock’s advice does not seem to be for babies, but for parents, specifically implying the necessity of controlling their thinking and feeling because the former asks mothers to restraint their thought, and the latter calls on curbing natural desire.

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The memories about the postwar era, like the other periods in American history, embrace ambivalent coexistence. The postwar period signaled an era of affluence. After World War II, with a sense of relief from the necessary hyper-awareness of the destructive and violent aspect of civilization, Americans seemed to find their own way toward renewed hope for healing the damages during the war. Postwar America enjoyed a high birthrate that was unprecedented, increased incomes, expanded educational opportunities, and, after initial shortages were offset by

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pears, 1946), 287; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 356; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 359. Omitted from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

<sup>2</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 262; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 320; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 325; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 361.

a building boom, an abundance of suburban residency.<sup>3</sup> However, the shadow of doubt about the perpetual progress of civilization after the world's experiences of both wars and the Great Depression could not be easily erased during the postwar era. For many, faith in general goodness of humankind had been damaged by the results of the war and the gruesome results of wartime behaviors of all kinds. A mad destructive impulse had taken over, revealing the irrationality of human being's own nature, disproving the theory of human progress. Despite the ascendancy of science, doubts about men's capability to control their fate came into play and became more visible. How can we possibly believe or guarantee that men would constantly endeavor to attain the good in behalf of humankind?<sup>4</sup>

This ambivalent picture of the postwar era coincided with a changing view on the correct theory of child development and child rearing. The idea of parents' critical influence on the development of a child had become pervasive and intensified from the turn of the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Since Freud emphasized the significance of infancy and early childhood as a key stage for a child's growing into a healthy, or at least normal, adult,<sup>6</sup> the responsibility of parents and the meaning of the parental role expanded drastically. A mother became not only an indispensable actor for her child's complete existence but also the one who was responsible for his or her development. Since children's development depended on mothers' capability to raise their children properly, a mother needed to be a good mother, or even the best mother.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Landon Y. Jones, *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> William Grabner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990) xi-xii.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 23.

<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Problem of Anxiety* (New York: Psychoanalytic quarterly Press and W.W. Norton & Co., 1936), 100.

<sup>7</sup> Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 562-563.

The postwar era was not only a period of reconstruction that could restore the damage of American society during the war, but also a period of healing a psychologically wounded society in order to return it to the normal state of life. At the same time, the postwar era inaugurated a prelude to the perilous Atomic Age and the Cold War, when even peace-time life for the young seemed increasingly precarious. Steven Mintz's observation shed light on the relationship between the historical circumstances and the pattern of childrearing during the postwar era, when, in Mintz put it in his *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, he wrote, "Postwar childrearing was viewed as a key to producing not simply a healthy, happy child, but also psychologically well-adjusted adults and a harmonious democratic society."<sup>8</sup>

With this in consideration, Parents during the postwar era were also willing to give better treatment to their child along with the postwar prosperity, in ways their own parents could or would not. After the war, parents who mostly had suffered from these dire circumstances of the 1930s and 40 and had sometimes even been victims of these situations did not want their children placed in the same or similar conditions. With their desire to raise better babies by making better options for more appropriate care, parents during this period turned to seeking out ways to do so.<sup>9</sup>

Along with the recognition of the critical impact of parents on their children at an early age and the increasing burden of the parental capability of child care, America had been through "a cultural anxiety about the rearing children."<sup>10</sup> As Steven Mintz put it, "beneath the warmth of the era were intense currents of anxiety."<sup>11</sup> The huge success of Benjamin Spock's publication of

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 280.

<sup>9</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 276-277.

<sup>10</sup> Lerner, *America as a Civilization*, 562.

<sup>11</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 276.

*The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* during the postwar era exemplified this parental anxiety about child care. Parents, mostly mothers, wanted to figure out how to raise a better child who could function well as a proper citizen to contribute to establishing a more stable and secure society. In order to build a better society, parents needed to raise a better child. In the midst of the coexistence of hope and fear about the Atomic Age and the Cold War era, Spock was someone who wanted to find appropriate ways to live through the new conditions of American life.<sup>12</sup>

Since the early twentieth century, along with the emphasis on childhood as a critical period to becoming a proper adult, childrearing had become an indispensable practice for generating a potential priceless contributor to society, even demanding skilled abilities of parents to deal with babies. Thus, the underlying assumption that a child should not be left with an unskilled mother came into play. Raising a mentally sound child became a very significant matter. Spock was in complete accord with this view. For him, it was imperative to raise children who would be well-adapted to society not only so that they themselves could survive but also so that they could establish a safer and more stable society in postwar America.

Thus, this chapter lays out Spock's idea of parents' self-control and what Spock wanted parents to do for better discipline for children. Eventually, beginning in the nineteenth century and raising a child went beyond the individual or family, so that expert advice and child welfare was considered indispensable. It became more difficult for parents could no longer set their own

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<sup>12</sup> Ruth Feldstein, on this matter, in her *Motherhood in Black and White*, demonstrates a critical view on mothers' role as nurturers of psychic and political health for the future generation, imposed by liberalism's expectations at its own time from the 1930s to 1960s. Pointing out the ambivalent and contradictory memories about the 1950s as "conservative, suburban, apathetic" versus "rebellious, courageous, and dignified," she argues that the image of mothers had often been appropriated and racial relations had also been objectified depending on the political and societal necessity. Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

expectations for child care but instead eventually were asked to learn what experts said.<sup>13</sup> As Spock focused greater attention on how mothers could and should do a great job in baby and child's physical and mental development, he highlighted the necessity of parental self-control to ensure the stable development of children.

### **Trust Yourself**

Spock strived to inform parents of how to make their situations more controllable and manageable. Through the advice in *Baby and Child Care*, he expected to enhance a sense of control for parents by reducing the uncertainty of unexpected and uncontrollable situations that parents might encounter. In addition to strengthening a parental sense of control over external circumstances, Spock paid a new level of attention to the inner control of parents this time. As Ann Hulbert has put it in her *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and Century of Advice about Children*, Spock highlighted parental confidence and self-trust "to calm fears about the conflicting scientific wisdom on raising children."<sup>14</sup>

For better discipline, Spock's childrearing advice during this period often implied that parents also needed to have their own self-control, not just instill self-control in their children. Parents' better treatment and careful nurturing of their children came to mean a higher possibility of raising a better baby with, at least, the proper speed of development. Thus, the role of parents became mainly significant for the pace of their child's proper development, and this relied on the parents' capability to raise their baby and child more appropriately. This implication extended to the development of a "normal" child as well. When children developed more slowly, it was often

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<sup>13</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Perfect Parents: Baby-care Advice Past and Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 163-164.

<sup>14</sup> Hulbert, *Raising America*, 4.

traced to parents' skill in childrearing, or lack thereof.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, however, parents were gradually losing their ground of being the sole nurturer. In this sense, they might need different strategies to strengthen their sense of appropriateness as a proper caretaker. The contribution of Spock's advice on parents' self-control began with his endorsement of emboldening parents' self-trust.

Repeating his famous lines, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do,"<sup>16</sup> Spock appeared more concerned with parents and their situations than the previous child care experts—Dr. Emmett Holt, Dr. John B. Watson, and so forth—because they frequently told what to do. However, Spock's emphasis on parental self-trust embraced a more complex dimension of control. In *Baby and Child Care*, Spock demonstrated his underlying assumption that parents needed to maintain their control or, at least, a sense of control through several methods of self-control. Taking certain self-discipline measures, parents would supposedly to become emotionally mature, psychologically capable, and even professionalized in order to rear good members of American society.

At a first glance, *Baby and Child Care* seemed to be another child rearing book for babies and children, but it actually told parents, mostly mothers, how to be an appropriate caretaker for their baby and child. Spock defined the eligibility for being an appropriate parent with a more permissive tone, and with much greater detail, than the previous advising books. He wrote that "Books about child care, like this one, put so much emphasis on all the need that children have—for love, for understanding, for patience, for consistency, for firmness, for protection, for comradeship, for calories, and vitamins—that parents sometimes feel physically and emotionally

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<sup>15</sup> Hardyment, *Perfect Parents*, 161-162.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1.

exhausted just from reading about what is expected of them.”<sup>17</sup> Yet, even so, Spock seemed to want to instill these same features of patience, consistency, and firmness into parents by providing the methods of emotional management, psychological knowledge, and professional help rather than moral influence. Furthermore, by instilling these new virtues of being a proper parent, he tried to arm parents with psychological and mental strength, so they could then save their children in the unstable and perilous world and make them function well as potential contributors to society.

Spock’s empathetic and understanding attitude toward mothers in the *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* demonstrated his intention to instill confidence into mothers as a prerequisite for a maternal sense of control. Spock knew that telling mothers to “be more confident” or “trust yourself” did not always make them trust themselves. In addition to repeating his mantra, Spock chose to demonstrate his trust in mothers through his writing. He began his *Baby and Child Care* with his soothing and empathetic remarks to provide comfort and warmth for mothers. Emphasizing “a natural, easy confidence in themselves,” Spock mentioned that “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 doctors gives you.”<sup>18</sup> Spock knew that, without mothers’ trust in themselves they could be good parents, there was no way to instill his guidance in mothers, nor in babies and children. For instance, thinking that the cause of management problems was mostly because of “the mother’s lack of assurance and her resulting inability to set reasonable limits to her permissiveness,” Spock argued, in one of his scholarly articles for physicians, that doctors needed to be “avoiding direct or implied criticism, approving her

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<sup>17</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 4: As in this case, the second, and third edition will be used if there are significant changes or revisions that are directly relevant to the subject. In general, I will mainly deal with the first edition of the book.

<sup>18</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1.



methods when they are sound, particularly when she stands up for her rights or sets sensible limits on the baby's demands."<sup>19</sup>

In this regard, Spock pointed out how important a role parents' confidence played in childrearing practice. Demonstrating what the result of parents' uncomfortable feelings toward their child could be, he highlighted that mothers' trust itself paved the road to a successful discipline. For example, Spock claimed that the first child could often be less sociable because of a mother's lack of self-trust. According to Spock, mothers with their first child easily could become too serious, and it could be difficult for them to be relaxed. By enumerating examples of a person who rides a horse for the first time and the young businessman who "may be unnecessarily solemn and strict in the beginning for fear that he won't keep control," Spock suggested that mothers embrace self-confidence, releasing their fear of making any mistakes as an inexperienced nurturer.<sup>20</sup>

Demonstrating his belief in parents' self-trust as a key element for successful discipline, Spock once mentioned what could be the real self-assurance from his point of view. In *American Weekly*, he stated, "There's no doubt that children do best with parents who have self-assurance, who know what they think is best for their children and aren't afraid to carry it out."<sup>21</sup> Without parents' self-assurance, Spock believed, smooth childrearing was impossible. In this regard, he was concerned with what would happen when parents had lack of confidence. When he dealt with the idea of over-permissiveness in *Ladies' Home Journal*, Spock considered lack of self-trust as a cause of parents' irrational reactions toward their child:

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<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Some Common Diagnostic Problems in Children," *Medical Clinics of North America* 34(4) (July 1950): 1082.

<sup>20</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 257; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 309; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 313; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 349.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What Spoils a Child" *American Weekly* (August 8, 1954); In this case, Spock saw parent's self-assurance as a determinant to leave their child in his or her room even though they became miserable with sleeping problems.

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But other parents, particularly those who had been raised with more than average crossness or severity, had grown up with insufficient confidence in themselves, a bit too much irritability in their makeup, a lingering resentment against some of their own parents' attitudes.<sup>22</sup>

The danger of this outcome could be related to parents' unconscious reluctance to be firm and decisive in their discipline by being afraid of antagonizing their child.

On top of this, parent's self-trust enabled them to discern childrearing information at their discretion. Without their own confidence, parents could easily be unduly affected by outside influence. Spock once stated this thought in an unpublished document:

But individual parents should not feel bound in advance to adhere to other people's code even if they are the only parents who disagree. In the long run parents can only do a good job if they are convinced they are doing right.<sup>23</sup>

But this was a paradox, because for their assurance that they are doing well and right, it would not be easy for them to dismiss other people's opinions. According to Spock, parents "who have grown up with too little basic self-assurance, have been intimidated by what they've read and heard."<sup>24</sup> Since they could become vulnerable to external influence or interference, self-assurance became more important to parents' firmness and consistency as well.

Showing his expert's support, in this sense, Spock tried to give encouragement to mothers, showing that there was someone like him who believed in mothers' potentiality.<sup>25</sup>

Spock suggested that mothers should believe their own capability based on their knowledge,

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<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Over-permissiveness," *Ladies' Home Journal* (December 1960): 6. Draft version.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How Firm Should You Be with Adolescents?" (August 1967). Unpublished.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Discipline: Brain-Washing," *Ladies' Home Journal* (September 1960): 11. Draft version.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan. *Spock on Spock: A Memoir of Growing Up with the Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 135.

attitude, and common sense, leading them to become good mothers as they encountered with new situations.<sup>26</sup> Using sub-chapters—“Parents are Human,” “Parental Doubts are Normal,” “Enjoy Your Baby”—Spock tried to demonstrate his empathy for mothers’ anxiety towards rearing children, and he gave suggestions as to how their capabilities could play a positive role in enjoying child care. Spock mentions that mothers already “know more than” they “think.”<sup>27</sup> This seems quite contradictory given that he provided over five hundred pages of advice containing “common” knowledge of how to rear an infant and a child. The purpose of his opening advice to mothers is to instill confidence and self-trust into them, building a feeling of control even as he offers further advice.

Without confidence of doing well at the task, childrearing simultaneously became a very tedious and difficult job for new mothers. Raising a child is often hard for mothers because it is always unpredictable, seemingly complicated, and sometimes very overwhelming. Because of unexpected circumstances that mothers cannot control, maintaining self-trust and confidence is a key element to preserve their sense of control over situations, their babies, and finally themselves. To this end, Spock believed that his evident trust in mothers could help them rear their children because he emphasized their knowledge and intuitive reactions as key factors of child care. By demonstrating his empathetic and understanding attitude toward mothers, he showed that he wanted, first of all, to ease parental anxieties and obsessions about being a perfect mother, which could be obstacles to their confidence, and could prevent mothers from having a sense of control.

At the same time, Spock wanted his readers to trust him as a reliable doctor. Thus, by showing his understanding attitude toward mothers, Spock not only tried to appease their

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<sup>26</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1.

potential anxieties, but also tried to build mutual trust between them. Without this mutual trust, mothers could hardly trust Spock's advice. Rather than using an authoritative attitude in directly providing his knowledge related to medical practice, Spock demonstrated his friendliness and kindness to mothers—not babies. To me, this seems to be one of the reasons why a lot of people perceived Spock's advice as too lenient; eventually mothers became frustrated with his advice or sometimes allowed babies and children to do whatever they wanted to do. However, from my perspective, this was a misunderstanding of his advice.

Spock's advice, even though he used a very lenient tone to convey his points, was not permissive at all. As a pediatrician with psychoanalytic training, Spock actually set up a new ideal for mothers in terms of how they could deal with difficult situations in childcare. In addition to offering useful information on how they could gain a feeling of control over the problems they might encounter, Spock suggested several measures of parental self-control, including adjustment of expectations, emotion management, control over reactions, and a balanced attitude. He believed that mothers could maintain their sense of control through these means.

Spock's soothing words could have caused confusion to mothers because he was about to mention that parents needed to control their own emotions to make them well-balanced as well. For Spock, these comforting words were strategic—to appease parental anxieties with child care. After making empathetic remarks, Spock continuously came back to tell parents that they need to acknowledge their limits. Without accepting the fact that they could not be perfect in any sense, there would be possibilities that they would fail to recognize the reality that they faced, would feel guilty for being ineligible to do what they were doing, or would often just feel discontented with parenting. Realizing parental limits was for Spock an indispensable step toward a feeling of

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being in control, since high expectations with an ideal could prevent parents from perceiving their own reality.

### **Know Thyself**

Often, desire to control is a proof of either lacking control or fear of lacking control. As Maslow put it in his *Toward a Psychology of Being*, one's desire can come from a scarcity and a need, not from an intentional pursuit of power.<sup>28</sup> Although the term "control" had been considered together with the concept of authority, power, or even reason in general that it might seem incompatible with the word *desire*, the extent of the term changed since the rise of psychoanalysis. Erich Fromm pointed out that psychoanalysis extended the scope of observation of human nature in his *Man for Himself*.<sup>29</sup> Since we no longer believe that all people make rational choices all the time, our analysis on human behavior based on each value judgment and control over it should have different dimensions of interpretation.

#### *~No Overestimation*

Spock's powerful but complex solution for maintaining this sense of control is to trust and "know thyself," especially to know one's limits. In addition to self-trust of parents, Spock advised parents to avoid setting up an ideal image of themselves for successful child care. The overestimation of themselves might cause unnecessary psychological and emotional pressure which Spock thought disadvantageous to the process of smooth childrearing. What was necessary for doing a good job was that parents should acknowledge the danger of setting up ideal standards for themselves. From Spock's perspective, setting up an ideal state could

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<sup>28</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968),

<sup>29</sup> Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Rinehart, 1947), 15.

discourage parents' confidence and sometimes cause parental feelings of guilt by setting for themselves a too high ideal or an unrealistic goal impossible to be achieved.<sup>30</sup>

The more there is the gap between the ideal they set up for their children or for themselves and the reality they are in, the more discontent and guilty parents could feel. Spock considered these feelings obstacles to maintaining a sense of pride which can make parents carry out their childrearing practice well. For successful control, parents needed to assess their capabilities as parents at face value by setting up more realistic and balanced expectations. In this case, both the idealization and overestimation of who they are do not get them anywhere, but progress is subverted by a vicious cycle of low self-esteem and underrated confidence. Spock sees that overly high standards can hurt parents' sense of pride and confidence.

First, for instance, Spock dismissed the ideal image of motherhood and an "overjoyed" pregnant woman in the section, "Parental Doubts are Normal." As medical research has shown, pregnant women can often have negative feelings about their pregnancy.<sup>31</sup> Showing his understanding of their situation, in which most mothers had to give up their previous life—which, if not completely carefree, was at least more autonomous—, Spock considered mothers' negative impression about their state of pregnancy and themselves as normal and temporary. After delivery, mothers could also experience a blue feeling and even feel depressed, and were usually unaware of how commonly this happened to mothers.<sup>32</sup> Spock thought that these experiences could be more easily endured if mothers knew that they were not alone in enduring these difficulties, which were not permanent at all.<sup>33</sup> Providing more specific information about the feeling changes during and after pregnancy and possible discrepancies among their feelings,

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<sup>30</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 4-10; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 17-23; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 18-24.

<sup>31</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 10; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 23; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 13; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 26; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 14; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 26-27; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 28.

Spock tried to categorize parental doubt or possible negative feelings in the realm of normal feelings that any pregnant women could have.

