

Edgar Z. Friedenberg

The Oppressive Synergy between School and Family

A number of other articles in this issue are alert to what they hope will be a productive synergy, one that must evolve between home, school, and other institutions if the concept of "mainstreaming" is to succeed in practice. Delivered in another context, Friedenberg's remarks on a synergy that already operates between home and school to compel conformity in the young, as an element of essential political and economic function within our total culture, have a peculiarly daunting significance. Such a cultural mechanism seems irreversible, and "there are no nice cultures;" nearly all children are handicapped by being born into families that, far from offering resistance on their behalf, collaborate in their oppression. Can conscious efforts like mainstreaming really break this cycle, help children to understand themselves and where and who they are in the world, and increase the number of those exceptional families which provide society with a "small but crucial source of heroes in times of crisis"?

The family is one of the most difficult of all subjects to talk sensibly about, for several reasons. So much has been said already; while each of us, willy-nilly, knows far more about family life than we will ever be able to remember. Our perceptions of what the family is and does are not so much limited by inexperience as distorted by sampling error. Tolstoi, of course, observed that happy families are all alike, which, if true, would make it unnecessary to include many of those in our study; but they appear, from historical and biographical evidence, to constitute a small proportion anyway. Most of us must accept the fact that each family is unique, and very similar to others, which certainly does not make us feel less qualified as experts on the costs and the promise of family life.

But the family would be hard to talk sensibly about even if the knowledge we derive from our own family life could be assumed to apply to family life in general. It is impossible to be fully aware of, much less to be sensible and discerning about, the most important things which happened to us as children; and the

consequent omissions and repressions make it equally impossible for us to be fully aware of and candid about our motives and our behaviour as parents. The politics of the family, as Laing has emphasized,¹ is the dirtiest and most obscurantist politics that ever happens. Jimmy Carter and Jerry Brown are, no doubt, determined rivals of Teddy Kennedy; but he is unlikely to find them able to do anything to him that Jack and Bobby have not already far surpassed — though the experience of the past might be more useful to him if he could only remember just what they did, and how he felt about it at the time. But none of us can; the most effective psychoanalysis can do no more than cut back the twisted vines of memory enough to clear a little stage on which we can struggle with our present difficulties in the clearest light we can afford; while nameless but familiar terrors continue to lurk in the surrounding jungle.

This by no means exhausts the difficulties. For language, of course, reflects in both its content and its structure the patterns of anxiety that characterize a culture and the black holes of the collective unconscious in which the culture absorbs the insights and the energy that might otherwise rip it apart. (I am not sure that it is physically possible to reflect a black hole, but I hope the meaning of the metaphor is clear.) Our language scarcely permits us to formulate clearly — if we can even imagine — totally unfamiliar goals of socialization, to be approached by equally novel ways of —

Well, ways of what? I was on the point of writing “rearing children,” on the assumption that that, irreducibly, was something every society must have to do, but that is a very patriarchal assumption. Everybody has to learn, in the course of growing up, the ways people *spo*zed to act in the community, and the skills and perceptions needed to act in these ways. But that doesn’t mean that older people, beginning with those who, by possibly heedless fucking, imposed upon him or her the gift of life, must perceive or define the younger person as an object of scheduled instruction. Ways of inducting the young into the culture? Obviously, it must happen somehow, if the community is to last more than a generation; but few cultures fully share the western propensity for dividing the world into agents and patients, with what we call children relegated to the role of those who are acted upon.

The basic difficulty is that what goes on in the family is the very heart of our culture — a culture, moreover, in which heart disease is a leading cause of death — and language and the concepts it deals with are thoroughly culture-bound, especially at the conative level. Conation presents far more barriers to communication than cognition: it is easy to imagine that another people may know something we don’t, especially with the help of a little paranoia; but it is difficult to imagine a people whose motives and driving force are totally different, and who must therefore relate to one another in ways that we could not really believe even if we could imagine them. This, basically, is why sensitivity training and/or didactic seminars avail so little in getting English and French Canadians, or gays and straights, to understand where the other is coming from: their experience of life is seen as resting on an infrastructure of sheer self-

deception, if not outright hypocrisy: How can anybody really have such feelings? Thus Oscar Wilde found it possible to epitomize Victorian family life and its underlying values by observing that only a man with a heart of stone could read of the death of Little Nell without bursting out laughing.

Political consequences of birth

It is universally observed that the human female is regarded by her offspring as so unbearable that they tear themselves from her womb after nine months — long before they are able to cope as other mammals do. Their immaturity at birth has far-reaching political consequences. People everywhere have experienced years of helpless dependency on others — whom, in order to avoid overwhelming anxiety and despair, they must romanticize as better-disposed toward them and more benign than people usually are to strangers, even little strangers; especially if those strangers are a financial burden, do not speak the local language well, and tend to be unsanitary in their habits. From this experience alone, humankind must share a predilection toward authority and a proneness to underestimate their own potential competence to manage their own lives that a wolf-cub would find odd, and probably distasteful. (I have deliberately chosen the wolf for comparison since they, too, form social groups and nurture their young, but seem more often to retain their dignity in adulthood. As cubs they experience much danger, but little humiliation.)

We can be reasonably sure, therefore, that every human society will, beneath whatever superstructure of civility and benevolence it may maintain, depend on mystification, constraint, and punishment for the preservation of peace, order, and good government; and that it will display some form of social stratification which the less privileged will usually accept as appropriate if not just, according their superiors more trust and honour than they would seem, on their merits, to deserve. Exceptions to this very limited rule seldom bear much scrutiny. In my student days, which included the dawn and brief flowering of New-Deal corporate liberalism in the United States, Ruth Benedict's essay on the Hopi and Zuni was very widely read and evoked enthusiastic admiration for these gentle, cooperative, impunitive and uncompetitive people. With the advent of the Eisenhower era came revisionism; Esther Goldfrank, in her turn, published an almost equally influential study emphasizing the terror and pain the *kachina* dancers inflicted on young people awaiting initiation, especially if they tended to show a little initiative; and the threat of banishment which constrained any adult from telling a Hopi child that the dread masked figure which menaced him was only his uncle Sam or Ernie, as the case might be, and as harmless as uncles invariably are.

There are no nice cultures, though some are much more oppressive than others. But few, if any, more positive statements hold true for societies generally. In many, the young do not grow up as members of what we would call a family. Sometimes the young males are sequestered for early indoctrination, as

in Sparta or, among the higher social strata, in nineteenth and early twentieth century England. In most of the world, even today, the discernible social unit is the village, whose members relate to one another through complex kinship patterns which vary from one culture to another through the entire range of possibility. Some form of marriage is almost universal, and the community recognizes, though it does not necessarily respect, the conjugal rights thus established, which may of course be plural. But there need not be separate households; and even when there are, the community may not be uptight about whose children belong to whom or how they came to be conceived. Indeed, in most of the world, they are not and cannot be *so* conceived. As Dorothy Lee pointed out years ago in her classic monograph *Freedom and Culture*, there are many languages in which you cannot express the idea “my child” or ask, “and whose little girl are you?”² Those who speak these languages know people can’t possess people, though evil spirits can. Nor have they a word, or concept, corresponding to “bastard.” A relationship may be recognized and deplored or condemned as illegitimate, but not a baby; and if there is a special word for such a child it does not also mean “vile.” Few so-called primitive languages would tolerate the imprecision of usage which designates both Idi Amin and most of his offspring by the same term.