Considering this, Spock specified parents' potential expectations towards their babies that might become an obstacle for parents in maintaining a sense of control. Having specific expectations for a baby before his or her birth could, in some sense, be a lost battle that parents had no control over because parents were unable to choose "what they want."<sup>34</sup> Spock suggested that parents acknowledge that their baby could have different characteristics from what they had expected. Spock points that parents also "have well-formed personalities...which they can't change overnight."<sup>35</sup> With this remark, he asked parents to recognize that they could not choose their own baby so should not have specific expectations about their babies. While the unexpected traits or personality of their own child could be a joy for some parents, these could also cause parental anxieties about the unpredictable and unknown. To appease these anxieties, Spock again advised that mothers should lower their expectations for their babies.

An image of a pure and fragile baby could also bring about mothers' disappointment and apprehension. Once they realized that their baby spent most of the time crying for wants rather than smiling at a very early age, mothers were easily overwhelmed by the fact that their baby gave them challenging moments. Being aware of this, Spock told mothers that their baby just wanted love.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, letting mothers know that their baby was not fragile might relieve pressures to handle their baby in just the right way. Spock gave readers comforting words as well as information about an infant, who could "care for himself pretty well."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 4; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 18; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 4; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 18; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 19-20; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 42-43; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 4; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 21; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 45; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 6; From the fourth edition, he changed the wording here to "she can card for herself pretty well." 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 5.

In addition, what Spock saw as disadvantageous for parents was an idealistic image of childrearing itself. Since the early twentieth century, along with the emphasis on childhood as a critical period in which to become a proper adult, childrearing had become an indispensable practice of generating a potentially priceless member of society and even to demand highly skilled parents. Thus, the underlying assumption that a child could not be left with an unskilled mother came into play. Eventually, raising a child went beyond individual or family capability, so that expert advice and child welfare was deemed indispensable in child care. Mothers could no longer set their own expectations of child care. They eventually needed to follow what experts said.<sup>38</sup>

In this transition of childrearing practice from the private realm to a more professionalized field with a growing influence on parents, Spock underlined the necessity of parents' trust in their own judgment and expectations. Warning them not to "take too seriously all that the neighbors say,"<sup>39</sup> Spock advised parents to avoid adopting other expectations of the neighbors. Once parents began to listen to what others might say about their childrearing practices and to compare their own case with others, they might be more easily disturbed by the idea that they were not doing things right or properly. By highlighting their differences and uniqueness, Spock maintained that parents needed to have their own standards depending on their own baby and his or her characteristics, development, and personality.<sup>40</sup>

Spock pointed out that parenting was not a self-sacrificing job which would necessarily sour everybody, both parent and child. If they become too exhausted, Spock insisted parents find a way out of their agony. "Remember that everything that keeps you from getting too

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<sup>38</sup> Hardyment, *Perfect Parents*, 163-164.

<sup>39</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 10; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 10.

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preoccupied with the baby, helps the baby and rest of the family in the long run,”<sup>41</sup> stated Spock. Persuading parents not to consider that parenting meant martyrdom, Spock insisted parents have a proper perspective on childrearing and gave a practical reason not to be too selfless. Surely, becoming a martyr was a noble deed for a religious purpose, but this was not an ideal attitude for parents attempting to sustain control over childrearing in the long run. Spock, rather, emphasized that parenting should be a satisfactory and rewarding job for parents as well even though parents still need to exert their maximum energies into childcare and could frequently end up exhausted. Being a parent did not have to be a self-sacrificing and torturous job to Spock, if parents changed their mind and attitude:

Taking care of their children, seeing them grow and develop into fine people, gives most parents—despite the hard work—their greatest satisfaction in life. This is creation. This is our visible immortality. Pride in other world accomplishments is usually weak in comparison.<sup>42</sup>

By emphasizing the worthiness of childcare itself and its crucial meaning, Spock hoped that parents would have a more positive view of childrearing.

Last, a feeling of excessive self-sacrifice could hurt the relationship between parent and child. For instance, if a mother thinks that she sacrifices her time, effort, or anything that she could enjoy without her baby, the mother would inevitably “expect too much from him in return.”<sup>43</sup> If such a situation arises, mothers often cannot see their initial motivation to spend their energies on child care, but only focus on potential rewards that they might get. To avoid

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<sup>41</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 118. From the second edition, he added more wording: “Remember that everything that helps you keep a sense of balance, everything that keeps you from getting too preoccupied with the baby, helps the baby and the rest of the family in the long run.” 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 182; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 191; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 223.

<sup>42</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 5; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 19; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 6; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 20; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 21.

this, Spock suggested that parents should be aware of their expectations towards what they should do as a parent. With all these warnings about the higher standards that parents can possibly have, Spock provides the core advice about parental self-control mainly related to emotion management.

Spock realized that parents, mainly mothers, might often think that they should be perfect, being a main provider and nurturer for their baby. Highlighting that “parents are human” who have their own needs, emotional instability, unreasonable expectations, and individual limits,<sup>44</sup> Spock advised them not to have an ideal image of a proper parent. Through this line of thinking, Spock strove to lower parents’ high expectations and standards for themselves, and to make them realize their own limits—circumstantial, emotional, and even physical.

### *~Observe Yourself*

Figuring out what might be the potential obstacles to effective childrearing, Spock began to show more interest in parents’ emotional state from the second edition of *Baby and Child Care* on. His advice for parents this time is “observe yourself.” To be precise, Spock asked mothers to identify their real feelings and their origins. He thought that parents needed to be more aware of their own emotions in order to enhance the effectiveness of child care by keeping their sense of inner certainty. By looking at their feelings more closely and figuring out what might be the potential reasons behind those feelings, Spock believed that parents could approach their genuine feelings and understand how their minds functioned. There are two discernible patterns of his advice when asking parents to acknowledge their feelings and find out the reason for some embedded feelings. The former was preventing their existing feelings from being repressed while the latter was finding out potentially repressed feelings in the past.

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<sup>44</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 4-10; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 17-23; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 18-24.

First, Spock asked that parents admit their feelings as they were by suggesting parents accept the fact that they could not control every single thing in their minds. He told parents that it was natural to feel angry when they faced unexpected situations, and to expect something from their baby since parents inevitably gave up many things due to child rearing. Setting up an idealistic state in which parents should have limitless tolerance and a stable state of mind all the time was counter-productive because this was “not humanly possible.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, asking parents whether they could admit their anger without uneasiness, Spock pointed out, “It’s the parents who set impossibly high standards for themselves, the parents who have angry feelings at times but can’t believe that good parents should, who really suffer from them.”<sup>46</sup> Spock further explained in *The American Weekly* that there were possible dangers, which were either generating a feeling of guilt or a denial of their disturbing emotions:

I think a lot of psychiatrists and psychologists would be more skeptical of that advice nowadays, thinking it was based on a too-mechanical concept of punishment. They’d say that parents shouldn’t have the idea that crossness or anger at children is shameful, something to be denied and hidden. Everyone gets cross at members of his family at times and even though indignation needs to be controlled it doesn’t need to be denied.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, he was telling them not to repress or deny their feelings because of idealistic and unrealistic image of themselves.<sup>48</sup> These defensive reactions could lead to worried

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<sup>45</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 7; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 20; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 21; see also Benjamin Spock, “Patience Has Its Limits” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (May 1956): 54.

<sup>46</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 8; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 21; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 22.

<sup>47</sup> Spock, “In Spanking Necessary?” *The American Weekly* (August 15, 1954): 17.

<sup>48</sup> This was one of the examples that generated mothers’ frustration later because when he dealt with specific situations of childcare Spock appeared to advise them to have more controlled reactions and mature attitudes toward their child, which seemed to require them to suppress their emotional distress. However, with a deeper understanding of his advice, acknowledging their limits and given realities was a prerequisite for becoming a parent with more mature psychological capability.

overprotectiveness of their child. Warning them, Spock strongly highlighted that his point was not allowing them to be angry whenever they wanted, but advising them to accept how and what they feel.<sup>49</sup>

To accomplish this, Spock asked parents to observe their feelings more closely. From the second edition onward, he added a section called “Parental Doubts are Normal.” Here, he introduced various feelings that mothers could have during pregnancy and early child care. Dealing with both negative and positive feelings, Spock underlined the necessity of discovering there were diverse feelings that parents might encounter and these feelings were not problematic in these terms:

So it’s human and normal and inevitable that we should feel quite differently about each of our children, that we should be impatient with certain characteristics in certain ones of them and proud of others. All these mixed attitudes are only different aspects of your deep feelings of obligation to bring up our children properly.<sup>50</sup>

Demonstrating that there were various possibilities for parents’ emotions toward their children, Spock implied the necessity of admitting the naturalness of their feelings.

Spock once mentioned his intention in this regard when he sent a letter to Miriam E. Lowenberg, the co-author of *Feeding Your Baby and Child*, published in 1954. While discussing how their book should look, he stated:

I think parents particularly appreciate a style that seems like a person talking with them. I am always looking for chances to express their probable feelings, especially the less admirable ones—irritation at the child, anxieties, suppressed

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<sup>49</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 8-9; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 22; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 23.

<sup>50</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 13; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 26; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 27.

irritation at the know-it-all experts, anger when the child rejects carefully prepared food, disgust at some of the baby foods.<sup>51</sup>

Through this remark, what Spock was interested in was not only children's feelings and development, but what the parents were feeling as well. For him, parents' feelings were the important subject to be concerned with because those emotions affected their style of discipline and children's emotional development as well.

Most prominently, Spock talked about parents' feelings of anger a couple of times. In the newly added part in the second edition, he assigned almost three pages to a discussion of parents' "crossness." Emphasizing that "It's inevitable that you feel indignant,"<sup>52</sup> Spock enumerated possible cases that made parents get mad at their children. Trying to normalize(?) parents' resentment for reasons, Spock pointed out that their feelings were not necessarily a result of parents' impatience or abnormality. Even when he mentioned their potential explosion of their feelings because of unwitting repression, Spock seemed to try to embrace unexpected and unconscious reactions of parents as manageable or controllable.

Regarding this, he posed a related question, "Can the parent comfortably accept his cross feelings?"<sup>53</sup> In addition to recognizing the existence of negative feelings, what parents needed to acknowledge was the feelings as they were.<sup>54</sup> More specific advice on this was shown in his letter on September 5, 1958 to Ms. Thomas F. Caskill, who was a desperate mother suffering from her baby's colic and wakefulness.<sup>55</sup> In a reply to her letter, Spock advised her neither to repress her anger nor display a feeling of guilt even if she lost her temper in these terms:

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<sup>51</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Miriam E. Lowenberg, Ph.D., February 12, 1954

<sup>52</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 7; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 20; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 21.

<sup>53</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2nd edition, 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 21; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Spock, "Patience Has Its Limits," 57.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas F. Caskill, Letter to Author, August 14, 1958.

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If you can't get any assistance you could start by getting used to admitting (to yourself, and to your husband perhaps) the angry feelings, their inevitability, the fact that they don't mean that you don't love Audrey Beth. This is the most direct route to lessening your guiltiness which is the chain that is binding you and her so unwholesomely close together.<sup>56</sup>

Accepting her feelings, in Spock's view, was an indispensable step toward allaying undesirable feelings since it would not be possible for a mother to figure out why she had those feelings without self-awareness.

In this regard, the purpose of parents' awareness was obvious. Repression itself might affect the relationship between parent and baby and, further, parents' discipline to control their baby. Here, it is revealed that Spock's utmost focus was not parents' emotional and psychological health, but that of babies and children. If repressed feelings someday came out unexpectedly from parents, this would be harmful to children's further development and the future generation in the same way that the previous generation influenced the generation of these parents. The reason why Spock emphasized the necessity of parents' awareness of their own feelings, of course, included for parents' happy experience of child care and their psychological stability, but his main focus was how to prevent these potential dangers of parents' negative feelings from influencing their children.

In another letter to J. E. Wilson in 1960, Spock implied that parents should not maintain their feeling of guilt too long because the feeling was not effective to control of the child. Wilson told Spock that she pretended to leave her older son when he resisted against her discipline. But,

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<sup>56</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Mrs. Thomas F. Caskill, September 5, 1958.

Wilson became remorseful when she saw her son crying in terror of his mother leaving him.<sup>57</sup> To

Wilson, Spock wrote:

I think you are feeling too guilty about your threat. If you go on being guilty, it will interfere unwholesomely with your management of him. In case you didn't do so before (you only mentioned apologizing—which certainly was right), I'd assure him that no mother has ever walked out on her child and that you never would, no matter how naughty he was.<sup>58</sup>

If her feeling of guilt continued for too long, Spock predicted that her feelings might interfere with her further discernment of the child's behavior.

In a similar vein, Spock shed light on another disadvantageous effect of parents' negative feelings and emotional repression. When parents felt anger or anxiety toward their child and repressed these feelings temporarily, the child might feel parents' original feeling, their repression, and other feelings as side-effect as well:

Such a situation is a vicious cycle. The baby's colic and wakefulness makes the inexperienced mother very anxious and over-attentive. Such feelings are felt by even a baby, who develops a corresponding anxiety and need for constant attention. (If he could put it in words he might say, 'If my mother is so worried about me and comes to me so quickly whenever I cry, I must be in real danger when I am apart from her.') Inevitably the child's demandingness drives the parents frantic, but when they sense they are becoming angry they feel guilty and give in further to the demands. The child senses not only the parents' initial anxiety but also their

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<sup>57</sup> J. E. Wilson, Letter to author, May 11, 1960.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to J. E. Wilson, June 2, 1960.

suppressed anger and guilt. This increases the child's dependence and demandingness.<sup>59</sup>

If the child detected the parents' discomfort with him or her, this could have a chain reaction. This might make the child feel anxious or defiant or use the parents' guilty feeling. In a letter to Robert Castranova in 1961, Spock offered a similar analysis of parents' anxiety. Mentioning that "It's the over-conscientious mothers' anxiety and frustration and (suppressed or expressed) irritation, and guiltiness that takes the child's appetite away and makes him feel like fighting back,"<sup>60</sup> he reiterated the potential influence of parents' repressed feelings on children.

Moreover, in a response to Terry Hiers, Jr. in 1960, Spock maintained his interpretation of the way in which parents' feelings influenced their further discipline of their child. His explanation demonstrated the process of the interactions between the overly permissive mother and her child:

It's a mother's over conscientiousness, (guiltiness about not being an impossibly perfect parent) that makes her too compliant to the children's demands for amusement, puts her at their disposal too much. They sense unconsciously that they can always get at her with their complaints, and that at the same time she is irritated by her subjugation. This makes her a doubly inviting target for this kind of teasing.<sup>61</sup>

Indicating the source of being too lenient as the mother's underlying feelings, he clarified that these feelings might make parents' discipline more difficult.

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<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Thomas F. Caskill, September 5, 1958.

<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Robert Castranova, January 3, 1961.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Terry Hiers, Jr., January 4, 1960.

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Spock's solution to this was figuring out the potential reasons for their unexpected feelings. Spock advised parents to figure out whether their discomfort was their own problem or children's. Spock designated these parents' feelings as potential obstacles that made child care harder. Thus, he advised parents to find out why they encountered difficulty in controlling their child. For instance, he advised Joan Maurer, who confessed her unbearable sensitivity to her children's noise, to consider whether it came "from tensions left over from earlier stages of life."<sup>62</sup> From Spock's perspective, parents' feelings, especially deep feelings that carried over from their upbringing, could be the potential causes of mothers' unnecessary reactions or generalized discomfort lacked particular reasons.

The necessity of figuring out the origins of their unconscious or feelings deeply rooted in the past was seen in his explanation for parent's inconsistency in attitude. Spock insisted that the reason for unsuccessful discipline was parents' reactions that were incompatible with their previous guidance.<sup>63</sup> In his analysis, this was because of parents' unconscious desire to let their child be unruly:

I'd say that the important thing is not whether the parent is exactly as strict one day as the next (about bedtime, for instance, or about how many ice cream cones), but whether the parents' feelings (of wanting and expecting the child to mind) are consistent.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Donald Maurer, April 18, 1960; see also Benjamin Spock, Letter to M. R. Carter, April 18, 1960.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How Do I Make Him Mind?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (October 1956): 20; Spock also pointed out that parents often thought that they tried their best even with incompatible discipline or coercive discipline: "Parents in situations like these think they are trying to make their children behave, and I am sure that consciously they want them to. But we can see that some of them at best are only half trying, others are not trying at all and some, without realizing it, are suggesting that their children misbehave."

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How to Control Your Child," *The American Weekly* (August 1, 1954): 7, 16.

In a letter to Ralston Gray in 1958, he indicated parents' unwitting ambivalence might lead to ineffectiveness:

I would guess that there are two factors at work in such a situation: (1) some children are a lot more energetic, less docile than others; (2) Some parents have considerably more trouble controlling one child than another, even when the children are equally docile (or undocile). They think they believe in control but unconsciously they really intend to control one and are quite willing to let the other evade control. In its simplest form one sees this in a mother who was brought up politely herself and never kicked over the traces. She may delight (without realizing it) in seeing in her daughter a rambunctiousness which she never dared express in herself. She may claim that modern psychology forbids repression or she may simply say she's helpless, but an outsider can easily see that she isn't trying very hard.<sup>65</sup>

This remark implied a greater demand for parents' observation of their own psychological state, even an unconscious one. However, even with Spock's request for observing themselves, it was not exactly for the purpose of their own state of mind. From Spock's perspective, these unnecessary feelings, originating from upbringing or past experiences, might impede their smooth discipline.

With their awareness of feelings potentially related to the past, parents needed to find out what the origins of their underlying feelings were as well. From the second edition onward, Spock added his explanation for the influence of their own upbringing on disciplining their

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<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Ralston Gray, June 25, 1958.

children later.<sup>66</sup> For example, on bowel training, Spock explained why some parents could react to the lateness of their child's training in a relaxed fashion while others could not:

These differences in attitude can often be traced back to our own childhood, to how much emphasis was put on our own training. Most of us are inclined to bring up our children about the same way we were brought up, and this is as it should be.<sup>67</sup>

Expounding on the idea that parents were affected naturally by their own upbringing, Spock argued that they needed to be conscious of the leverage of childrearing. In *Ladies' Home Journal*, he especially mentioned the influence of their upbringing on toilet training. As discussed in the previous chapter, before Spock changed his advice on this topic, he tried to figure out what the reasons were for failure in bowel training in the second year. One of the reasons he pointed out was parents' reluctance to impose rigid training on their child because of their own tense training in the past.<sup>68</sup>

In his correspondence with mothers, Spock provided more specific explanations in the context of certain situations. He reiterated the idea that childrearing was passed down to the next generation, that it took a path of inheritance. In his reply to Roland D. Ross, he stated, "I've discussed the mother who has no discipline but screaming, in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, for Oct 1956. Most often that mother was brought up the same way, and as a result has no confidence in her own leadership or in her child's controllability."<sup>69</sup> Implying their own upbringing affected

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<sup>66</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 324; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 329; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 365. Also, in a letter to R. Beiner, Spock once mentioned the potential relation between the parent's anxiety and their upbringing: "The trouble is that this is a rational approach and a feeding problem is not rational. The mother is intensely anxious (and inevitably angry underneath). Her tension takes the child's appetite away and makes her feel increasingly balky. The vicious cycle takes another turn. Often the mother's anxiety comes from having been a feeding problem in her own early childhood." Benjamin Spock, Reply to R. Beiner, April 18, 1960.

<sup>67</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 248.

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What is the Best Time for Toilet Training," *Ladies' Home Journal* (February 1957): 47.

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Roland D. Ross April 17, 1961; see also Spock, "How Do I Make Him Mind?" 20, 123.

their childrearing practice later, Spock insisted upon the necessity of acknowledgement of its influence.

With this advice, Spock got an actual response from one of his readers, a mother who mentioned the usefulness of his advice about looking back to parents' own experience to figure out the real reason for their reaction. In her letter, Sandra C. Tye wrote that,

The second area in which your book has been of the greatest assistance to me concerns my own upbringing. I was raised in a very unhappy home and wound up fighting anything and everything connected with it. It is very hard for a person, no matter how determined, who has never known a home with happy children, to create one for her children. Your book has helped me stop fighting my own past and concentrate on the present and to treat my children as the individuals they are and not as reincarnations of myself, so that I am trying to undo the harm that was done me.<sup>70</sup>

An interesting thing to note here is her remark that she could overcome her struggle with her own past experience when she followed Spock's advice. It is easy to imagine that when people heard that they needed to look back to their past experience and their relationship with their own parents, they might think that his advice was past-directed. But interestingly, it rather made the mother to focus on her current childrearing more.

In answer to her additional question of how to manage her potential "dominatingness" toward her children, which might have resulted from her upbringing, Spock advised her not necessarily to stigmatize or problematize her domineering way of discipline:

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<sup>70</sup> P. L. Tye, Letter to author, March 29, 1960.

I think it's admirable to know what your faults are, so that you can be somewhat on guard against them. But it is futile and unnecessary to try to deny or reverse your own nature. Dominatingness [sic] when not obnoxious is only leadership, which is a quality very useful to society.<sup>71</sup>

Since “the hardest way to bring up children is opposite from the way one was brought up,” he was more concerned that parents might be trapped in oscillation between “irritation and contrition.”<sup>72</sup>

Thus, the importance of parents' own upbringing relates to the influence of parents' feeling and might have been repressed in the past. In the relationship with their own parents, mothers and fathers might have learned particular feelings in the past. For instance, in *Ladies' Home Journal*, Spock brought up an example of a father who demanded instant obedience from his young son. Explaining how the father might have felt, Spock pointed out the reason behind of this somewhat unreasonable reaction: “In other words, the father in the letter is truly afraid that his son will get into danger or will become delinquent if he doesn't acquire instantaneous obedience at fourteen months—not because of any facts but because of deep feelings carried over from his upbringing.”<sup>73</sup> The reason for the importance of their own firsthand experience of childrearing is that their feelings from the past could remain influential just when they needed to raise their own child with a clean slate. The emotional carryover from their past potentially created difficulty.

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<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Mrs. P.L. Tye, April 28, 1960; see also Benjamin Spock, “Good Manners are Often Just a Question of Taste,” *Ladies' Home Journal* (March 1956): 176.

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Mrs. P.L. Tye, April 28, 1960.

<sup>73</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What is the Effect on Children When a Father Takes Little Part in Discipline?” *Ladies' Home Journal* (April 1955): 83.

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One of the things that Spock was concerned with was a feeling of guilt that parents might possess from the past. From his perspective, the key to successful discipline was parents' firmness and consistency, but parents' guilty feeling about their state, past reactions, or anything at all could make their further reactions too soft, permissive, or even inconsistent. In several letters to readers, he elucidated this point about parents' difficulties with discipline. In a letter to Linda Rogers in 1963, the mother's guilty feeling due to a marriage that disappointed her parents might have caused the hesitancy she felt toward her baby:

This kind of persistent crying whenever the mother makes a move to go away is usually caused by excessive tender-heartedness, hesitancy in the mother, mixed with increasing but suppressed resentment at the baby's tyranny...Underneath it all I suppose it might be your guiltiness about a marriage which disappointed your parents and isn't going too easily.... But a baby detects both the guilty submissiveness plus the parents' suppressed resentment. Both factors make the baby anxious and determined to hold the parent. You have to lift yourself by your boot straps, deny the guilt and show the baby that you can be more independent of her—not fiercely but casually, cheerfully.<sup>74</sup>

Since the mother could not overcome her feeling of guilt, Spock wanted to show that this might affect her relationship with her baby.

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<sup>74</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Linda Rogers, March 15, 1963; in 1966, Spock replied to her letter again pointing out a very similar point, stating, "I suspect that the children are unruly because you are too guilty about the divorce." Benjamin Spock, letter to Linda Treat Rogers, February 3, 1966; See also Benjamin Spock, Reply to W. Hugo Liepmann, June 5, 1961.

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In another letter to Mrs. Charles N. Potts, Spock propounded the possibility that children could take advantage of the mother's vulnerability to them. This definitely was an impediment to her discipline:

Sometimes a child who whines and who is demanding is reacting to his mother's guiltiness.... If a mother feels that somehow she has failed a child because, for instance, she wasn't ready for him when he was born, or was depressed, or was too impatient with him when he was going through a fretful stage as a baby, then she can't resist his unreasonable demands.... And her lack of assurance in managing him gives him a weak model to pattern himself after.<sup>75</sup>

As shown in his remark, mothers' guilty feelings often might make them too submissive to their child. Considering this, Spock advised another mother, Wanda Jones, not to let herself be yielding toward the child's unilateral demands:

I don't think you should take all the blame yourself. Some babies are born much more demanding than others, I believe. But the only way you can improve the situation is by gradually teaching Scott (and yourself) that you don't have to be. Don't feel like being a slave to his whims any longer. As the behavior in the nursery shows, it's the mothers preexisting submissiveness and guiltiness that the baby learns to play on. This is what clouds the distinction between yielding to tyranny and cooperating with legitimate wants.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Charles N. Potts, January 3, 1961.

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Wanda Jones, June 11, 1960.

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Spock's advice on parents' own feelings and the necessity of observing them was indispensable for the promotion of parents' self-control because it was not possible for parents to control their own emotions without their awareness of preexisting feelings. After admitting the existence of those feelings and accepting the feelings as they were, more mature control over their child was possible.

### **Control Yourself**

Self-control for parents was an effective tool to control children in a more mature way. The need for parental self-discipline presupposed the high possibility of absolute parental influence over babies and young children. As a prime nurturer, parents could be an exemplary model for their children since the latter developed themselves through mimicking and identifying their parents. From Spock's perspective, this process was "more than just imitation, it's imitation because of admiration."<sup>77</sup> In this respect, it became more significant to control the mother's attitude toward babies for Spock. Michael Sulman, adopting Freudian theories in his doctoral dissertation, points out that "Spock emphasizes the fact that mothers have an essential role to play in guiding their children through their period of life" and "the consequences of the child's experiences during this period are critical to the child's entire future."<sup>78</sup> Once the significance of parental influence on children was acknowledged, parents, especially in their appropriate reactions toward babies, became indispensable to children's proper development.

To promote a proper attitude for raising a child, Spock implied the inevitability of parents' self-control. In encouraging parents to recognize their reactions to babies, have more

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<sup>77</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 294. Omitted from the second edition.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Sulman, "The Freudianization of the American Child: The Impact of Psychoanalysis in Popular Periodical Literature in the United States, 1919-1939" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1972), 111.



patience, and show a balanced attitude towards babies and children, Spock sought to instill self-control in parents through a successful experience of managing their emotions and attitudes toward baby and child. Their emotional maturity would enable parents to be more tactful in disciplining their own child. By embracing a psychoanalytic basis for understanding childhood and child development, Spock demanded that mothers prepare to be eligible caretakers through their mental capability. If parents could control their reactions to babies, then they could have a greater sense of control, and ideally, greater actual control over their children's development as well. Spock's emphasis on self-control as a method to make their discipline more effective stressed control over both their emotions and attitudes.

Spock emphasized the importance of parents' maintaining of emotional control as they interacted with their babies and children because their reactions and mutual interactions could make a significant impact on babies' and children's development. Spock considered emotional maturity to be a helpful element in a mother's self-control. As an example of potential negative emotions, Spock dealt with parents' discontent and disappointment. For instance, Spock suggested that parents suppress their potential disappointment about their baby. By suggesting that mothers should "enjoy him as he is," Spock almost urged parents to have "love" for their baby. He directly mentioned:

Love and enjoy your child for what he is, for what he looks like, for what he does, and forget about the qualities that he doesn't have. I don't give you this advice just for sentimental reasons, there's a very important practical point here. The child who is appreciated for what he is, even if he is homely or clumsy, or slow, will grow up with confidence in himself, happy.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 22; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 44; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 5; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 4.

Spock emphasized the significance of a mother's own emotional control and its relevance to the child's emotional development, especially his or her confidence. For proper childcare, the presence of a mother—not just being present, but present with unconditional love—was an essential element in Spock's view. Thus, if parents showed a negative reaction to their baby's unsatisfactory characteristics, then the baby might easily notice the parent's discontentment and internalize it in the form of lack of confidence. For the sake of their baby, the parent should overcome their dissatisfaction or disappointment.

Similarly, Spock implied that parents needed to control their disappointment about their child's unsatisfactory progress if their child had a feeding problem. While suggesting that they conceal even the expression of their dissatisfaction if necessary, he implicated parents' restraint of negative feelings in their baby's behavior or reaction:

Try hard not to talk about his eating, either with threats or encouragement. I wouldn't praise him for taking an unusually large amount, or look disappointed when he takes little. With practice you should be able to stop thinking about it, and that's real progress.<sup>80</sup>

For the sake of making the child's natural appetite come back, from Spock's perspective, it would be ideal for parents to train themselves to curb their thinking and even feeling.

Interestingly, even though it is of dubious effectiveness to practice unthinking, Spock seems to believe that parents should avoid displaying their oscillation based on their own judgment.

Similar advice was demonstrated with his advice on bottle feeding as well. Spock seemed less interested in parents' contentment since he was so focused on the success of the feeding process:

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<sup>80</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 352; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 426; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 439; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 483.

I don't mean that you have to snatch the bottle away for good the first time your baby pauses. Some babies like to rest a bit several times during a feeding. But if he seems indifferent when you put the nipple back in his mouth (and it's not due to a bubble) then he's satisfied, and you should be, too.<sup>81</sup>

This remark gave the impression that no matter what feelings parents could have, they should be satisfied if their baby is.

When it came to his advice on bowel training, Spock almost urged parents not to show their worries or frustration in front of their children because it could cause children to get a sense that their parents harbored dissatisfaction with them. According to Spock, this feeling of discomfort could make children eventually "too obstinate" and lead them "to say 'no' to everything."<sup>82</sup> In order to prevent this happening, parents needed to have more tactful patience in order to prevent a child from being defiant. He added his clarification on this issue from in the second edition, stressed that while mothers should be patient, patience does not mean that mothers should be tolerant at any time to the fullest extent.<sup>83</sup> This meant that they needed to be emotionally mature enough to deal with their baby. Patience, for Spock, was not only an indispensable element of being a good adult with mature emotions, patience also was a necessary feature that needed to be instilled in children through identification with parents. But, at the same time, this could also be a tool to maintain a sense of control by preventing children's defiance and resistance.

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<sup>81</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 352; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 426; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 439; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 483.

<sup>82</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 195; in different words, but similar advice. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 255. As examined in the first chapter, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Spock's advice on bowel training had a temporary transition to push children to get used to training. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 252-253.

<sup>83</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 325-326; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 330-331; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 366-367.

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Since he considered patience as one of the desirable aspects of being a more appropriate mother, Spock advised parents to avoid jumping to hasty conclusions about children's development at an early age. Emphasizing a "gradual" process of development, Spock attempted to ease mothers' fears of whether their babies had problems with their development.<sup>84</sup> In the section called "Watching Him Grow," he laid out the several possible reasons for babies' slower progress in beginning to talk. Spock highlighted the notion that mothers' anxiety and cursory reactions could be more harmful to children's later development rather than dilatory development itself. Giving the information about the potential causes of slowed progress in talking and placing babies' tardiness of talking into the realm of being the "perfectly normal,"<sup>85</sup> Spock tried to help mothers maintain more relaxed attitudes through patience:

Don't fret about it and don't jump to the conclusion that he's stupid. Give him plenty of warm, comfortable affection, and be sure that you are not bossing him too much. Give him chances, if possible, to be around with other children where he can make his own way. Talk to him with simple words in a friendly manner. Don't be intense, don't insist that he talk. The child who is temperamentally bashful will be even more silent if he feels that someone is pushing him.<sup>86</sup>

In the matter of weaning timing, Spock again advised mothers not to compare their baby with neighbor's babies. Spock understood that simplistic comparisons often led mothers to a cursory judgment about their baby. He kept warning mothers that hasty conclusions that their baby might

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<sup>84</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 227; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 232; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 268.

<sup>85</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 156; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 236; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 240; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 276.

<sup>86</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 157; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 237; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 241; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 277.

be slower than neighbor's babies could make themselves feel more anxious, which could be detrimental to maintaining a sense of control.<sup>87</sup>

Spock also emphasized that mothers should be understanding and avoid urging children to do something even though they are slow or uncooperative. If mothers tend to wait for them until they are ready without intervention, children will be “much more co-operative” even though “it takes patience.”<sup>88</sup> If they interfere in something that the child should do voluntarily, then the mothers might face a greater possibility of easily losing their children's willingness to cooperate. This experience could make them feel that their mothers are just against them, so that they might try to dismiss this attempt. Spock believed that the maternal sense of control did not depend on a forceful method of discipline such as urging or scolding, but instead depended on children's cooperative consent.

In addition to this advice, Spock seemed to have a lenient method for toilet training babies, such as getting away from strict regulation. He insisted that mothers wait until their baby is ready to use a toilet rather than taking the initiative in urging them to use a toilet. Spock strongly argued that mothers should not urge their toddler or scold until he eventually has control over the training process.<sup>89</sup> However, this seemingly child-centered and permissive advice actually targeted the enhancement of the mother's sense of control. Since Spock's emphasis on proper discipline was about how to build up more sustainable interactions between mothers and their babies, inevitably Spock maintained the necessity of invisible but more sophisticated control.

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<sup>87</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 184; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 147; from the third edition, this was omitted.

<sup>88</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 262; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 320; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 325; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 361.

<sup>89</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 201; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 259; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 262; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 295 (on urine training).

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There are other examples demanding mothers' patience for the sake of their sense of control, such as when their child plays with his toys and plays with them. According to Spock, there should be a certain stage of his development based on his interest based on his age. However, if mothers hurry the child to move onto different toys or drive him to follow their instructions, this can "only make him feel incompetent." While the child is playing with his toys, it is very important to let him play at his own level of development. Spock also claimed that it would be better for mothers to show their interest in a child's play, which could make the child invite his or her mother to play.<sup>90</sup> Spock demanded that mothers restrain themselves from forcing a child "to share his possessions with other children when he is insecure and selfish." If the child is forced, this only makes "those traits stronger and more lasting."<sup>91</sup> In the case of nail-biting, Spock did not want mothers to punish a child for this habit. Nail-biting could be unconscious, after all, as the child often did not realize that he was doing it.<sup>92</sup> Considering this, Spock asked mothers to be understanding of the origin of this habit.

While he did not seem to see that there was another possibility that mothers could lose their control over their own life, Spock tried to enhance mothers' sustainability in regards to childrearing. Once mothers lost their feeling of control, they would eventually lose real control over their children. If they fell into depression or exhaustion, it would be more dangerous for both the mothers and babies. From Spock's point of view, this can be prevented with his advice on emotion control.

Spock also gave mothers more practical advice for dealing with unbearable situations. For those who could not get away from their baby's non-stop crying, Spock suggested, "Hire

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<sup>90</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 249; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 306; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 310; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 346.

<sup>91</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 278; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 343; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 347; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 383.

<sup>92</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 288; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 356; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 360; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 396.

someone, or ask a friend or neighbor to come in and relieve you....It's very important for you, for the baby, and for your husband, that you shouldn't get exhausted and depressed."<sup>93</sup> He goes on: "Remember that everything that helps you keep a sense of balance, everything that keeps you from getting too preoccupied with the baby, helps the baby and rest of the family in the long run."<sup>94</sup> The direction of his advice always aimed at how to make the parents in control of their baby as well as themselves. He seemed to consider unmanageable situations to be obstacles for the mothers to more effective child rearing.

In addition to patience, as discussed above, another important element for maintaining self-control for Spock was controlling parents' attitudes toward babies and children. Parents often needed to suppress feelings such as anxiety, anger, frustration, and surprise in front of their baby, or at least they should not show their unstable emotions since this could make the baby or child unstable as well. Noting that "Sometimes the mother's nervousness increased baby's anxiety,"<sup>95</sup> Spock warned mothers to watch out for the way in which the baby's reactions carefully come out of his or her feelings. This advice directly followed Freud's idea that infantile anxiety frustrated by a mother could have a powerful impact on an infant in later life. If mothers succeeded in controlling their anxiety and do not have a negative influence on the child during infancy, then the child can grow up with more resilience to distress.<sup>96</sup> By putting forth this idea, Spock emphasized the significance of parents' controlled attitudes.

If they managed to control their behavior and attitude toward their baby through emotional maturity, then parents could gain a feeling of control through the experiences of

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<sup>93</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 117.

<sup>94</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 118; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 182; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 191; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 223.

<sup>95</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 292. From the second edition, it changed to "Sometimes the mother's anxiety is greater than the child's." 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 383; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 386; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 426.

<sup>96</sup> Freud, *The Problem of Anxiety*, 104.

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dealing with their emotions and baby at the same time. In the section on “sleep” in the first edition, Spock advised parents to restrain their anger even if a baby was resistant to go to sleep. He thought that it would generate uneasiness in the baby at bedtime and result in an immediate unstable feeling. There could be other ways to make him or her go to bed peacefully.<sup>97</sup> In the matter of eating habits, Spock also wanted mothers to avoid showing their direct negative reaction toward a child’s reluctance to eat vegetables. If mothers responded with a strong negative reaction to their baby’s unwillingness to eat a particular vegetable, this could “turn a temporary dislike into a permanent hate.”<sup>98</sup>

Even a mother’s negative feelings such as sadness or doubt needed to be controlled as well, according to Spock. When mothers lacked money to buy fancy toys for their child, Spock asked them not to spill their sadness onto their baby.<sup>99</sup> If they needed to go to work and could not be with their baby, Spock suggested that parents should reassure themselves of what they are doing rather than show self-doubt or skepticism. They did not need to show hesitance or demonstrate their feeling of being sorry for her child. This could just increase the child’s uneasiness and allow him or her to think that something was wrong.<sup>100</sup> Spock insisted that mothers speak with a friendly voice, not “the nagging tone, the bossiness that he finds irritating, and that spurs him on unconsciously to further balkiness.”<sup>101</sup>

Through these controlled attitudes, Spock encouraged parents to gain control of themselves as well as over their children. The quote below demonstrates how Spock perceived

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<sup>97</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 261; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 319; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 324; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 360.