If you wish to recall the appalling and degrading confusion which can result from trying to invoke our norms in a culture which relates differently to children — even one which has perforce become familiar with our ways through several years of intimate if unfriendly association — remember what happened with regard to the children of American servicemen when their fathers were so abruptly, albeit belatedly, withdrawn from Vietnam. Some were kidnapped, to save them from communism — in retrospect, they may have been relatively fortunate, though the episode was shameful at the time. Many, of course, were abandoned, and there is nothing novel about that. But those fathers who wish to seek out and identify “their” children usually find it impossible not only because of the ensuing and prevailing chaos but because the concept just doesn’t apply; the kinship patterns don’t mesh; the authorities don’t seem to have a form that asks the right questions.

Even in those times and places in which family patterns prevail that look to us substantially like our own, with households composed of persons closely related by blood who expect to go on living together until the younger members form homes of their own, these households have been characterized by a very different climate of feeling from what we have come to regard — often with profound aversion — as normal. They have been less purposive, less instrumental, less wilful. This is not to imply that they were necessarily less oppressive, or that their younger members were treated more considerately; the very contrary was likely to be true, because the parents attached less importance to the children *as a product*. They were more likely to be ignored and their interests disregarded, or to be exploited as labour or — less often — emotionally. But unless they were upper bourgeoisie with a family firm to carry on, or a lesser bourgeois family

who had adopted such a role-model, the family fortunes were not perceived as linked to the training — or upbringing, or education — that might be imposed upon the children. And, especially, the self-esteem of the family was not linked to any fine gradations of status that the younger generation might achieve in the outer world. True, a son or daughter in prison or on the streets brought disgrace upon a family. But the parents did not as often regard themselves as entrepreneurs engaged in producing a highly competitive article on whose merits they themselves expected to be judged and to judge themselves. There was plenty of snobbery — more than there is today, probably, if Jane Austen is to be believed. But there wasn't so much expertise, so much technology, so many monitors of physical, academic, emotional and social progress. If you didn't fall clean out of your social class, you were probably doing OK.

Children as product

Talcott Parsons, of course, long ago placed this increasing instrumentalism of the western bourgeois family in an intelligible theoretical framework.³ He has often been quoted as likening the family to a launching pad from which the children, and especially sons, are sent forth to outstrip the achievements of their parents, with the parents' blessing and, indeed, at their internalized command. This must greatly complicate the Oedipal conflict; and it certainly imposes some new responsibilities on the modern family: the need, or, one might say, the *chutzpah*, to monitor the child's way of loving and committing himself — not simply to preserve him or her from socially undesirable entanglements, but to restrict his capacity and his tendency to even make such attachments and invest them with permanent meaning. (Dedicated executives must, if necessary, outgrow their spouses and replace them with more appropriate models.) Mental health care, a bizarre concept in itself, becomes a very expensive kind of grooming; and its criterion is effective participation in what Warren Bennis has called, approvingly, the Temporary Society in his 1968 work of that title.

All this is too familiar to bear elaboration here; but I would like to stress that these developments have markedly altered the nature of generational oppression. The oppressive elders of Dickens' novels were harsh, exploitive, hypocritical, basically indifferent to the children they used and wasted. They didn't care what happened to them. But middle-class children now are likely to experience parental care as the instrument, the device, of manipulative exploitation — not that it isn't genuine: people care for their children as they care for their cars, and panic if they can't keep them well-fed and running smoothly.

Do they also love them? Undoubtedly, in most cases, most of the time. But the fact that parental love is now not only experienced but institutionalized as a technique — a highly effective technique — for the efficient production of effective human beings makes it all the more difficult for a child to tell whether he or she is loved even when the parent is in no doubt. There are no longer actions that signal love unambiguously, and there are not even supposed to be. Televi-

sion commercials and jolly school personnel alike are open and unapologetic about the usefulness of *administering* warmth and friendliness as the most effective means of social control. You can't really tell any more, unless you have an uncanny capacity for empathy; as children do before they are socialized. But nothing erodes this capacity more thoroughly than a regime of inauthentic expression.

This is what I loathe most about behaviour-modification. Its defenders like to argue that there is nothing that novel about the process: we all do it to one another when we reward behaviour that pleases us with a smile and punish offensive behaviour with a frown or by withholding affection; and this is the way people normally learn how to act in their society. Behaviour modifiers are reluctant to acknowledge — or, perhaps, do not perceive — that it makes all the difference in the world whether what a child experiences is the way the people around him genuinely respond to his *self*, as this develops; or whether they plan and control their responses in order to induce him to become the kind of person they think other people will value, so that they can value him, too. And in a society in which people accept such manipulation as natural, those who do not practise it are less likely to be perceived as emotionally honest than as egocentric and cold, since they don't *communicate* as zealously as most people. This leads to a very confused kind of generation gap, across which the older generation, in a neat but distressing reversal of the Laingean tradition, is caught in a painful double-bind: no matter what it does, it gets blamed for being devoid of genuine feeling; though the kid does expect some sort of prize if he can guess which shell really has some feeling hidden under it.

To love is not to decree

It is reasonable — though I think incorrect — to argue that, in any case, I have established a false dichotomy here, since if you love someone you naturally want him or her to be successful and well-regarded by his neighbors, and therefore have more and better life-chances. Is not this sort of solicitude for the child's future the very core of parental responsibility, and the central function of responsible child-rearing? Yes, if its purpose is to help the child develop the kind of clarity about himself and understanding of the world and his place in it that will allow him to be more effective in setting and reaching his own goals, in self-realization. (Please notice, parenthetically, that the English language is really bucking against me at this point: people don't possess goals, and should not be possessed by them; harmonious selfhood is not a set of goals but a process; and a self does not exist except in relation to the others and the society of which it is a part, as a figure in the carpet, to use Henry James' metaphor.)

Self-realization is seldom a pleasant process, for the self seldom grows through self-indulgence, and the world does not exist for our convenience; other people have purposes, and rights. A loving parent does all he or she reasonably can to help the children make intelligent choices in setting their path through

life, and this includes warning them about dangers they might not know about and sometimes — though this is tricky — intervening to reduce those dangers. But it is no act of love to decree where the path should lead, or obstruct it with missionary (or, as has recently been more common, anti-missionary) zeal.

Some of my readers may find this discussion very class-biased, since only middle-class people are likely to go on this way about child-rearing. The hazards and meannesses of a life of poverty justify poor people in coercing their children if necessary into doing what they have to do to get off the streets and out of the ghetto, whether this means doing well in school, following orders, keeping clear of dangerous friends, or whatever. But my view of poverty is starker than this. Whatever social class a child is in, he and he alone has to live his life, and the better he can understand himself and where and who he is in the world, the abler he will be to do it. Being poor is bad to begin with, and one of the bad things about it is that you will probably grow up among people who are themselves too often desperate and harassed to be able to give you space to grow in or to allow you to make it for yourself — *unless they are very ambitious for you to succeed*. But I'm just not sure that all this makes it any worse; or, for that matter, very different. You can't grow much with somebody on your back all the time, and whether they whip you along or just hold the reins gently but firmly and always keep your head pointed the way they want you to go and actually let you eat the carrot isn't really the point. In neither case are you going to find out where you want to go, or recognize it if you should get there.

The question is not at all whether child-rearing should be more permissive or less. My basic point is best illustrated by the fact that there has been so much controversy about this; that, as has often been pointed out, in our society fashions in child-rearing have altered drastically about once each decade — and not just in the middle class, either; fashions filter down, or sometimes, seep up. Each of these technologies has been thought, in its time, to be more likely to succeed than old-fashioned ways. But the very idea of *successful* child-rearing is absurd, and the fact that it is regarded as normal in our society is itself conclusive evidence of its inherent lack of dignity. If parents think they are turning out a product, it's going to be insulting no matter how they do it and how much goodwill they bring to the task. Oh, sure, it makes a difference what method you use, a big difference. Like in those advertisements for Hartmann (I think it is) attaché cases, only just the opposite. For the cheaper models, you use real belting leather; for the top of the line, you use plastic. Only the basic craftsmanship is the same.