<sup>98</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 218; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 277; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 281; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 315.

<sup>99</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 248; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 305; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 309; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 345.

<sup>100</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 284; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 349; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 353; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 389.

<sup>101</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 315; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 387; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 390; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 432.



an image of a good parent to babies. In discussing the case that mothers might hear children's "naughty words," Spock implied how parents should behave:

It's usually quite a shock to conscientious parents to hear these words coming from the mouths of their supposedly sweet innocents. What's a good parent do? It's better not to jump out of your skin, or act horribly shocked. On the timid child this will have too strong an effect; it will worry him, make him afraid to be around with children who use bad words, make him feel 'different.' But most children who find they have shocked their parents are delighted, at least secretly. Some of them will go on cussing endlessly at home, hoping to get the same rise.<sup>102</sup>

As demonstrated in this remark, parents needed not to display their shock at their child since the child might react to parents' expression negatively, or take advantage of it. Spock opposed parents' intense reactions: "The point is that when you tell a child that just by making certain sounds he has the power to scandalize the whole world, it's like handing him a full-sized cannon and telling him."<sup>103</sup> Similar advice was provided to parents when they sensed their child's lying. He states, "You don't need to jump on him for making up stories occasionally, or make him feel guilty, or even be concerned yourself, as long as he is outgoing in general and happy with other children."<sup>104</sup> Explaining that their child's false story was not really lying in their sense, Spock argued that parents did not need to react to it so sensitively with a more controlled attitude.

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<sup>102</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 251; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 311; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 318; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 354.

<sup>103</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 251; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 311; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 318; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 354.

<sup>104</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 295.

Spock also gave his advice to one worried mother, whose first child apologized and kept saying she loved her whenever the mother tried to discipline her.<sup>105</sup> In a letter to Stanley Kiec in 1960, Spock suggested that the mother try to hide her real feelings in order to set her child at ease, stating, “You might practice using a little more control of a cheerful, matter-of-fact type to keep her from getting into difficulties. But if she becomes worried and says she’s sorry and that she loves you, don’t act worried or contrite.”<sup>106</sup> Through these various warnings about the uncontrolled attitudes, he reaffirmed the mothers’ crucial influence and responsibility toward their babies and children. In another response, to Elizabeth M. Black, who asked how to react to her child when she was asked about death, he also shed light on the importance of parents’ attitude rather than the actual words: “The most important factor, of course, is the basic attitude of the parent. If this is serene, the child will get the best possible feeling and the actual words won’t matter too much.”<sup>107</sup> Spock’s attempt to instill self-control through a more effective disciplinary skill in parents seems quite ideal theoretically. However, it is hard to deny that it simultaneously risked increasing the possibility of putting parents in a situation with a much more demanding emotional task as well as their physical and mental labor.

### **Role of Parents: Permissiveness? or New Ideal?**

It was not difficult to get a glimpse of his idea on the role of parents from Spock’s advice on parental self-control. By observing themselves and enhancing their self-control, Spock acknowledged the necessity of parents’ maturity. If this did not come about, the parents-child relationship would go sour. In order to be a good parent, other than the self-disciplinary methods mentioned above, there were a couple of small things that Spock implicated in his advice. Even

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<sup>105</sup> Stanley Kiec, Letter to Author, March 18, 1960.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Stanley Kiec, April 18, 1960.

<sup>107</sup> Benjamin Spock, Reply to Elizabeth M. Black, June 25, 1959.

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though Spock's emphasis was mostly on children's healthy development, I do not think that he intended to give pressure on parents as well. When he talked about how fathers could spend a good time with their son, he elaborated on that to say that fathers should not become overseers. They could also enjoy the time with their son, and this should be helpful for their relationship. If the father took a role of criticizing or displaying uncomfortable feelings all the time to his son,<sup>108</sup> this would not be a pretty picture for both. Spending his time with the son did not necessarily have an educational or practical purpose only.

In addition, Spock thought that parents needed to find a way to be themselves and do things their own way. If parents could not sincerely agree with what Spock or other experts advised, they did not need to be always loyal to the advice:

The management of a child has to be carried out, for better or worse, according to the parents' own philosophy and feelings. Any mother has to go into action in relation to her child a thousand times a day, directing him, stopping him, helping him, encouraging him, approving, disapproving, comforting. These actions come from inside her, instantaneously, spontaneously.<sup>109</sup>

From his perspective, without parents' consent with their voluntary cooperation, it could not be effective to maintain their sustainable discipline in child care.<sup>110</sup> His advice was not a short-term plan, but a starting point for perpetual control over parents, children, and further, the entire society.

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<sup>108</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 254; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 314; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 321; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 356-357.

<sup>109</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Most Babies Must Put Things in Their Mouths," *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1954): 152.

<sup>110</sup> Spock, "Difficulties in Breastfeeding" *Redbook Magazine* (June 1964) He also mentioned this from the expert's perspective in this remark: "I think it's a mistake to try to persuade mothers to nurse who are disinclined, because first of all they rarely succeed or continue; but even if they could go, I think that their reluctance would cancel out any theoretical advantage."

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Another interesting idea that Spock provided was that he wanted parents to realize the difference between what they wished their child to be and what their children really wanted. If parents wished to interfere with their child's will, intention, or basically what they want to do, this might undermine the child's confidence as well as a sense of accomplishment.

Parents wouldn't be good parents if they weren't delighted with their children's fine qualities. But it's necessary to distinguish between which are the children's interests and which are the parents' eager hopes. If parents who are naturally competitive can admit it honestly to themselves, and be on guard against using it to run their children's lives, the children will grow up happier, abler, and more of a credit to their parents in the end. This applies not only to early reading and writing but to putting pressure on a child at any age, whether it's in schoolwork, music lessons, dancing lessons, athletics, or social life.<sup>111</sup>

Differentiating parents' longing from the children's real interest, parents would have to think over what could be the "best" thing for their children. Often, parents did not doubt the idea that their choice for their child could not be wrong.

Relating this idea, Spock's advice also contributed to separating parents' intention and the result of their intention to be a good caretaker. In discussing what factors might have affected spoiling children, in *The American Weekly*, Spock demonstrated his intention to split these two by mentioning, "This week I'd like to talk about ways in which well-meaning fathers and mothers can spoil their children."<sup>112</sup> Pointing out the potential discrepancy between parents' good intentions and their influence on their child, Spock wanted parents not always to believe

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<sup>111</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 335; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition; 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

<sup>112</sup> Spock, "What Spoils a Child," 9.

that their good intention would work: “The job is greatly complicated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the fact that parents have all heard some psychology of one kind or another and have been made uneasy about the theoretical possibility of doing harm by well-intentioned efforts.”<sup>113</sup> This advice, from my perspective, was related to the accomplishment of the Freudian idea because it precluded the possibility for parents to exercise arbitrary power. Since there were some dangers in the idea of good will, his advice on this contributed to differentiating parents’ discipline of their child from an authoritative style.

Although his advice was often considered very permissive to the extent that he was even accused of spoiling children, what Spock really seemed to be doing was encouraging parents to have a more balanced attitude toward their babies in order to establish an intimate relationship with them. Spock clarified that maintaining a friendly attitude all the time could not be ideal for raising a proper child. Parents should be firm at the same time. Spock warned that it would be unhelpful for them and their baby if “they speak to him sweetly no matter how disagreeable he is or how unreasonable his demands.”<sup>114</sup> Spock emphasized this point clearly in his book, but as we know, the major attack from critics was on excessive leniency of his advice.

Taking this into consideration, he added the new section on “Strictness or Permissiveness?” in the second edition in response to the criticisms. Parents did not need to be afraid of showing their love, but at the same time showing their love did not mean that they should be excessively lenient all the time. Spock believed that ideal balance could be obtained “by giving your child what he needs most but keeping for yourselves such other interests and

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<sup>113</sup> Spock, “How Firm Should You Be with Adolescents?” 1-2.

<sup>114</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 268.

pleasures as won't hurt him at all.”<sup>115</sup> What Spock demanded was to acknowledge that showing love is not equated with giving boundless permission to do whatever the baby wanted.

The power of Spock's advice might not have been in the debate on how permissive his advice was, but rather, it was evident in his endeavor to contemplate how parents could manage their control of themselves. Spock's suggestion to distinguish the uncontrollable factors from the controllable ones could effectively reduce unnecessary feelings of helplessness and incompetence as a parent. Acquiring more knowledge of oneself facilitated mothers' awareness of their individual and circumstantial limits and made them realize that they seldom had control over these aspects of parenting. In this regard, it would be helpful to ease their anxiety and provide emotional comfort, so that they could enjoy a feeling of control during child care.

At the same time, there could be another possibility for why his advice might have been misunderstood. Spock, in general, seemed to suggest that parents needed to have “pertinent” or “balanced” expectations toward their baby. He warned them not to have irrational and inappropriate expectations.<sup>116</sup> In this case, we must question what the “balanced” expectations are. This inevitably confused parents because he advised them on how to control their feelings while he implied that parents' emotional instability including crossness and impatience was natural at the same time. Even though he acknowledged that balance could be achieved “in theory,”<sup>117</sup> he actually gave somewhat confusing and seemingly contradictory advice to mothers.

Spock's advice, of course, dismissed the idea of perfect mothers, suggesting that parents needed to care for themselves, but, in reality, his advice set up a new ideal for them. Given that he was a pediatrician himself, his words had power over parents even though he tried to

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<sup>115</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 6; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 19; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 20.

<sup>116</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 19-22.

<sup>117</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 6; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 19; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 20.

minimize his authoritative influence. As I mentioned, his strategy might have been to tell parents that he understood their feelings, but at the same time, he did tell them what they should do, albeit in a permissive way. This can easily set up a sense that he was telling parents what to do because he was a beloved friendly baby doctor and an authority as well.

In the Introduction of Winnicott's *Babies and Their Mothers*, Spock emphasized the mothers' confidence: "The most that doctors and nurses can do is create an atmosphere in which the mother can believe in herself, and then depend on her own intuitive reactions."<sup>118</sup> In this remark, we can assume that Spock's focus was not attempting to instill professionalized parenthood or even skills into mothers, but rather to inculcate essential elements, such as self-trust, self-control over aggressiveness, and autonomy even with child rearing, to help them to be more adaptive to modern society. His intention here shows us that he tried to maintain the same attitude he championed for mothers.

However, mothers became more susceptible to uncontrollable situations with their emotions when they tried to control their emotions all the time. Also by insisting on the control of emotions, Spock showed his perception that an ideal adult can function as a proper adult for American society, and can raise a proper child at the same time. By setting up a new ideal type for mothers, even if that ideal involved not having an ideal, he maybe have ironically frustrated them and stirred up their feelings about child care.

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<sup>118</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Introduction" to *Babies and Their Mothers* by D. W. Winnicott (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), x.

## Chapter Four. The Common Sense of Baby and Child Care

At the end of the July 1954 *Ladies' Home Journal* article, Spock wrote, "I'd be interested in hearing from any of you who have had particular successes or failures with pacifiers, for these or other conditions." After this, many letters flooded in that contained experiences with pacifiers. One mother from St. Paul, Minnesota talked about her positive experience with a pacifier. When her son could not stop eating, she decided to use a pacifier. Though her husband, who was a dentist and worried about the health of his son's teeth and jaws, seemed to disagree about the idea of using it, it seems she felt it inevitable not to make her son miserable any longer. When it was applied, the result was very positive. The mother wrote, "A contented baby means a lot to the whole household. As time went by of course his need for it gradually diminished."<sup>1</sup> As in this example, readers were willing to share their own observations and experiences with Spock, which enabled him to gather first-hand information from parents. Of course, he was a baby expert who mastered the theories and methods of child care based on pediatrics and psychoanalysis, but the correspondence provided him with another source of knowledge besides his professionalized training.

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Uncertainty has perhaps always been a companion of human lives. At the same time, history has shown thousands of examples that mankind has aspired to pursue greater assurance of its own capabilities for achievement. Ironically, as Abraham Maslow pointed out, the lack of certainty brought about motivation to make efforts to compensate for absence by attempting to

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<sup>1</sup> C. G. Kelsey, Letter to Author, August 5, 1954.



reduce potential incertitude and strengthen certainty.<sup>2</sup> Spock's description in his *Spock on Spock* epitomized this attempt to reduce parents' frustrations about uncertainty:

In fact, it grew increasingly clear to me as I continued to practice that there were so many experts, with the best of intentions, telling parents what to do—that parents' most widespread problem was their own uncertainty, a guilty feeling of 'Maybe I don't know enough...maybe I need to read another book!' Less secure parents begin to think that only professionals know the answers. They don't dare trust their own judgment or stand firm. It's pathetic, and children can get pesky when they sense their parents' uncertainty.<sup>3</sup>

Here, Spock pointed out that parents' exasperation about uncertainty did not get them anywhere, but could lead them to self-doubt in their own capability to do a good job as a caretaker. But, at the same time, what Spock was really concerned about was the potential impact on children of parents' uncertainty. In order to prevent poor results, parents during the time decided to search for information as much as possible, as suggested by the immediate success of Spock's *Baby and Child Care* upon its publication in 1946.

However, at the turn of the twentieth century, the source of childrearing information was still splitting both sides: grandmother's wisdom based on religious and moral norms and scientific knowledge in the newly rising professional realm.<sup>4</sup> Since the rise of professionalism and scientific methods of childrearing, grandmothers' wisdom had been losing its ground, which

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<sup>2</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968), 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan, *Spock on Spock: A Memoir of Growing Up with the Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 134.

<sup>4</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Perfect parents: Baby-care Advice Past and Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89.

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meant that mothers during this era also had been losing their familiar way to acquire the information they needed on childcare.

With this transition inevitably the knowledge of childcare became more esoteric, almost difficult even to approach. If we look at the books by childrearing experts before Spock, the mode of childrearing advice was almost scolding or even ordering mothers what to do. For example, Emmett Holt's book, *Care and Feeding of Children*, was full of "should."<sup>5</sup> There did not seem to be any more room for open discussion. Based on the up-to-date scientific research during the time, raising a baby became a realm of rules imposed by the expert. Behavioral psychologist John B. Watson's book also provided more rigid rules of childrearing based on his observation of experiments.<sup>6</sup> C. Anderson Aldrich's *Babies are Human Beings*<sup>7</sup> was comparatively handy but was limited to knowledge about babies, not detailed childrearing information. *Infant and Child* by Arnold Gesell and Frances L. Ilg poured forth a massive font of information without friendliness, but rather a scientific and dry tone.<sup>8</sup> These were not necessarily an effective way of sharing the information or even knowledge that professionals had obtained. Their method was more likely to be a one-way passage to grant their information to receivers. Those who were interested in more helpful and up-to-date ways of childrearing based on scientific evidence possibly read it, but the professionalized information might have been limited and exclusive to the specific class and profession.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> L. Emmett Holt, *Care and Feeding of Children* (New York & London: D. Appleton & Co., 1926).

<sup>6</sup> John B. Watson and Rosalie Alberta (Rayner) Watson, *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1928).

<sup>7</sup> C. Anderson Aldrich and Mary M. Aldrich, *Babies Are Human Beings: An Interpretation of Growth* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938).

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise B. Ames, and Janet L. Rodell, *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today: The Guidance of Development in Home and Nursery School* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> Hardymont, *Perfect parents*, 103.

My assumption in this chapter is that Spock's advice contributed to the conversion to a new way conveying information and knowledge, through his intention to distribute more information about childcare for the readers and his particular mode and method. In sharing his knowledge with the prospect parents, he projected himself as a baby doctor who could help make situations more manageable for parents. His aspiration to let them have a more appropriate childrearing experience from his psychoanalytic point of view, which would be helpful to their children's psychological and emotional health, resulted eventually in numerous two-way interactions between professionals and ordinary readers, mainly mothers.

I do not think that Spock intended this transformation, but, at least he seemed to feel responsible for giving appropriate and accurate guidance for those who would raise future generations. Because of the effort, according to the scientific mode of thinking based on his training, his advice reshaped how both professionals and parents dealt with childrearing information and knowledge. This chapter examines the patterns of his advice as a tool of conveying information and knowledge, which eventually led to a more democratic way of transmission.

## **Domestic Insurrections**

### *~Preventative Information*

Childcare seemed to be a job in which caretakers inevitably lost control over the situation quite easily. The job itself was not just feeding the baby, nursing the baby when necessary, or making him or her simply sleep well. It was more like a job of managing someone else's entire life up to a certain age including appetite, desire, feelings, and physical development as well as managing one's own like in this way, at least from Spock's viewpoint.<sup>10</sup> Even though he seemed

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<sup>10</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1-2.

to introduce a positive impression of childcare to parents,<sup>11</sup> it could not be denied how hard Spock tried to control possible unexpected elements in the situations of childcare.

As discussed in previous chapters, Spock provided various preventative information in his *Baby and Child Care*. His entire book was composed of each set of child development stages and thorough information about childcare, with every possible detail about how to raise babies including their physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual development. In this sense, my curiosity prompted me to question why Spock offered massive amount and various kinds of information about childcare mostly from a preventative perspective even though he kept insisting that parents should “trust” themselves and that they knew more than they thought.

If I may go even further, I would like to consider why he provided extensive information about a baby’s development and the proper process of preparation for childcare. My question about the reason for distributing information related to a somewhat fundamental question about why we seek information more generally. Having knowledge of something or getting to know something better seems to have some power, or, at least, many people believe so. It is not difficult to find examples of people gathering information about something in order to prepare for unexpected or upcoming events. Acquisition of information in advance might give an individual a feeling of eliminating uncertainties caused by possible problems. People want to make their situation more predictable and manageable, or, at least, they feel that way, believing that they possess useful information. In other words, some can believe that their situation becomes more predictable if they know something more about it.

Getting to know more about the issue must have given some form of relief, as we cannot overlook how successful Spock’s *Baby and Child Care* was even in the first year of its

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<sup>11</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 3; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 3; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1-2.

publication, selling 500,000 copies. Parents enthusiastically welcomed the advent of a friendly and father-like baby doctor who provided a non-authoritative style of information. In this sense, it would not be a futile attempt since the purpose of publishing the book was to provide useful information for parents' childrearing.