Political consequences of family life

The family as we have come to know it, it seems, is a decentralized production unit; each one turning out at least a marginally different model, and some highly specialized indeed with a lot of custom workmanship. Enormous pride and great anxiety go into the work. Even the most skilled and devoted parents

sometimes blow it, there are so many imponderables: Jimmy takes a bright shine; Billy is a dull white. And here I have been trying to discuss in psychological and philosophical terms what turns out to be, basically, a set of economic and political processes.

R. D. Laing's brilliant and original discussion of *The Politics of the Family*, though enormously revealing, has been in one respect rather confusing. Laing's magisterial approach to the topic has effectively defined it and set its normal limits, and Laing has been almost entirely concerned with the internal politics of the family; that is, with the power relationships that become established within a family, the processes by which these relationships express themselves, and the often destructive psychological consequences for family members, especially though by no means exclusively the younger ones. His observations are tragic epiphanies; but their scene is private, the foyer and the clinic. Laing also stresses that the definition of an individual's state of mind as psychopathic is in fact a political assault upon his being; to define a person as mentally ill is, in effect, a means of depriving him of influence and of civil rights. But no one — not even Laing — would suggest that to do this is the social function of the family. What that function is Laing does not explore; and while Parsons made it his central concern, he did not address it in political terms. This is the question with which, it seems, we must now deal; not the internal politics of the family, but the political consequences of our kind of family life.

The most important of these, in my judgment, is the converse of what Parsons stresses as the most important social function of the school. Parsons saw compulsory school attendance as vital to the modern, democratic polity because it serves as the instrument by which people at an early age are removed from the family; in which they are given affection and nurturance — in variable amounts, to be sure — simply because they are the children of the family, as a matter of custom if not of right. The school inducts them into the larger world in which they learn to accept that they will be treated as members of a socially defined group, assessed and governed by policies that were established as social norms before they entered the group and that apply to all its members, however inconvenient they may find them. Some of these are expressed in formal rules; far more are embodied in informal procedures; but all apply to everyone. This is the way people are obliged to make the basic transition from the particularism of the home to the universalism of the society at large, in the terminology sociology uses to express this basic change. Children are somebody special at home; but to get special consideration in school and subsequent serious social situations you have to win it, if not by playing by the official rules, at least by pragmatically mastering the accepted limits of dirty pool. This, basically, is how you learn to make it in the wonderful world of whatever.

This is now conventional wisdom; but what is less stressed is the role of the family in, as we say, bringing these group judgments and assessments home to the pupil who is subjected to them. In the old days, "a licking at school means a

licking at home” was a common maxim; today, it is the emphasis parents place on school records that makes these effective instruments of motivation and control. “Parents refuse to co-operate with the school” is one of the most pejorative entries that can be placed in a child’s dossier; it is taken to mean that the socialization process has been shorted out and delinquency and drift loom ahead. But parents usually *do* cooperate with the school, take its judgments to heart, and inflict them on their young. This is one basic reason for grade inflation: the schools’ judgments of proficiency are still largely based on social and to a lesser degree academic skills that are reinforced by a bourgeois life-style; but it is not bold enough to face the hassle that lower-status parents create when their children are designated as failures. Working-class parents are even less likely than middle-class parents (some of whom, at this point in time, are willing to follow my friend John Holt’s lead and arrange for their children to learn without schooling) to shrug off the school’s judgments and rely on their own; and they fear, justly, the practical consequences of academic stigma. So the home provides no haven in a heartless world; its walls are a diaphragm that transmit and often amplify the world’s vibrations.