Although his *Baby and Child Care* became widely known for its characteristic "permissiveness," the bulk of the volume and the meaning of it caught the attention in the first place. They clearly even felt comfort through his book.<sup>12</sup> Thus, my question is why these readers, especially parents, felt comfort and a friendly feeling from his book despite its length. It was not a short or handy manual at all, even when it came out later in paperback. Spock produced 527 pages for the first edition, 627 pages including an index for his second edition, 620 pages in the third edition, and 666 pages in the fourth edition. His book is in some ways in the style of an encyclopedia. Every edition had a massive amount of information. So why did parents welcome his book so enthusiastically?

*Baby and Child Care* was designed to "present them with such knowledge as we have about what motivates children at different ages."<sup>13</sup> Spock willingly disseminated information he knew about childrearing that he believed as helpful to mothers possible. Not only was his tome enormous, but also the extent of knowledge and information he covered was thorough and meticulous. It was not exclusive or selective at all, but extensive and all-embracing. At the same time, his tone of voice was not authoritative, but still credible since he was trained as a pediatrician. Even though the book was voluminous and provided specific knowledge, his wording was easy to read and friendly and conversational in tone. Readers were not to be blamed or to get a feeling of inferiority, which happen with many previous childrearing books. Spock's

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 154-155.

<sup>13</sup> Spock and Morgan, *Spock on Spock*, 126.

permissive tone of persuasion as the mode of conveyance was surely effective for the sale of his book. Consequently, his first edition sold almost 750,000 copies before the very first year of publication, 1946, had ended.<sup>14</sup>

One of the prominent characteristics in Spock's advice was that it provided preventative information for parents': prior-knowledge. It seemed inevitable for him to focus on prophylactic explanations as shown in his professional writing in 1950:

The physician who cares for children and the parents who consult him tend nowadays to be less occupied in their visits with physical disease, more with growth and development, behavior problems, school and social adjustment. There are well-known reasons for this shift, which include the minimizing of infection by means of sanitation, immunization and the antibiotic drugs, the increased awareness on the part of parents and physicians of the importance of fostering the child's total development and total adjustment, the interest in preventive psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine.<sup>15</sup>

Spock acknowledged that pediatrics itself might be intruded upon by this new wave "if pediatrics does not accommodate itself to the increasing desire of parents for preventive guidance."<sup>16</sup> Especially as a person who believed in the psychosomatic aspect of children's health, he was concerned that pediatrics or psychology might play a role in fostering to split between psychological methods and physical means.

Along with this concern, in terms of reducing the unpredictability of uncontrollable circumstances that parents might meet, Spock's advice covered how babies and children

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<sup>14</sup> Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, 154.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Teaching the Broader Aspects of Pediatrics," *Pediatrics* (January 1950): 21.

<sup>16</sup> Spock, "Teaching the Broader Aspects of Pediatrics," 21.

developed, what would be the characteristics of the development stages, and how parents could deal with each situation in detail. Through the detailed explanation, Spock believed that his advice could give guidance or a road map to parents. Spock once mentioned in his *Ladies' Home Journal* article, "When individual cases are studied carefully, we can usually find clear causes, most often beginning in childhood, which theoretically could have been prevented if the means had been available."<sup>17</sup> Based on this belief, Spock's advice embraced a preventative method enthusiastically.

For instance, beginning with the process of material preparation before delivery such as having blankets, baby clothes, bottles and other equipment, Spock introduced detailed information on what parents needed to do to prepare for caring and nursing a baby.<sup>18</sup> Providing every possible details, Spock tried to offer information that helped parents to prepare "everything ahead of time."<sup>19</sup> In addition, from when, to how and what to feed, he carefully described every possible situation that might happen in the very early process of childrearing. In doing so, it seems to me that Spock tried to eliminate possible unpredictable elements caused by insufficient preparedness and information during early child care. He implied that advance preparation would be helpful to prevent less unpredictable or unexpected situations from interrupting the process of childrearing.

If we closely look at the material preparation before delivery, it would not be difficult to see that Spock attempted to lay out all of the things that could contribute to baby's safety and promote mother's convenience. In the section, "Things You'll Need," the important thing to

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Spock, "True Love Makes Them Grow," *Ladies' Home Journal* (May 1954): 134; See also, Benjamin Spock, "Children's Health: Accent on Emotions," *National Parent-Teacher* (December 1954): 30-32. Spock wrote of the advantage of preventative medicine mentioning how diphtheria was defeated: "diphtheria too is fast disappearing. Only a few years ago it was an immediate threat. How has it been eradicated? Again the answer is research—through preventive pediatrics, by inoculations given to children in every forward-looking community."

<sup>18</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4-9; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 26-33; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 39-48; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 57-68.

<sup>19</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 26; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 39; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 57.

consider when parents chose “a place to sleep” for their baby was safety rather than luxuries that he could enjoy such as the kind of fabric and mattresses. In describing the crib, Spock asked parents to prioritize baby’s safety by stating,

All he needs is sides to keep him from rolling out, and something soft but firm in the bottom for a mattress...Occasionally hair, principally pig’s hair, causes allergy in a susceptible child. This risk can be avoided by enclosing the mattress in an airtight casing specially made for this purpose.<sup>20</sup>

A baby’s safety might be considered a mother’s duty, but this could mean more than someone’s responsibility. If a baby got injured or accidentally harmed, his caretaker not only felt responsible, but the experience of childcare might also become full of concern and worries, or even a feeling guilt would plague the one in charge. In order to prevent or at least reduce the possibility of dangers or this kind of unexpected and sudden burden during childcare—for everyone’s sake, then—safety was vital.

Another thing that concerned Spock was mothers’ convenience. While caring for children, it would not be easy to do extra chores or tasks. Thus, Spock provided useful information that might relieve parents from unnecessary extra work. He suggested that it would be ideal to prepare “sheeting, pads, sheets, blankets, etc.,” that were “waterproof to absorb moisture,” “lightweight,” and required or “no ironing.”<sup>21</sup> He detailed the features of these items, focusing on “a great convenience” and baby’s health at the same time. The reason why Spock emphasized these features was so the laundry was less heavy and cleaning less. This could be also read as his attempt to reduce potential obstacles and distractions during childcare.

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<sup>20</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 26; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 39; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4-6.



The purpose of providing information often plays a significant role in reducing a person's sense of helplessness; as stated above, information is a means of promoting a sense of control. Knowing what is at stake or what will happen in advance can help people to figure out what to do, and what remedy they should use for solving their problems. Or, at the very least, it might give them the hope or belief that they can do something, Spock seemed to acknowledge the significance of providing accurate and up-to-date information. By introducing another reference by Arnold Gesell and Frances L. Ilg, Spock highlighted the importance of figuring out what implications that each stage had. He did not forget to mention that better acknowledgement of the stage a baby was in was "the first step in learning how to get along with him."<sup>22</sup>

However, with this assumption about the key role of information in mind, we need to acknowledge that there should be some distinctions between "what the state of my child is" and "what my child's state (or stage) is supposed to be." The former required an actual experience with one's own baby whereas the latter needed, inevitably, more generalized information based on scientific empirical data. The gap between collective—generalized—data and individualized experiences hinted at why many mothers sent mail for clarification or expressing their own opinion. Even before we look at Spock's advice more closely, what Spock gave his readers was more likely the latter because of the nature of experts' advice. As a pediatrician, like other experts, Spock also tended to pass on know-how of how to rear a baby "properly" to his readers, even with his permissive tone. On top of that, with his psychoanalytic training, he also focused on emotional reactions that depended on psychological development and gave more emphasis to that in his book.

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<sup>22</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 146.

In *Baby and Child Care*, Spock provided a massive amount of scientific preparation, or something we might call “prior-information” about babies and childcare in general. Spock’s childcare advice was composed of information on each developmental stage of a child and what to do. Under the stage for each age, he offered the typical characteristics of proper physical, psychological or emotional, and intellectual developments that should occur, together with his own advice on how to manage a baby and a child, how to feed them depending on their age, and how to deal with possible dangers such as diseases or emergencies. The information that Spock provided could be described as a combination of up-to-date scientific information on child development and the knowledge based on his professional judgement: his advice. Both could be “scientific” prior-information for parents who needed the information since both relied on the data accumulated through the process of empirical observations based on his professional training and clinical data.

The provision of this combination of information and knowledge could report what would happen next in advance for parents. The acquisition of the prior-information on what would be next for parents could allow for more options regarding their actual preparation, sense of preparedness, or at least belief that they could manage the situation better. For instance, the information about the stages of child development could be prior-information which intended to make parents more prepared for possible situations that they might encounter in child rearing. By getting them to expect what their baby’s physical, psychological, and intellectual development would be according to his age, it might help reduce unexpected or uncontrollable obstacles and prevent the need for later interventions in their care. By arming parents with up-to date scientific prior-information in advance or at the time of care through the standardization of developmental

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stages and more accurate quantification, he ironically advised them to prepare, or, at least, prepare for the unexpected.

Looking at Spock's information, we might categorize it with a couple of characteristics. First of all, Spock provided the information about the baby's typical physical features and characteristics of each development stages. In doing so, he let parents know what to expect for each stage. First of all, in a section on "Your Baby's Development," Spock mainly focused on the signs of visible development of babies from birth to 12 months such as showing their needs, smiling, and using their head, hands, and other body parts. At the very first stage of development after birth, he wrote, babies are mostly self-interested needing constant contact with the outside world. Up to two or three months, babies seem to respond to their own desire and inner stimuli. After babies get more control over their body, their physical development becomes more visible.<sup>23</sup> Offering a description of the basic facts up to the age of first year, Spock gave parents a sense of what to expect.

In addition to the information about the first period of a new born baby, Spock described what a one-year-old—up to 24 months—baby generally looked like and how they behaved. By letting parents know their baby's changes "in his eating, in how he gets around, in what he wants to do, and in how he feels about himself and other people,"<sup>24</sup> he offered the information on the developmental stages based on medical data that he observed and acquired as a pediatrician. In his description of the one-year-old, along with babies' physical development Spock included psychological, intellectual and emotional states of a baby. He explained that a baby would pass through the phase of building his own autonomy: "He seems to realize that he's not meant to be a baby doll the rest of his life, but a human being with ideas and a will of his own. The

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<sup>23</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 145-158; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 223-238; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 229-242; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 264-278.

<sup>24</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 203; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 260; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 265; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 297.

psychologist calls it ‘negativism’; mothers call it ‘that terrible no stage.’”<sup>25</sup> He also introduced the typical characteristics of a one year old baby such as curiosity, independence, and outgoingness later in the child’s development.<sup>26</sup>

Spock also listed the *prior-information* about the specific developmental aspects of the age over two. For example, he instructed parents about the signs of psychological development, stating, “In the period between 2 and 3, children are apt to show signs of balkiness and other inner tensions. Babies begin to be balky and ‘negativistic’ way back when they are one-year-old, so this is nothing new. But it reaches new heights and takes new forms after 2.”<sup>27</sup> Letting them know expected features during the ages and stages could facilitate parents’ to preparation for all of the possible situations. Dealing with the development of emotions for a three-year-old child, Spock pointed out “identifying” and “curiosity” as prominent characteristics of this age.<sup>28</sup> Spock also introduced another sign of development in which the baby would explore anything that he could come across with curiosity: a different type of fear. He elaborated: “New types of fears crop up fairly often around the age of 3 or 4—fears of the dark, of dogs, of fire engines, of death, of cripples.”<sup>29</sup> For the children from six to eleven:

The child becomes more independent of his parents, impatient with them. He’s more concerned with what the older kids say and do. He develops a stronger sense of responsibility about matters which he thinks are important. His conscience may become so stern that it nags him about senseless things like stepping over cracks. He is interested in impersonal subjects like arithmetic and engines. In short, he’s

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<sup>25</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 203. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 261; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 265; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 297.

<sup>26</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 204-205; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 265-267; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 308-313; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 303-306.

<sup>27</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 285; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 353; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 356-357; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 393.

<sup>28</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 294; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 357; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 361; in different wording, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 398-399.

<sup>29</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 296; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 363; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 368; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 405.

beginning the job of emancipating himself from his family and taking his place as a responsible citizen of the outside world.<sup>30</sup>

As illustrated above, Spock laid out potential changes at age six by demonstrating conspicuous attributes of that age. In doing so, Spock tried to assist parents to feel that they were making upcoming situations more foreseeable by increasing their advance information, or *prior-information*, of children's development.

With a closer look, it is not difficult to find that his advice seemed inevitably focused on more or less generalizing information since it might be nearly impossible to cover every single case. In doing so, he often provided approximate proper age ranges for each particular development. For instance, on sitting, he stated, "Most babies learn to sit steadily (after being helped up) between 7 and 9 months. Some normal, intelligent ones wait till as late as a year."<sup>31</sup> Similar to this, Spock also offered his remark on crawling by saying "Creeping can begin any time between 6 months and a year. Some babies never creep at all, they just sit around until they learn to stand up."<sup>32</sup> In his description of walking, Spock delivered a very similar structure of information by stating, "Most babies learn to walk between 12 and 15 months. A few muscular, ambitious ones start as early as 9 months. A fair number of bright children, without rickets or any other physical disease, do not begin until 18 months or even later."<sup>33</sup> This pattern appeared repeatedly in his explanation on teething,<sup>34</sup> feeding,<sup>35</sup> toilet training,<sup>36</sup> and other topics in the care of a baby from birth up to age of two. The power of words such as "most," "normally," and

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<sup>30</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 312; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 384-385; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 388; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 429.

<sup>31</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 150; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 230; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 235; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 270.

<sup>32</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 151-152; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 231; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 236; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 271.

<sup>33</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 154; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 233; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 237; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 272.

<sup>34</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 158-164; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 238-245; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 242-248; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 278-285.

<sup>35</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 165-176; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 274-283; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 278-287; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 312-321.

<sup>36</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193-202; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 245-256; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 286-296.

“typically” might be a double-edged sword since it played an unavoidable role in not only giving generalized information to parents, which helped provide *prior-information* about child development, but also left the possibility that it would make parents fuss and worry about their own child’s potential lateness in developing.

Another type of *prior-information* that Spock gave was about how to react to the clues or changes of baby’s development. The reason to provide the information about a baby’s features and behaviors was not just for showering the advanced up-to-date information upon parents or boasting of the pediatrician’s knowledge. The purpose of doing this was, from my point of view, to let parents know how to react to the signs regarding due development. For example, Spock informed mothers of one of the intellectual developments for a one year old: “At this age a baby may be frightened by strange objects that move suddenly or make a loud noise, such as folded pictures that pop up from a book, the opening of an umbrella, a vacuum cleaner, a siren, a barking, jumping dog, a train, even a vase of rustling branches.”<sup>37</sup> He went on: “Try to keep these startling events from happening too close to a one-year-old, until he gets used to them.”<sup>38</sup> What Spock provided here was not only the information about child’s behavior or reactions, but also the information about how to react them. He also mentioned:

Don’t say ‘no’ in a challenging voice from across the room. This gives him a choice.... It’s much wiser, the first few times he goes for the lamp, to go over promptly whisk him to another part of the room. Quickly give him a magazine, and empty cigarette box, anything that is safe and interesting.... Suppose he goes back to the lamp a few minutes later? Remove him and distract him again, promptly,

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<sup>37</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 210; 2nd edition, 264; 3rd edition, 269; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 303.

<sup>38</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 210; from the second edition, the wording changed. 2nd edition, 264; 3rd edition, 269; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 303.

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definitely, cheerfully. It's all right to say 'no, no,' at the same time that you remove him, adding it to your action, for good measure... You are tactfully showing him that you are absolutely sure in your own mind that the lamp is not the thing to play with. You are keeping away from choices, arguments, cross looks, scoldings—which won't do any good but will only get his back up.<sup>39</sup>

With this advice, Spock provided the examples of possible reactions that parents needed to use to demonstrate their intention to their baby as a means of displaying their disciplinary attitude. His suggestion clearly shows how Spock emphasized a parental attitude of certainty. If parents showed hesitation or allowed a choice to the baby, this would give the impression that the parent was not certain about what they were doing. By offering psychology-based guidance that parents could use to prepare their actions, Spock attempted to give parents a means of sustaining certainty.

With more predictability or a better possibility of being prepared, parents could feel their own capability expand, as was conducive to a better relationship with their child, which was, in turn, crucial for better child care. Understanding the development of a child or baby was a key step for prospective parents because it could give parents *prior-information* that could tell what their current situation was and whether they were on the right track. Also, they could acquire the belief that they could manage their difficulties or any problems that they might encounter with discipline. Knowing what happens next—*prior-information*—could give parents more comfort and confidence. Distinct from exercising full control over the situations, which seemed never possible to achieve, a feeling or sense of control for parents could give them greater comfort with

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<sup>39</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 210-212; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 269-270; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 274-275; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 307-308.

their babies. In order to make for a more manageable situation in childcare, Spock believed that parents should “learn” how to understand their baby and the process of how to rear him or her.

Also, this tendency was demonstrated in his advice on the emotional aspect of parents’ role in childrearing. As discussed in chapter three, by providing some explanation about the blue feeling, he also wanted to give mothers *prior-information* about themselves as a means of control over their emotions. Without knowing what would happen after delivery, a sense of uncertainty could increase mothers’ anxiety. By explaining postpartum depression, Spock conveyed to mothers that the feeling itself was not uncommon and could be shared with others.<sup>40</sup> By doing so, he wanted to minimize the impact of possible obstacles that could affect mothers’ long-term emotional stability, which was essential to the childrearing process from his view.

*~Observation on Their Own: Empirical Experience*

Another pattern of information that parents could acquire about babies and children in child care, Spock suggested, was not only the acquisition of prior-information through reading his book or learning experts’ advice, but also direct observation of a baby on one’s own. Spock frequently asked parents to look at their baby very closely. By carefully observing the baby, parents could get a sense of what his or her behaviors and reactions meant. In reading the baby’s signs and signals, and knowing the meaning of their expression, parents could eventually become effectively responsive to their baby. In order to do so, first of all, they needed to look at her baby’s signals very assiduously.

For instance, on the matter of feeding, Spock suggested that parents look at their baby’s signs during his first year and think about the meaning of their signals. From his perspective,

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<sup>40</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 16; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 10; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition; 23-24; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 24-25.



babies were more autonomous and interactional beings than parents thought, so they would show the indicators of what they wanted depending on their needs. According to Spock, a baby “wakes up because he’s hungry, cries because he wants to be fed. He is so eager when the nipple goes into his mouth that he almost shudders.”<sup>41</sup> Indicating that these signs were not just entirely based on instinct, he emphasized that the first interactions with parents were a significant step in babies’ psychosomatic development.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, Spock argued that parents observe the readiness of their baby by reading his or her reactions because these reactions could have meanings. In his section on “Weaning from Bottle to Cup,” for instance, a mother needed to test her baby’s readiness by “offering your baby a sip of milk from the cup each day by the time he’s 5 months old.”<sup>43</sup> In gauging the baby’s reaction to this attempt, a mother could figure out whether her baby was ready to start to be fed with a cup or not. With his advice on urine training as well, Spock maintained the same stance on baby’s readiness. According to him, mothers should wait until their baby became ready to move forward to the next step:

It really isn’t you who trains your child’s bladder. The most you can do is show the baby where you want him to urinate. The worst you can do is to go at his training so hard that you get him to hate the idea of going to the bathroom.<sup>44</sup>

For Spock, coercive training was more detrimental to the mother-child relationship and thus to babies than their slow development. Without the baby’s readiness, the training process is not the baby’s achievement, but just a mother’s accomplishment. Through closer observation, he

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<sup>41</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 23; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 50; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 58; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 23; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 50; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 58; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 182;

<sup>44</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 199.

believed, mothers could detect subtler the signs and signals from her baby. In another example, He also mentioned that parents could get a hint of their baby's development by observing his or her reactions to other people: "You can get an idea of how a baby goes from phase to phase in his development by watching his reaction to strangers at different age periods."<sup>45</sup> In this sense, it would be imperative for a mother to guess what her baby's signals meant.