No right to flee

The family also plays a very important role in defining the basic framework of civil rights. It is a major instrument by which people below a certain age are deprived of them. Not the only instrument, of course; the schools have their own mandate; and the juvenile justice system continues to function in splendid disregard for the most part of the Constitution, though a number of judicial decisions like *in re Gault*⁴ have begun to establish some marginal and procedural guarantees for American, though not yet for Canadian youngsters. But children are vulnerable above all to their parents, since the parent is assumed to be benign and protective unless proved otherwise — a decision courts are most reluctant to reach — and is legally responsible for controlling the children. Most status offenses, therefore, involve attempts to evade the authority of parents or schools, even in the least challenging way possible — that is, by truancy or running away. Even suicide is unlawful; though the offense is difficult to prosecute and an increasing proportion of adolescents have been trying it lately. So, apparently, have children; but this is more difficult to establish, since our cultural conception of children tends to deprive them even of free will. Below the age of about seven — it varies in different jurisdictions — you can’t have criminal intent, and nobody is likely to grasp that you tried to poison yourself. The bottle just should have had a childproof cap.

To define a person as a child, like defining him a criminal or a lunatic, is to deprive him or her of the right to flee from even the most hostile and abusive social situation. There do exist certain officials and functionaries who can take rather cumbersome legal measures, as *guardian ad litem and next friend*, which may or not — usually will not — extricate him from an abusive home. But there is nothing the child can do himself. There is also not much anyone else can do

unofficially to help him. It is illegal to harbour a runaway; and if you love such a minor and are yourself an adult, the penalties are virtually lethal. Foreclosing by law the child's alternatives, to life as a member of his own family, is thought of and justified as a way of protecting him. The intent of the family is assumed to be benign. The intent of a friendly employer or other related adult is assumed to be at least potentially to exploit or to molest. The wishes of the child have little or no bearing on the matter; there is usually no legal way to take account of them. Even in divorce proceedings, children in most jurisdictions have no legal right to a voice, much less a choice, as to which parent they will live with; judges now more frequently consult them before reaching a decision as to custody, but they are not required to and need not be influenced by the child's wishes. And certainly, the child who has survived the domestic crash has no right or opportunity to decide that he'd rather not fly with *either* of these inept pilots any more, if he can make more satisfactory arrangements or try his own wings.

This is really an extraordinary state of affairs; though it is held to be so natural. Children are weak, and need protection, obviously, aren't they? Yes, for a time, though not all for the same number of years and not, usually, for a quarter of their whole life. But that is not the point, because protection is not what the law or social custom provides. When a conflict of interest arises, the law protects the family rather than the child, and it denies the child protection from acts that would be felonious if committed upon it by anyone other than a parent. To justify this as necessary if the parent is to fulfill his responsibilities to protect and provide for the child is beside the point; it does not meet the issue I am raising. It may or may not be true; but it's like arguing that police must be armed if they are to fulfill their responsibilities in a violent world. Whether that is true or not, it has no bearing on the question whether police are the most effective way of maintaining social order, or whether in fact they contribute more to the problem than the solution. And it tells you even less about whether a particular state of social order ought to be preserved, and in whose interests it is to preserve it. What is evident is that the police are, like all social institutions, an artefact; and that much of their apparent effectiveness arises from the fact that they have been granted a monopoly on the legitimate means of doing what, it is assumed, has to be done.

Children, too — like women — are social artefacts. They share, as women do, certain distinctive biological and possibly psychological characteristics which will, under certain circumstances, prove to be weaknesses. But those circumstances are themselves the consequences of particular policies. The fact that children cannot move safely in a community without risking being run over or ripped off tells you more about the community's priorities and lousy design than it does about children. Where would children go if they were allowed to leave home because they couldn't bear it there any longer? They couldn't support themselves, people would assault them, even sexually. What would happen to them? Well, all those questions used to be raised about wives, too; and the answers were the same because the dominant forces in the society moulded its

institutions in such a way as to see to it that runaway wives had no place to go, could not earn a living or own their own property, or live unmolested in a sexual union even if they abandoned any claim upon their husband. How could women ever do such things? What would happen to the family and society if they were allowed to try?