Meantime, in a section on "Crying," Spock even went further to deal with skills based on his own experiences: "By the time he's a few months old, you will know his ways, and what different cries mean."<sup>46</sup> He enumerated several reasons for crying such as sickness, wetting, hunger, and discomfort, and implied that parents would eventually recognize the difference by hearing it, although Spock did not indicate how to do so. Rather, he laid out the subtle signs or indications that might help adults to distinguish different causes of crying:

He usually does his crying just before his feedings. As he gets hungrier, he wakes earlier. Usually it's only after he has been waking early for several days that he begins to cry for a period after his feedings. All this doesn't mean that a baby can't occasionally get hungry early, as an exception. There is no harm in feeding him half an hour or an hour early, if he seems to be really hungry. This will not spoil him. If he is regularly crying early, he needs more to eat. If he wakes and cries half an hour or an hour after taking a good meal, the chances are he is not hungry but is having indigestion.<sup>47</sup>

As we know, Spock was blamed by many for the young generation in the 1960s being spoiled because of the influence of his book from the mid-1940s on. It would not be difficult to

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<sup>45</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 115.

<sup>47</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 116.

acknowledge the idea that there were some concerns about spoiled children if their needs were too easily fulfilled. However, what Spock really prioritized here was not excessive satisfaction of baby's needs, but fulfilling their needs through a recognition and interpretation of the signs in advance, which he thought might help parents have a more sense of control.

With this understanding, we could easily assume that by observing the clues about their baby's needs parents could figure out what developmental stages their child was in. As discussed above, the nature of information often helps us know where we are, and more specifically, what situations we are in. Childrearing seems to be a similar case. With the information acquired based on parents' close observation, they were able to know what development stage their baby was in and then, by consulting *Baby and Child Care*, Spock's encyclopedic instruction manual, they could find all of the attributes and behaviors they could expect next.

In this sense, the acquisition of information about baby's development through parents' own observation could play an important role in maintaining a mother's sense of control. Other than focusing on merely nursing the baby, observation required much greater attention to the baby's signs of wants as well as reactions to the parent. If parents figured out what their baby's reactions really meant, it would increase the chance of having a more effective means of interaction during childcare. At the same time, through more effective interactions with their baby, parents could develop more effectual tools with which to discipline the baby in the near future. Once the mutual relationship was established firmly between them, it would help strengthen a mother's control over her baby as well as her own sense of control. First-hand experience understanding a child's needs, figuring out what might be the proper reactions to them, and developing a feeling of accomplishment based on their own understanding could enhance parents' sense of control over the coming situations. Also, the experience of managing

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the information about the baby that parents could gather on their own could be an important element in giving them a new kind of confidence and satisfaction.

However, at the same time, one thing that we need to pay attention to here was that there could be some room for misunderstanding what Spock were asking parents to observe. What Spock suggested was to watch their child as he or she was. Yet, given the voluminous information that Spock provided in terms of the child development, it would be highly possible for a mother to look not so much at the natural state of her baby, but at signs for whether her baby is on the proper stage or whether the baby is ready to do something or not based on notions of *due development*. In doing so, parents could recognize the proper or improper development of her children since they were already informed of appropriate actions and reactions of each stage of development.

*~Information of Conversion: Idea, Perception, and Method*

A couple of time throughout his 1960s writings, Spock dealt with the idea of disillusionment. Designating the early twentieth century, especially the period immediately after World War I, as an age of disenchantment, Spock lamented the demise of idealism in the good old days.<sup>48</sup> Spock was not entirely denying the potential advantages of disillusionment, but he was apprehensive about the extreme effects of the disenchantment of the era. In *Redbook Magazine*, he weighed these pros and cons: “Disenchantment is valuable when it clears away fraud and obstructions to progress. But when it becomes a habitual mood it brings about the very deterioration of human values about which it is so critical.”<sup>49</sup> Because of his trust in the effect of

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<sup>48</sup> Benjamin Spock, *Decent and Indecent: Our Personal and Political Behavior* (New York: McCall Publishing Company, 1969): 17-18.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Bringing Up Children in an Age of Disenchantment,” *Redbook Magazine* (February 1966): 27.

idealization of human advancement, Spock felt sorry for the reality of turning a down-to-earth and realistic perception during the time into its extreme form.

While attacked for being too liberal and permissive, Spock actually maintained trust in older values and practices. Witnessing a weakening both strong belief in God as a creator of men and confidence in men as a creature of God, Spock was worried about a skepticism he detected in men and women themselves. Slippage of traditional values was manifested in “the lack of awe for the older generation and its values.”<sup>50</sup> Spock indicated that a younger generation no longer placed a high value on information provided by the old:

In many parts of the world grandmothers are considered experts, and a young mother takes it for granted that when she has a question about her baby or needs a little help with him she'll ask her mother. When a mother has this kind of confidence in the grandmother, she can get not only advice but comfort. In our country, though, a new mother is often more inclined to turn to her doctor first, and some women don't ever think of consulting their mothers. This is partly because we are so used to consulting professional people about our personal problems—doctors, guidance counselors in school, marriage counselors, social workers, psychologists, ministers. Also we take for granted that knowledge advances rapidly, and so we often think that anyone who knew how to do a job twenty years ago is behind the times today.<sup>51</sup>

He also observed that the young did not display unconditional admiration for the insight of the old: “In America we are allowed to rebel fully against the older generation when we are

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<sup>50</sup> Spock, “Bringing Up Children in an Age of Disenchantment,” 22.

<sup>51</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 18-19; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 31; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 49.

adolescents and young adults. After that we may love and enjoy them, but we don't look to them for wisdom."<sup>52</sup> Spock acknowledged this change and thought this a possible source of tension between mothers and grandmothers.

Although he was concerned about this transition of American society away from older customs, Spock's advice itself played a significant role in bringing about a wholesale conversion in the preexisting concept of information conveyance. By providing *prior-information*, preventative information, and chances for direct observation as discussed above, Spock's advice was based on scientific and medical knowledge of child care provided by professionals. For more proper management of the information that he would provide for them, he thought that parents should have freedom to determine their own actions and thoughts even though their knowledge would never be solely independent from experts.

Thus, while providing information about how to raise a baby and a child properly in advance, Spock simultaneously argued that parents needed to avoid potential interventions that might interfere with parents' autonomy of childrearing. Based on what he observed, in the second edition of *Baby and Child Care*, he added a new section, "Relations with Grandparents." As he mentioned in his article, he wanted "to encourage mothers and grandmothers to find ways of getting along easily because of the profound benefit and enjoyment that not only both of them but the children, too, would receive from such a relationship."<sup>53</sup> Spock did not explicitly advise that parents needed to reject all of the influence from grandparents, but he inevitably put much emphasis on parents' self-confidence and a sense of autonomy in the process of childrearing. In doing so, it was unavoidable for Spock to stress a more practical and tactful relationship between mother and grandmother as opposed to the traditional one. He described:

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<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Discipline: Where Fathers Fail," *Redbook Magazine* (July 1964): 105.

<sup>53</sup> Spock, "Family Triangle: Mother and Child—And Grandmother," *Ladies' Home Journal* (May 1957): 32.

The young mother will come out better if she can learn gradually not to run away from the grandmother, and not to be afraid to hear her out, because both these reactions reveal, in a way, that she feels too weak to stand up to her. Harder still, she can learn how not to get boiling mad inside or how not to explode outwardly in a temper. You might say she's entitled to get angry, which is true. But pent-up anger and explosions are both signs that she has already been feeling submissive for too long, out of fear of making the grandmother mad. A dominating grandmother usually senses these indirect signs of timidity and takes advantage of them. A mother shouldn't feel guilty about making her mother mad, if it must come to that.<sup>54</sup>

In his advice for those who were afraid of making a grandmother resentful, Spock suggested that daughters or in-laws did not need to feel guilty about making their mother or mother-in-law angry.<sup>55</sup> But, at the same time, Spock proposed that parents should not complain about the grandmother's decisions if they chose to get her help occasionally:

When the children are left in the care of the grandparents, whether for half a day or for two weeks, there should be frank understanding and reasonable compromising. The parents must have confidence that the children will be cared for according to their beliefs in important matters (that, for instance, they won't be compelled to eat food they don't like, be shamed for bowel accidents, or be frightened about policemen). On the other hand, it's unfair to expect grandparents to carry out every step of management and discipline as if they were exact replicas of the parents.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 21-22; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 34; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 52.

<sup>55</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 21-22; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 34; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 52.

<sup>56</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 20, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 33; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 51.

With this remark, Spock implied that parents also needed to respect the grandmother's ideas or opinions if they also wanted to be treated respectfully.

Along with the advice, Spock insisted that mothers should be confident with the decision of whether grandmother's influence was useful or not. In addition, Spock advised that parents should eliminate external influence or interruption for their childrearing if they felt that these contributions might not be useful to their own childrearing process. Spock stated, "If she decides that what she hears doesn't suit her or her baby, she can tactfully turn it down without making a fuss about it, since she doesn't have pent-up feelings of resentment or guilt."<sup>57</sup> If there were too many interruptions and interventions from grandmothers, it would not be possible for parents to make a proper choice with confidence, he thought. Thus, for instance, he advised a mother to maintain her self-confidence that she the one who was in charge of the job and to believe that she could get other professionals' help instead of relying on her mother-in-law:

In the first place, she can keep reminding herself that she is the mother now and that the baby is hers to take care of as she thinks best. She should be able to get support from the doctor or the public-health nurse when she has been made to doubt her own method. She is surely entitled to the support of her husband, especially if it's his mother who is interfering.<sup>58</sup>

Considering this, what they needed to be careful about was grandmother's potentially despotic attitude. Especially at the moment when disagreements between a mother and a grandmother surfaced, the mother could easily lose her own style of childrearing, which meant that their autonomy as a nurturer was weakened. If a grandmother did not realize that her

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<sup>57</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Family Triangle," 32.

<sup>58</sup> Spock, "Family Triangle," 28; See also Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 21; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 34; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 52.



daughter or daughter-in law actually had become a grownup and that she was ready to raise her own child, that grandmother's advice could sometimes undermine her daughter's (or daughter-in law's) choices and decisions. For example, Spock received lots of letters from mothers mentioning an unhealthy relationship with their mother or mother-in-law. Even though Spock did not deny the benefit of having a grandmother as "the ideal helper," not every grandmother could be ideal.<sup>59</sup> If the grandmother still wanted to treat the mother of the child as her own child, it would not be helpful, for the mother would have a more difficult time becoming an independent adult. He introduced a couple of examples of mothers suffering from their mother-in-law's attempt to belittle their autonomy in his *Ladies' Home Journal* article in May 1957.<sup>60</sup>

With this train of thought, I think that Spock's advice, unwittingly or wittingly, asked parents to break their tie to the older generation's powerful influence tactfully. In his reply to Joyce H. Mann in 1962, Spock demonstrated his underlying assumptions of the relation between the influence of knowledge from the past and the concept of self-government through information by citing an example of French education:

French education in the lycée is admired by many critics of American education. There the students do not contribute their own experiences or opinions, do not cooperate in projects or carry out their own experiments. They are packed with knowledge of what their forebears have done and said and they learn to express with [sic] the authoritative teacher considers the correct opinions with exquisite precision. Educated Frenchmen's knowledge of literature and history makes their

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<sup>59</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 9; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 24; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Spock, "Family Triangle," 26.

American counterparts appear uncouth. But each decade the French are proving more appallingly their inability to govern themselves.<sup>61</sup>

Implying that an undemocratic way of information conveyance could play a negative role in cultivating autonomous individuals, who could be a backbone of a self-governing body, Spock's advice demonstrated its conversion from a traditional and unilateral way of knowledge inheritance.

In addition to a switch in conveying information, an enthralling point to note relating to the shift in childrearing information of Spock's advice is the concept of the resistance of babies and children. Often, children's resistance was not an ideal situation for parents, and could last a long time. This had been considered a challenging act in defiance of parental authority, so that, especially in an authoritative or patriarchal society, defiance to the powerful older generation was almost a taboo. However, dealing with babies' and children's "balkiness," Spock's advice offered mothers a new perspective on this. As opposed to the perception of rebelliousness as disobedient, he considered children's defiance a signal of potential loss of parental control and suggested that parents approach this problem with a more practical method.

For example, when a baby become recalcitrant, this might mean that parents were treading in a "vicious circle" of "absent-minded balkiness."<sup>62</sup> The problem with this situation lay in parents' inevitable attempt to react to their child even though this appeared futile in some ways. Spock claimed that children's disobedience could be harmful to the all-important parent-child relationship because it could easily generate mothers' futile attempts to suppress children's confrontation,<sup>63</sup> which could make mothers feel as though they were losing control. Once this

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<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Spock, Reply to Walter Mann, January 16, 1962.

<sup>62</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

<sup>63</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 320-321; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

started, children's defiant reactions often intensified. These endless and futile reactions to the seemingly perpetual rebelliousness of children resulted in raised possibility of losing their sense of control over children. These polarized and polarizing reactions could not generate mutual, friendly interactions, which Spock thought indispensable for establishing their mutual trust.

Spock extended his explanation of children's initial period of defiance to the age between two and three. Different from a one-year-old's obstinacy, disobedience during this period was partly attributable to children's development, which Spock called "contrariness."<sup>64</sup> By differentiating the nature of children's defiance at different ages, Spock's advice enabled parents to see rebelliousness not as just children's intentional disobedience, but a result of children's struggle for autonomy vs. dependence. The implication of giving various meanings to the child's attitude inevitably resulted in the necessity for a different attitude and strategy for the parent dealing with that child. Rather than generalizing the concept, and treating children's defiance as something always to squelch, the new perspective might have allowed parents to seek other possibilities to deal with the situations.

This was why Spock advised parents not to augment for their baby any negative impressions of eating. Following the Freudian idea that the level of dissatisfaction might affect the quality of one's entire life, Spock located an unnecessary feeling of dissatisfaction on the part of the child, which could occur in his or her responses to the mother's reactions.<sup>65</sup> The child

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<sup>64</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 284; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 352; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 356; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 392; Spock similarly introduced a similar explanation for the internal conflict in adolescents: "The conflict is within himself: between the strong pull to become a replica of his parents—in character, in occupation, in outlook—and the urge to rebel, to be different, to excel." He pointed out this ambivalent or multi-faceted inner conflict of children's desire when dealing with the idea of "conformity," and implied that parents should use this information to enhance their tactic of discipline as well. Benjamin Spock, "Conformity," *Ladies' Home Journal* (October 1959): 5. Draft version.

<sup>65</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 285; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 353; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 357; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 393.

might respond to the mother's reactions negatively because the child needed to defy her in order to reduce the level of his dissatisfaction.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, to instill in a child a proper attitude through self-control, preventing their child from being defiant needed to become parents' goal for a healthy relationship. Children's dissatisfaction often kept a child from cultivating self-control with room for spontaneity in the future because it blinded the child from figuring out what one's own desires and needs really are. In other words, their defiance could keep them from recognizing their real needs, which was in turn a basic presupposition for self-control. Because of the immaturity of children, in Spock's view, the only person who could manage their defiance and inculcate self-control in children is their mother. Pointing out that it is mothers who actually start this vicious cycle with "the habit of prodding children,"<sup>67</sup> Spock warned that mothers should take responsibility for failing to engage in these ceaseless unnecessary reactions.

For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, with his advice for eating habits, Spock suggested that mothers restrain their urge to push their baby to eat undesirable food. Prodding the baby in this situation cannot be helping the parents gain more control over their child, but instead, it could intensify a "harmful effect," which could "take away his appetite, and makes him want to eat less than his system really needs."<sup>68</sup> To make matters worse, if mothers kept urging their baby to finish their meal, the baby could also become "indifferent and balky."<sup>69</sup> This was also the case for stating solid food as well.<sup>70</sup> No matter what stage their baby or child

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<sup>66</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1961), 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 263; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 320; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 326; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 362.

<sup>68</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 81; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 119; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 124; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 152.

<sup>69</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 82; from the second edition, the word "balky" was omitted. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 121; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 125; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 153.

<sup>70</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 168; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 129; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 134; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 165.

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was in, it became important for parents to be careful not to undermine children's will to do something based on what parents wanted to impose or instill.

Spock saw the unconditional attempt to eliminate children's defiance as detrimental and harmful to their relationship building. Spock told parents that they were not able to get any control—neither real control over their child nor a sense of control for themselves—if they failed to elicit spontaneous reactions from the child. Without the child's consent to respond to any demands, it would be very difficult for parents to get their child's response to a multitude of other demands later on. For almost every piece of training advice, including eating habits, bowel training, and such, Spock emphasized that a parent needed to be aware of the harmful effect of urging.<sup>71</sup>

Also, children's discontentment and reactions could prevent parents from having a more effective method of mutually interacting with the child. Since the interaction should go two-ways, children's behaviors and attitudes, based on their attempts to decrease dissatisfaction, could be greatly misinterpreted by their mothers and could provoke unnecessary emotional dissatisfaction at the same time. As Spock noted, it could actually be parents who were responsible for launching their child's balkiness, and cooperative interactions were beyond their control once rebelliousness started. From Spock's point of view, this perpetual cycle was more detrimental to the parent-child relationship, so that parents needed to have quite a different approach to the matter.

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<sup>71</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193-195; Specifically, in the section on "Toilet training," Spock wrote, "Sometimes parents make a great fuss about toilet training, work very hard at it, and end up with a balky, untrained child." Then, he goes on: "When a baby gets into a real battle with his mother, it is not just the training which suffers, but also his personality. First of all, he becomes too obstinate, gets in a mood to say 'no' to everything, whether he means it or not." Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 193. This was omitted from the second edition on.

Relating to the new perception of children's behavior and resistance, Spock provided parents with a new idea about their observations as well with his explanation of the matter of procrastination. When parents saw their child reluctant to go to school, they might easily conclude that their child was just lazy in nature, or, there were some bullies at their school.<sup>72</sup> Of course, there were reasons for children's procrastination, but Spock offered different interpretative information about the potential reason for their laziness. He saw children's dilatoriness as their conscious or unconscious resistance stemming from the process of bowel training in these terms:

If she is very persistent in keeping after him and the movement, he may, with practice, learn to withhold it for hours and even days. He thus acquires the habit of resisting pressure by delaying. If his mother, in exasperation, continues for many months to demand the movement and if he chooses to continue to balk in the same way, the pattern of stalling may become permanent, and spread to other situations beside toilet training.<sup>73</sup>

From his perspective, it was not just an inborn temperament of children, but also an evolved form of resistance. This perception might have allowed parents and readers to ponder the nature of resistance again. Frequently, some thought that resistance could be suppressed with rigid and stern, or sometimes severe, treatment or punishment.<sup>74</sup> But, according to Spock's advice, pressing children to follow parent's instruction and guidance forcibly might lead to more resistance toward parents' pressure: "The more the child feels pushed, the more he slows down. It's a neat way for him to fight back. He's asserting his right to resist domination."<sup>75</sup> Thus, when

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<sup>72</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Procrastination" *Ladies' Home Journal* (September 1959): 8

<sup>73</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Procrastination," 8.

<sup>74</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How to Control Your Child," *The American Weekly* (August 1954) 7.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Conformity," *Ladies' Home Journal* (October 1959): 5. Draft version.

obedience to parents became no more an unconditionally good thing, now unveiled as a potential tool to distort their child's natural development, resistance acquired a new meaning.

This new interpretation also made room for reconsideration when parents judged the child's behaviors by surface manners. Opening the possibility of new meaning, Spock included a psychological or medical concern to look for the origins and reasons of a child's behavior. In recognizing this, he thought that parents should approach this matter with a more practical viewpoint. As discussed in the previous chapter, since discipline was not about instilling or fostering a moral lesson unilaterally, finding out the way to build up a wholesome relationship between parent and child by avoiding open hostility<sup>76</sup> was a more effective way to gain real control over children.

Similarly, another prominent characteristic of Spock's advice was its demonstration of "a marked shift in philosophy of child management on the part of physician and parents, away from rigidity and severity, toward flexibility, consideration for the child's stage of development and individual differences, and respect for his or her vital emotional needs."<sup>77</sup> With this changed idea of child care, Spock's advice contributed to shifting the preexisting concepts of parents' proper perception, attitudes and reactions in child care based on the most up-to-date medical information and knowledge. Compared to what parents maintained previously, they inevitably needed to change their perspective on babies' symptoms and how to deal with them during their basic development.

For instance, with the matter of sleep disturbances of babies around one year, Spock provided a very different interpretation of the problem itself. Traditionally, due to the strictness

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<sup>76</sup> Spock, "Conformity," 5. Draft version.

<sup>77</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Some Common Diagnostic Problems in Children" *Medical Clinics of North America* 34(4) (July 1950): 1081.

and rigidity of schedule, childrearing was nearly imposing proper rules on a baby. Parents usually did not pick up their baby except at the exact time of scheduled feeding. Thus, there might be fewer sleep problems with the strict method, but this meant babies were just objects of their guidance and the source of their problems. What parents needed to do was to fix or eliminate baby's problems.<sup>78</sup> However, with the experts' advice on demand schedule, this was not the case anymore.

While pointing out the potential origins of baby's wakefulness at one year old,<sup>79</sup> Spock perceived the problem from a somewhat different angle. "I believe that these sleep problems of infancy have been caused most often by parents' being excessively conscientious and exact in following a doctor's general advice to study the baby's individual needs and to try to satisfy them,"<sup>80</sup> he wrote, elucidating his notion that babies were not the sole source of the problem. He thought that it was highly possible the symptom began with parents' wholeheartedness when they comforted their colicky baby at around 3 months. Influenced by a misunderstanding of the emphasis in experts' advice on childrearing based on babies' demands,<sup>81</sup> parents often continued comforting their baby whenever he or she displayed discomfort or cried.<sup>82</sup>

Concerning sleep problems in the second year, Spock painted a different picture from the first-year problems. Compared to the earlier problems, children's sleeping problem during this

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<sup>78</sup> Spock, "Some Common Diagnostic Problems in Children," 1082; Benjamin Spock, "A Parent Needs Enough Self-confidence...", *Ladies' Home Journal* (August 1954): 45.

<sup>79</sup> Spock distinguished between "the going-to-bed-type and the waking-in-the-middle-of-the-night type." Spock, "A Parents Needs Enough Self-confidence...", 45; see also Benjamin Spock, "When A Baby Won't Sleep," *Redbook Magazine* (December 1973): 20.

<sup>80</sup> Spock, "A Parents Needs Enough Self-confidence...", 45; Spock mentioned the physical causes in this remark: "The apparent cause was a fresh cold or a middle ear infection or, in my old-fashioned opinion, teething." Benjamin Spock, "Sleep Problems in the Early Years," *Postgraduate Medicine* 21(3) (March 1957): 273.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Sleep Problems in the Early Years," *Postgraduate Medicine* 21(3) (March 1957): 272.

<sup>82</sup> Spock, "A Parents Needs Enough Self-confidence...", 45; with the advice on the waking-in-the-middle-of-the-night-kind, Spock pointed out that parents' attitude could also worsen the problem mentioning, "She has usually gone in every ten minutes to try to comfort him with words and a pat on the shoulder. This only makes a baby who's expecting to be taken up more angry." Benjamin Spock, "Parents Have Rights, Too...", *Ladies' Home Journal* (September 1954): 23.



age occurred rather abruptly. Indicating the potential cause of separation anxiety,<sup>83</sup> Spock argued that parents also contributed to the symptoms of sleeping problem of two-year-olds. This explanation consequently may have resulted in a new perspective on the origin of the babies' sleep disturbance because it indicated that the caretaker could also be a factor in the problem. Different from the existing purview of the childrearing literature,<sup>84</sup> Spock's advice led parents to look at another potential source.

Under Spock's different interpretation of the problems of childrearing, parents needed to have both a different attitude and a different solution to problems that arose. Spock's idea asked that parents pay more attention to themselves and their reactions toward their baby, which could be critical stimuli to them. Spock stated, "I mean that the parents need to see that it is not meanness but kindness to give a baby what he really needs, no matter how much he protests." Moreover, fixing or eliminating surface symptoms was not a proper solution anymore. As discussed in the previous chapter, this transition was related to why Spock was so concerned with parents' self-control as a tool to make the parent-child relationship smoother. Perceiving the parent-child relationship as a birthplace of problems and solution at the same time, it was unavoidable for Spock to emphasize it. Informing parents of the importance of their attitude and reactions toward their baby, rendered the entire direction of childrearing transformed.

It is noteworthy that it was Spock who helped open the potential for the individual's management of information, and furthermore knowledge, which could be directly related to the feeling of control that I wish to explore further here. By providing massive information on childcare based on his professional knowledge, whether Spock intended or not, he opened the

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<sup>83</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What to Do If the Child Is Acutely Anxious at Bedtime," *Ladies' Home Journal* (April 1956): 92; Benjamin Spock, "When Your Toddler Is Afraid to Let You Go," *Redbook Magazine* (September 1973): 26.

<sup>84</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The End of American Childhood: A History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 186.

realm of individual management of professionalized information. The acquisition of information had to be presupposed in order for parents to detect subtler problems in child's development such as emotional or psychological ones. For diminishing the uncertainty of the circumstances in which parents found themselves and minimizing the unexpected elements possible in childrearing, it was increasingly seen as imperative to know the basic and generalized information about the development of babies and children.

Emphasizing the distinctiveness of children's development and characteristics, Spock's advice implied that there should be a proper controlling method to apply depending on their unique characteristics. He shed light on the child's differences which should be considered in the disciplinary method, along with the child's age: "And the same parents will use different methods at various age periods—even different methods for each of their children."<sup>85</sup> The elaboration of his idea focused on children's development, which led parents to individualized understanding, preparation, and application of their method.

As a result, Spock's advice eventually prevented parents from protecting their child's individuality and uniqueness. For example, dealing with parents' impartial attitude to a child who was feeling jealousy toward his or her sibling, Spock detailed how parents' unwitting words might have brought about the competitiveness between their children:

In a similar way a child doesn't enjoy for long being compared with, being put in the same category with, a brother, or being officially treated just like him...Such procedures put him in uneasy competitiveness.<sup>86</sup>

As shown here, children's uniqueness should be recognized, from his point of view, because they might get an impression that their individuality was disregarded by their parents. And I assume

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<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Controlling Young Children," *Redbook Magazine* (November 1966): 22.

<sup>86</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Can You Love All Your Children Equally?" *Ladies' Home Journal* (June 1956): 53.

that the recognition of children's individualized traits could lead parents' perspective to diverge to the side of a more the democratic attitude of childrearing.

Spock attempted to separate parents' intention from the result of their intention to be a good caretaker. In a discussion of what factors might have affected spoiling children, in *The American Weekly*, Spock demonstrated his intention to split these two by mentioning, "This week I'd like to talk about ways in which well-meaning fathers and mothers can spoil their children."<sup>87</sup> Pointing out the potential discrepancy between parents' good intentions and their actual influence on their child, Spock wanted parents not always to believe that their good will would work in this remark: "The job is greatly complicated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the fact that parents have all heard some psychology of one kind or another and have been made uneasy about the theoretical possibility of doing harm by well-intentioned efforts."<sup>88</sup> This advice, from my perspective, precluded a self-assured belief that good intentions always resulted in good results from exercising its power, aiming to prevent the blindness of parents' potential excuses that they did nothing harm to their child since they had always had good will for their child.

### **Agora for Information: Journal Articles and Correspondence**

Looking at his articles and correspondence, I found that these played an important role in creating an information exchange hub in a pre-internet age. When parents and readers sent their letter to Spock, of course, they expected to receive certain advice and information from Spock, but at the same time they wanted to know whether there were other people who had similar experiences or opinions. For example, in his discussion on parents' uncomfortable feeling with their particular child, Spock once mentioned a mother's letter, asking whether the "problem

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<sup>87</sup> Benjamin Spock, "What Spoils a Child," *American Weekly* (August 8, 1954): 9.

<sup>88</sup> Benjamin Spock, "How Firm Should You Be with Adolescents?" 1-2.

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exists in other large families.”<sup>89</sup> As shown in the remark, “my own impression is that they occur commonly in families of all sizes and can be felt toward a child in any position in the family,”<sup>90</sup> Spock’s articles played a role in consolidating parents’ individual experiences and information.

In many articles, Spock began with mothers’ questions that arrived at his desk through their correspondence. Often, he started his introduction with questions from mothers, and filled his ensuing pages with the answers of those questions.<sup>91</sup> When he got a question about sleep disturbances, which his book did not cover extensively, he spent two consecutive articles discussing the problem.<sup>92</sup>

On the other hand, mothers’ questions provided Spock with ideas for what to talk about. Playing quite a useful role in letting Spock know what mothers’ real interests, concerns, and discontents were, the mothers’ responses might have helped to construct a mutual bond. For instance, while dealing with a physical examination by doctors, Spock began his introduction with a complaint from a mother. He stated, “Every once in a while there comes a letter from a mother who’s unhappy and indignant because her doctor—whether he’s a pediatrician or a

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<sup>89</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Sometimes I Don’t Like My Child,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (July 1956): 16.

<sup>90</sup> Spock, “Sometimes I Don’t Like My Child,” 16.

<sup>91</sup> See Benjamin Spock, “When Should You Call the Doctor?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (October 1954): 205; Spock also began his article saying, “I have two letters to discuss. A new mother of a two-month-old daughter says, ‘I would appreciate a column on soiling babies, as we are not (my husband and myself) in complete agreement on the subject. Is it possible spoil an infant?’” Spock, “What Spoils a Child,” 156; Benjamin Spock, “When Can You Start Toilet Training?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1955): 116; Benjamin Spock, “Is the Bread-fed Baby More Secure Than the Bottle-Fed?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (May 1955): 118; Spock began this article with the remark, “In different words several mothers have written letter saying in effect, ‘I feel guilty because I don’t seem to love one child as much as another.’ On the other hand, many parents will say firmly, in talking with a doctor or a neighbor, ‘Of course I love my children equally.’” Spock, “Can You Love All Your Children Equally?” 50; Benjamin Spock, “Good Manners are Often Just a Question of Taste,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (March 1956): 81; Spock mentioned, “A recent letter from a West Coast mother says, ‘I gather, since you commented once that young mothers have a tendency to flaunt your book at grandmothers, that you feel that grandmothers are more put upon than offending, where conflict exists. Believe me, the grandmother is often the offender.’” Spock, “Family Triangle: Mother and Child—And Grandmother,” 28; Benjamin Spock, “Should Your Child Believe in Santa Claus?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (December 1959) pre-published version; Benjamin Spock, “Office Visits,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (October 1960). Draft version.

<sup>92</sup> Spock, “A Parents Needs Enough Self-confidence...”; Benjamin Spock, “Parents Have Rights, too...”

general practitioner—will not make house visits for ordinary illnesses in children.”<sup>93</sup> Elaborating on the importance of an evaluation of an individual, Spock sought to persuade readers that the history of an individual condition could be used as an indicator to examine potential dangers or susceptibility to disease, physical as well as psychological. He did not always agree with every idea parents demonstrated,<sup>94</sup> but, even with disagreement, exchanging ideas became a natural process for both Spock and parents. In addition, Spock also used his own experience to begin his articles. While talking about children’s potential resentment toward parents, he once described that he also felt anger at his parents, but he could never display his feelings toward them.<sup>95</sup>

Correspondence between Spock and parents became an exchange hub of information in yet another sense. Helen Thomas Irwin, who sent her first letter on traveling with children to Spock in December 1954, provided the information based on her experiences with her own child. Noting various experiences while traveling with her small child for nearly five years, Irwin detailed not only her own experiences from her trips, but also her observation of other mothers’ distress.<sup>96</sup> Including her second letter as well,<sup>97</sup> Spock used both letters in a *Ladies’ Home Journal* article.<sup>98</sup> He mostly used her preventative information about the essentials that could help mothers prepare for emergency. Since she observed many cases in which mothers were frustrated with unexpected situations, such as broken bottles for just a short trip, their child’s wetting, places where they could be rejected because of their baby or child, Irwin enumerated helpful

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<sup>93</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Physical Examination,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (August 1960).

<sup>94</sup> See also, Benjamin Spock, “Teasing,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (January 1959) pre-published version.

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Children’s Anger at Parents,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (November 1961).

<sup>96</sup> Helen Thomas Irwin, Letter to author, December 6, 1954.

<sup>97</sup> Helen Thomas Irwin, Letter to author, February 7, 1955; Benjamin Spock, Letter to Helen Thomas Irwin, March 7, 1955.

<sup>98</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Traveling with Children—How to Do It, and Stay Well and Happy in the Process,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (June 1955): 92, 94.

items that might reduce mothers' anxiety, the possibility of their embarrassment, and difficulties.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, Spock added a revised "Traveling with Children" chapter in the second edition with inclusion of Irwin's information.<sup>100</sup> From my perspective, this demonstrates Spock's clear stance on information itself. Distinct from unilateral transmission of information from the expert who was considered to know better and more, Spock showed that he was ready to embrace the validity of information from a caretaker's observation and experiences. This exchange of information could help parents play a more active role in the childrearing process, so they did not have to be just a receiver of classified information from professionals.

Communication with Spock indeed provided a path that led more professional information. In a letter to Nancy Joan Cuthbert in 1960, Spock introduced an article about "how the styles in childrearing have varied in the past 50 years"<sup>101</sup> and books relating to American modern childrearing. With this advice, he considered himself an information mediator who connected parents to information about childrearing, which was not easily accessible to parents.

In this regard, it is not odd that Spock basically opposed to any attempt to frighten parents with experts' professional knowledge. From his perspective, it was not wise for experts to make parents feel incompetent and anxious with exaggerated descriptions of scenarios that parents might or might not face in the future. He stated:

I strongly disapprove of this article on cystic fibrosis as it is slanted. The author seems, unconsciously at least, to be trying to terrify most of the parents of America

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<sup>99</sup> Helen Thomas Irwin, Letter to author, December 6, 1954; Helen Thomas Irwin, Letter to author, February 7, 1955. See also other letters on March 8, 1955; March 17, 1955.

<sup>100</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 540-544; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 543- 546.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Nancy Joan Cuthbert, February 17, 1960; see also Benjamin Spock, Reply to M. P. Spellman, September 8, 1960; Benjamin Spock, Letter to Robert Simon, February 3, 1961.

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by the combined emphasis on (1) the commonness of the disease, (2) the fatal outcome, (3) the incompetence of most doctors to suspect or diagnose it.<sup>102</sup>

This remark demonstrated that Spock wanted to maintain mutual trust between expert and parent since he disagreed with instilling unnecessary doubt about doctors or uncertainty in parents.

When he decided to be exposed to an expanded audience with his monthly contribution to *Ladies' Home Journal*, Spock expressed his concern about how he wanted readers to perceive him. He knew that experts' authoritative attitude did not help promote flexible conversation with readers as shown in a letter to Tina Fredericks, who was a photo editor of *Ladies' Home Journal*:

Be sure if you use captions not to use the one that says "mothers listen when Spock speaks." This is what I'm violently opposed to in theory—that experts know and that parents better pay attention. This is the single greatest handicap of educated parents today. Parents knew how to raise children for tens of thousands of years before there were any other experts and I hope by being as unauthoritative as possible to help to rebuild parental confidence.<sup>103</sup>

He hoped to contribute to the improvement of parental self-trust, not undermine it. Highlighting that mothers are not merely the ones who should unconditionally follow what experts said, Spock wanted a more interactive mode as an effective method to open a friendly conversation.

Similarly, when he was asked by Lucy Kroll about the weekly NBC program on child development, which started in 1955, his reply demonstrated his basic position on how experts should convey their knowledge to the public. His emphasis on practicality might have led his advice to focus on more individualized cases from mothers:

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<sup>102</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Bruce Gould, February 3, 1955; Spock wrote that "These objections of mine come from my strong inclination to avoid frightening parents unnecessarily." Benjamin Spock, Letter to Gladys Denny Shultz, May 19, 1955.

<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Tina S. Fredericks, May 12, 1954.

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I felt that the basic formula should be a conversation between parents and myself because I believe (as do others in the fields of psychiatry, case work, group work and parent education), that parents are helped more by being allowed to express their own questions, problems, frustrations, resentments, objections, than by being told by a professional person what he thinks they ought to do in regard to topics he chooses. I did not want to play too dominant or authoritative a role in the talks because I believe that one of the handicaps carried by many American parents is the attitude they've acquired that they are ignorant and bumbling and that only professionals know the answers.<sup>104</sup>

As this shows, Spock did not want to make parents more diffident with a commanding attitude on his part. Rather, Spock thought that letting them display their feelings, experiences, and observations eventually would enable them to become a real participant in the process.