A legal monopoly of intimate nurture

Well, it has happened, and we still have a social order and a semblance of civilization. I am not arguing here for the liberation of either women or children; I would if I thought it was either useful or necessary, and I sometimes do, but that is not my present purpose. I am merely demonstrating that our kind of family is a legal artefact. That doesn't imply that it is an arbitrary arrangement; it has deep social and historical roots that make it very difficult to change by deliberate action. I can't tell whether it does more good than harm; I doubt that this is a meaningful question, since the family's legal monopoly of the lives of young humans makes it impossible to explore possible alternatives. People try, of course; there are communal living arrangements secular and religious, homosexual *ménages* which afford displaced and unwanted boys shelter and tenderness rather than the risk of murder. But these are likely at any time to be attacked and dismembered by the state, which hardly helps make them stable or cozy; and even those which avoid this risk lack the fiscal sanctions that, in the form of tax breaks and established property rights, hold many conventional households together through times of peril — sometimes, to be sure, long after they should have been amicably dissolved.

It is clearly apparent that this legal monopoly of the intimate nurture of the young has fundamental political consequences. We have discussed some of these already, while others have been made familiar by, for example, Marxist critics who point out that the family is the archetype of the institutional arrangements by which modern industrial societies govern the conduct of their members: paternalism and hierarchy; mystification — the matters that affect the lives of children most crucially may not be discussed with them or even in their presence, which helps them as they grow older to accept the concept of classified information; the presumption that the work of women is of minimal economic value. All this is valid enough, and serves to complement Parsons' more favorable but equally valid analysis. But the family has even more fundamental political effects, of which such examples as these, though they involve the most basic commitments to existing social institutions and hence are the very heart of cultural continuity, are in a sense epiphenomena.

The most basic political function of the family is the structuring of feeling itself; indeed, in Freudian terms, the structuring of the unconscious in its relation to what can become conscious and hence available to choice. The unconscious is the invention of the mononuclear, internal-combustion family; and its political consequences transcend particular social content. The norms of

society, at any one time and place, provide the content of socialization; but the family makes the young vulnerable to it.

What the family is supposed to do, and does superbly well, is to lower the child's resistance to socialization. It's where the consequences of disapproval, rejection, being different, failing (or sometimes, succeeding) are too distressing to be borne. It's where you learn to be literally *apprehensive*, to notice the tightening of the lines around the teacher's mouth when you aren't picking up the right cues. There isn't, really, that much she can do to you; but the feelings that overwhelmed you when mother looked like that and you were two years old, and the awareness that she still gets like that when you get too smart, are enough to keep you in line.

Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage.
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an Hermitage.

In a good home the parents will make sure that for their own good their children, faced with the threat of prison, will *not* have a mind innocent and quiet, and will collapse in childish confusion and sobs of remorse when confronted with their misconduct. Nearly every home has its own unplanned but hardly innocent "scared straight" programme. There are exceptions, of course, and societies depend on such exceptional families to provide them with a small but crucial source of heroes in times of crisis. Even about this, though, there is consistent ambivalence: the hero must not finally triumph over secular authority; the ones who are cool and competent enough to see that their enemies drink the hemlock or die on the cross prepared for them — these do not become legends. It seems reasonable to infer that Socrates, had he been present at the Stonewall Inn at the time of the historic raid, would have counseled his companions to submit quietly to arrest.⁵ But Socrates, too, to the best of his ability, was a family man; and certainly a loyal citizen. They go together, these traits. Then as now.

NOTES

A version of this paper, commissioned by the Department of Social Foundation of Education, was presented at the State University of New York, Buffalo, in July 1979.

1. R. D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corp., 1969).
2. Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959).
3. Talcott R. Parsons, "The Social Structure of the Family," in Ruth N. Ashen (ed.), *The Family: Its Function and Destiny* (New York: Harper, 1949).
4. In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1 (1967).
5. The events of June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street, New York City, are now recognized internationally by the homosexual community as marking a beginning in their fight for civil rights.