### **Controlled Independence**

With an increasing bond with Spock, parents seemed to become real actors in the process of childrearing. If they reduced potential external and internal interruptions successfully, parents might become eventually more qualified in possessing childcare information. This also might have more chances to believe that they could achieve more control over their external circumstances by increasing their certainty. However, the provision of the information by Spock required a prerequisite: preparation for the management of the given information. First of all, the information on childcare was not to be directly transmitted from the expert to the readers without

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<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to Lucy Kroll, October 24, 1956. With a similar idea, see also Benjamin Spock, Reply to Marianne Mantel, September 30, 1966.

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his verifying the effectiveness of the information. It was only an expert who could verify the information and provide proper knowledge to those who needed the information. Under the supervision of an expert, an individual could finally become more eligible for treating the information appropriately. With the acquisition and management of the information, the individual acquires a double-edged sword, which made him or her more autonomous and more dependent on experts' advice at the same time.

As mentioned above, through the experience of dealing with the information, the readers, especially parents, possibly gained a sense of autonomy in child rearing since they had more chances to handle the information that the expert gave than before. Their sense of control comes into play here. The experience of managing the information in itself could give the individual the sought-after sense of control, with chances to deal with the information at the individual level, verify the credibility of the information, and decide whether to take it into account or not. Some might think that this was not the most important factor in information management, but through these genuine experiences, the individual, at last, could learn how to handle the information as well as how to acquire an emotional support and assurance that there might be a way to cope with the situation that they faced. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* epitomized this attempt to distribute the necessary information to the targeted readers. Even though it was quite obvious that Spock did not intend to leave all the information in parents' hands and let them do everything that they needed and wanted, his was a noteworthy approach toward the distribution of information.

With the rise of professionalism and expertise during the late nineteenth century, knowledge became more esoteric since information based on the scientific data was

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institutionalized and professionalized.<sup>105</sup> In this transition, the information once possessed by lay people or no one at all needed became something to be verified by the eye of experts. Without that, it was just information floating around that was not verified and credible. Individuals became more and more marginalized in the realm of scientific knowledge. Specific knowledge inevitably became exclusive property for the expert.

Before the popularization of the information about child care, it was fairly difficult to get even generalized information unless people could see their doctor at a regular basis. However, the fact that they could acquire the specific information whenever they wanted could mean something different and significant to the mothers of this era. The popularization of the information about child care, in this case, the publication of the ultra-popular and prominent *Baby and Child Care*, gave readers of his book a tool to get easier access to information based on the accumulated data—scientific data in this case. Revealing this intention in his memoir,<sup>106</sup> Spock's was not a manipulative attempt to promote social control<sup>107</sup> nor merely an ambitious attempt to gain fame and popularity.

Spock's distribution of childcare information had specific meanings in this sense. There is a possible line of reasoning behind this distribution. First of all, Spock intended to share the feeling of control with parents who were situated in unexpected childrearing situations through more effective management of information and even knowledge. Information, strangely enough, is the first tool to be equipped with when individuals encounter and handle each new situation that arises. It would not be difficult to find examples of someone seeking information when he or

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<sup>105</sup> David A. Hollinger, "Inquiry and Uplift: Late Nineteenth Century American Academics and the Moral Efficacy of Scientific Practice," *The Authority of experts: studies in history and theory*, ed. Thomas L. Haskell, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 144-145.

<sup>106</sup> He mentioned, "I try not to cram my ideas down their throats—just to present them with such knowledge as we have about what motivates children at different ages, and let them take over from there." Spock and Morgan, *Spock on Spock*, 126.

<sup>107</sup> Graebner, "The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock: Social Engineering in a Democratic Culture, 1917-1950."

she faces an unpredictable or sudden incident in life. The available information about such an incident such as what it is, how to manage situations, possible management tactics, and even someone else's experience of coping with the situation can give the person some forms of comfort and a belief that he or she can at least do something, and not just face it with a sense of helplessness.

The possibility of using information for their own, further knowledge possibly, can mean the victory of individualism and/or individuality. As professionalism and expertise triumphed, the extant channels of communal information sharing became rare. The once esoteric, professionalized knowledge begin to be shared with non-professionals. Of course, there can be cons with releasing massive generalized information. It can be misinterpreted, so that it rather makes people more confused—something Spock's readers had clearly gone through before encountering Spock. Though he knew the side effect of distributing generalized information, as we know, he did it anyway since he believed its usefulness.

As noted many times in his book, Spock did not suggest that his advice could cover all the cases encountered in child care. He was very cautious about generalization. He clarified that his advice could be used effectively just in case the mother could not see a doctor regularly.<sup>108</sup> Despite his acknowledgement that there were possible dangers of generalization and potential usefulness in only more exceptional cases, Spock attempted to fill this gap with his articles, interviews, and correspondence beside his books. Spock wanted to let readers know that there was such information for parents, which he could offer, so that it needed to be shared with those who wanted to know more of it. With this effort, Spock's advice, I believe, contributed to conversion regarding the transmission of professional information, helping to lay the foundation

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<sup>108</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51, for example.

for the dissemination of liberal ideas of childrearing. But, ironically, and this cannot be disregarded parents could actually become more dependent on the expert's advice at the very same time. The nature of the information that the expert provided was data controlled by the expert's value judgement and selection as we have seen above. Thus, parents' susceptibility might have been intensified within the realm of information circulation and knowledge sharing of the professionalized childrearing tactics, no matter how well-intentioned the earnest aims for the democratization of knowledge, childrearing, and society on the part of America's foremost pediatrician and reluctant expert. This is the complex tension, delicate art, or tightrope act at the heart of the Spock paradox.

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### Conclusion: A Peaceful Polis

When toddlers begin to walk, their enthusiasm about gaining more control over their body sometimes leads them to an unexpected accident. They can bump into a table or any other furniture because of their lack of complete control of their arms and legs. In this scene, it is not difficult to imagine the situation in which a mother tries to sooth her desperately crying baby, saying “what a bad table! I will punish it.” Many might think that blaming the table for hurting the child is absurd because the fault lies in the baby’s action of bumping. However, this unconscious displacement of responsibility is not uncommon. This common example actually tells us a lot about how our mind works and how easily we can be deluded. Psychoanalytic knowledge calls this displacement and projection.

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Spock’s decision to join the peace movement in 1962 seemed to many to undermine his long-lasting positive reputation as a baby doctor.<sup>1</sup> For some parents, his decision was a total disappointment because it meant that Spock was no longer impartial as an authority and his political stance was the opposite of theirs. Some parents were even under the misunderstanding that Spock advocated communist ideas.<sup>2</sup> However, against these accusations, his participation in the antiwar effort can be interpreted as an attempt to continue his long-lasting journey to help minimize the aggressiveness of American society, which he perceived as problematic.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Dr. Spock Is Worried,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1962; Benjamin Spock, *Decent and Indecent: Our Personal and Political Behavior* (New York: McCall Publishing Company, 1969), 92.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Garrett, Jr. Letter to Author, November 16, 1962.

What did Spock mean by aggression? Was it a belligerent action in the war or violent behaviors which were easily detected in juvenile delinquency? Including these somewhat direct forms of aggression, Spock's definition of aggression shows its expansiveness: "I use aggression to mean a full or exaggerated amount of assertiveness, domineeringness, forcefulness, competitiveness, without the implication of hatred, unless I say hostile aggression."<sup>3</sup> The definition of aggression for Spock was quite important because the nature of the term was more complex than previously thought of. Embracing a more extensive meaning of aggression, Spock emphasized that aggression should be dealt with in a more tactful way than before.

Based on his observation of babies and children throughout his pediatric work, Spock claimed that infants were born with the innate inhibition of their own aggressiveness.<sup>4</sup> Most important was not eradication of aggressiveness itself, which he thought impossible, but a careful release from this inhibition. Similar to his advice examined in previous chapters, Spock stressed the control of aggression:

Aggression and hostility mean different things to different people. I think of all human beings as being born with the potentiality for reacting with hostility (loosely synonymous with antagonism, hatred, cruelty, murderousness); but how far it is developed in each will depend on the amount of antagonism and cruelty in his family and on how effectively he is taught to control it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 94.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Innate Inhibition of Aggressiveness in Infancy," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 20 (1965): 340-343. Spock defined an innate inhibition of aggression of infants: "In humans the impulse to bite with the deliberate intent of hurting a person does not show in behavior until about eight or ten months. Even then it is still under enough inhibition to make the infant distinctly cautious in releasing it, and the inhibition is easily reinforced by parental disapproval. Sharp disapproval evokes what appears to be a shame reaction."

<sup>5</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 93.

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Spock neither vilified aggression nor thought it erasable. Rather, for him “there is nothing abnormal about aggression, as long as it is not excessive for the situation.”<sup>6</sup> Also, aggression could be a driving force for human beings to protect themselves when they were attacked by others or a basis to seize the initiative in a potential dispute.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for Spock, the suppression of aggression was not a goal, but the successful control of it was.

Spock wanted to figure out what the fundamental basis of this kind of aggression or hostility was. As shown in his articles, according to his analysis, the fundamental root of aggression came from children’s repression of their uneasy aggressive feelings to mostly their parents, and siblings. This hostility contradicted itself because they could not accept their own “hostile feelings toward other members of the family.”<sup>8</sup> This tension may have led children to the repression of these feelings because they felt guilty about having antipathy toward their loved ones.

In order to deal with this wisely, Spock argued that parents should find a way to ease their child’s inner tension before the repressed feelings eventually exploded. Rather than letting the child act out his or her repressed anger in a violent way, such as “by breaking playthings or damaging the room, or hitting the doctor,”<sup>9</sup> he suggested that parents help their child “more effectively cope with them [hostile feelings]—and his guilt about them—by learning to express them in words.”<sup>10</sup> Through this, the child would recognize negative feelings that he or she tried to evade, and learn how to handle them tactfully.

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<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Spock, “What Makes a Child Aggressive?” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (April 1958): 46.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Spock, “A Child’s Position in the Family,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (November 1955): 92. Spock mentioned the process of how aggression from sibling rivalry could be successfully resolved: “This pattern is the most dramatic evidence that a phase of jealousy—if it is not too overwhelming and if it is gradually digested—may be a truly constructive experience for a child, inoculating him and fortifying him, as it were, against future threats of the same sort.”

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Children’s Anger at Parents,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (November 1961): 1. Draft version.

<sup>9</sup> Spock, “Children’s Anger at Parents,” 3. Draft version.

<sup>10</sup> Spock, “Children’s Anger at Parents,” 4. Draft version.

From Spock's perspective, the world was also in danger because of men's increasing aggression and hostility.<sup>11</sup> However, as opposed to what people during the time thought, it was not only because of the communist threat, but it was because of "the adult's self-deceptive hatreds of other groups and other nations," which led the country to "mounting use of power all over the world."<sup>12</sup> As shown in the table incident above, Spock pointed to projection as a potential way that people harnessed their own unsolved aggression or hostility and justified these feelings to blame or offend others: "The terrible danger is that projection permits individuals, groups, and nations to unleash their hatred and destructiveness."<sup>13</sup> Without self-reflection on what they are doing and responsible for, projection could easily provide the reason for hostile actions:

Even a person with high intelligence and generally excellent judgment can delude himself in such an interplay, as if he had no more insight than a small child who scolds the table when he bumps into it. He blandly puts a righteous interpretation on all his own actions and the worst possible interpretation on his opponents' actions.<sup>14</sup>

Taking this into consideration, Spock thought that this displaced hostility should be controlled in a proper way within the healthy relationship of family members. Since the displacement of aggression that was not resolved in a healthy way might extend to other kinds of aggressive and violent ideas, behaviors, or attitudes, building up a stable and mutual relationship was fundamental from his point of view. Spock implied that children learned power relations

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<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to William Dozier, October. 5, 1966. In his reply to Dozier, Spock demonstrated his concern about the situation: "I see many evidences that our country is sliding more and more into a casual acceptance of violence and I'll do everything in my power to call attention to it."

<sup>12</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 93.

<sup>13</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 111.

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through identification or mutual interactions within the family in the first place.<sup>15</sup> Within this reciprocal relationship, children's healthy sublimation depended on how parents reacted to the signs of inborn aggression: "But most cases of aggressiveness start with tensions inside the family and have to be solved by relieving these tensions."<sup>16</sup> This explains Spock's major emphasis on the indispensable role of parents' proper care throughout his advice of *Baby and Child Care* and other writings.

At the same time, children's experiences with other people, including parents, were also significant for another reason. When Spock pointed out "domineeringness" as "an important subdivision of aggression,"<sup>17</sup> he elaborated that the notion of power and submission could develop within children's relationship with others. Spock implied that the promotion of a suitable environment was a key element to the management of individual aggression: "To put it the other way, each individual is kept in his place and kept civilized by being surrounded by self-respecting people who won't let him take advantage of them. Of course the individual's self-discipline, built up through childhood, will play a part, too."<sup>18</sup> Growing up in such environment was fundamental to avoid forming a dominating and authoritative personality.

Spock thought that a dominating personality could also be prevented by being educated "to be conscious of their individual and group power drives, honest in not pretending that these are something else, obligated to discipline them to serve primarily the genuine needs of society."<sup>19</sup> He believed that self-awareness of the nature of power drives and the will to control them for the communal purposes of the society could protect each individual from forming a

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<sup>15</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 106.

<sup>16</sup> Spock, "What Makes a Child Aggressive?" 200; see also Spock, "Children's Anger at Parents," Draft version.

<sup>17</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 108.

<sup>19</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 108.

self-centered and authoritarian perspective. Spock emphasized that potential power drives could be managed by a more altruistic and public spirited mind:

And fascination with power is perilous unless it is controlled by a humanitarian drive and a touch of humility. I have a particular mistrust, from personal knowledge, of the person who is so brilliant that he feels he doesn't need to listen to other people's views or to question his own.<sup>20</sup>

Ironically and interestingly, he elaborated that excessive self-assurance was not true confidence and did not help to achieve controlled aggression. He argued that one needed balanced self-esteem, not blind self-deception.

One thing to note here is Spock's stance on children's potentially early exposure to violence. When he talked about children's war toys and the influence of TV, radio, and comics in the 1940s and 1950s, Spock did not seem aware of the impact of these media on children. He explained that children sometimes needed to release their aggressiveness through these means by expressing their anger or violent feelings.<sup>21</sup> However, his stance eventually shifted gears toward opposing to earlier exposure to these things in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> His writings on aggression dealt with the question of whether watching brutality affected children's perception of how to behave. In *Decent and Indecent*, Spock clearly showed his stance against children's early exposure to violent contents on TV or war toys:

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<sup>20</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 125.

<sup>21</sup> Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 320; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 393.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Spock, Reply to Sonja Lid Larseen, November 14, 1963. Spock wrote about his changed position of the idea about early exposure to cruelty and violence: "Lately I have changed my mind and my advice to a degree. I've become aware that some young American children, after viewing brutal scenes on television, have behaved cruelly to each other. I've told parents that I thought it wrong to let children view such programs because they can coarsen a child's feelings, and that children should not be allowed to be physically cruel to each other."; see also Benjamin Spock, Reply to Helen Rand Miller, April 23, 1964.

We should help our children better to master their aggressiveness by prohibiting meanness, forbidding them to watch brutality on television, declining to buy them war toys, pointing out to them at each occasion, at home and at school, their natural tendency to project their hostility onto others.<sup>23</sup>

Opposed to frequent contact with violence on media<sup>24</sup> or play,<sup>25</sup> Spock argued that “we should be curbing our children’s aggressiveness and orienting them more deliberately toward world peace.”<sup>26</sup>

Rather than displaying the explosiveness of their violent feelings repressed or suppressed temporarily, Spock believed, children should deal with their hostile feelings in a more controlled form. For example, in a letter to Muzza Eaton whose five-year-old daughter displayed aggressiveness to her cat as well as her younger brother,<sup>27</sup> Spock agreed with her idea that her daughter’s hostility should be expressed a more rational form: “I agree that children should be allowed to verbalize aggression in the sense of its being admitted on all sides in the family that everyone feels angry at others sometimes. But I don’t think that it’s desirable to let children whack each other regularly, or insult adults, or play hostile games or watch violence on television.”<sup>28</sup>

Spock’s meticulous analysis of aggression was further revealed in his ideas about social protest movements. As mentioned in the introduction, Spock received lots of criticisms from his critics during the 1960s that his childrearing advice eventually led the youth to be unruly and

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<sup>23</sup> Spock, *Decent and Indecent*, 142; see also Benjamin Spock, Letter to Basil Coltson, June 15, 1961.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Television, Radio, Comics and Movies,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (April 1960). Draft version.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Spock, “Pistol Play,” *Redbook Magazine* (August 1964). Draft version.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Spock, Letter to John S. Gilmore, May 24, 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Muzza Eaton, Letter to Author, February 6, 1961.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Spock, Reply to Muzza Eaton, April 17, 1961.

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rebellious, and that his book in particular was a catalyst promoting student protest movements. Distinguishing student and social protest from uncontrolled aggression such as the blind craving for power, discrimination, and a dominating attitude, Spock pointed out in a *Redbook Magazine* article in 1970 that having a voice for a good cause was not rebellious aggression that was needed to be suppressed, but controlled aggression.<sup>29</sup> Rather, he highlighted the importance of self-controlled and spontaneous thinking through an explanation about the purpose of the higher education:

The basic purpose of any university is to discover the truth and to equip student to use the truth in their lives. It should not be the purpose of a university just to teach the students to think the way the legislature or the alumni or the trustees of the administration or even the faculty would like them to think. That's indoctrination. Students, as future citizens, have to learn to think for themselves so that they will be able to play their part in overcoming the ignorance and mistakes of the past.<sup>30</sup>

Spock thought that it was indispensable to promote self-directed learning for students because the obstruction of free thinking was rather based on uncontrolled aggression or hostility to others or the desire to dominate the process of how they think.

Spock's advice on the question of how to raise babies and children properly turned fundamentally into the question of how human beings could effectively control aggressiveness—how carefully to release innately inhibited aggression and have

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<sup>29</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Why Young People Protest," *Redbook Magazine* (April 1970): 50. Spock thought that temporary violence that students displayed during the protest movements was a strategic method to "get the attention of the majority."

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Spock, "Why Young People Protest," 48.

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aggression controlled. The importance of an ability to control one's own aggressiveness lay in nurturing an eligible, and at the same time happy, citizen who could contribute to sustaining peace in the world. As discussed in this dissertation, Spock's childrearing advice can be interpreted as an attempt to perpetuate more delicate control of individuals as opposed to the criticism that he contributed to the unruliness of the youth during the 1960s. In Spock's effort to lay groundwork for sustainable self-control, the Spock Paradox demonstrated quite an ambivalent portrait of how seemingly permissive—informalized but deliberate—control was to permeate American society during the mid-twentieth century as in the various forms of everyday language, common knowledge, and manners.

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### **Vita**

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