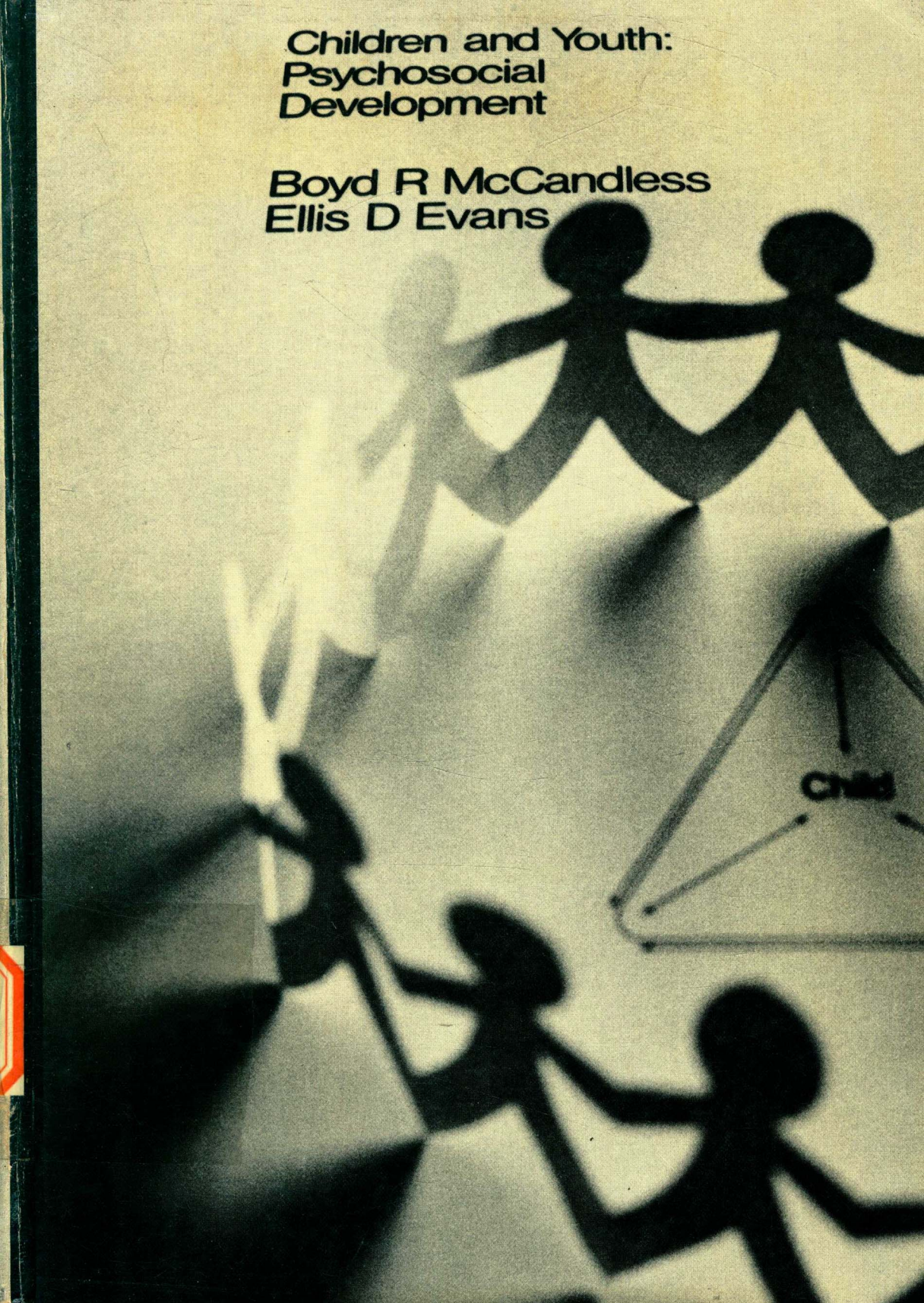
Children and Youth: Psychosocial Development

Boyd R McCandless
Ellis D Evans



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Psychosocial Development

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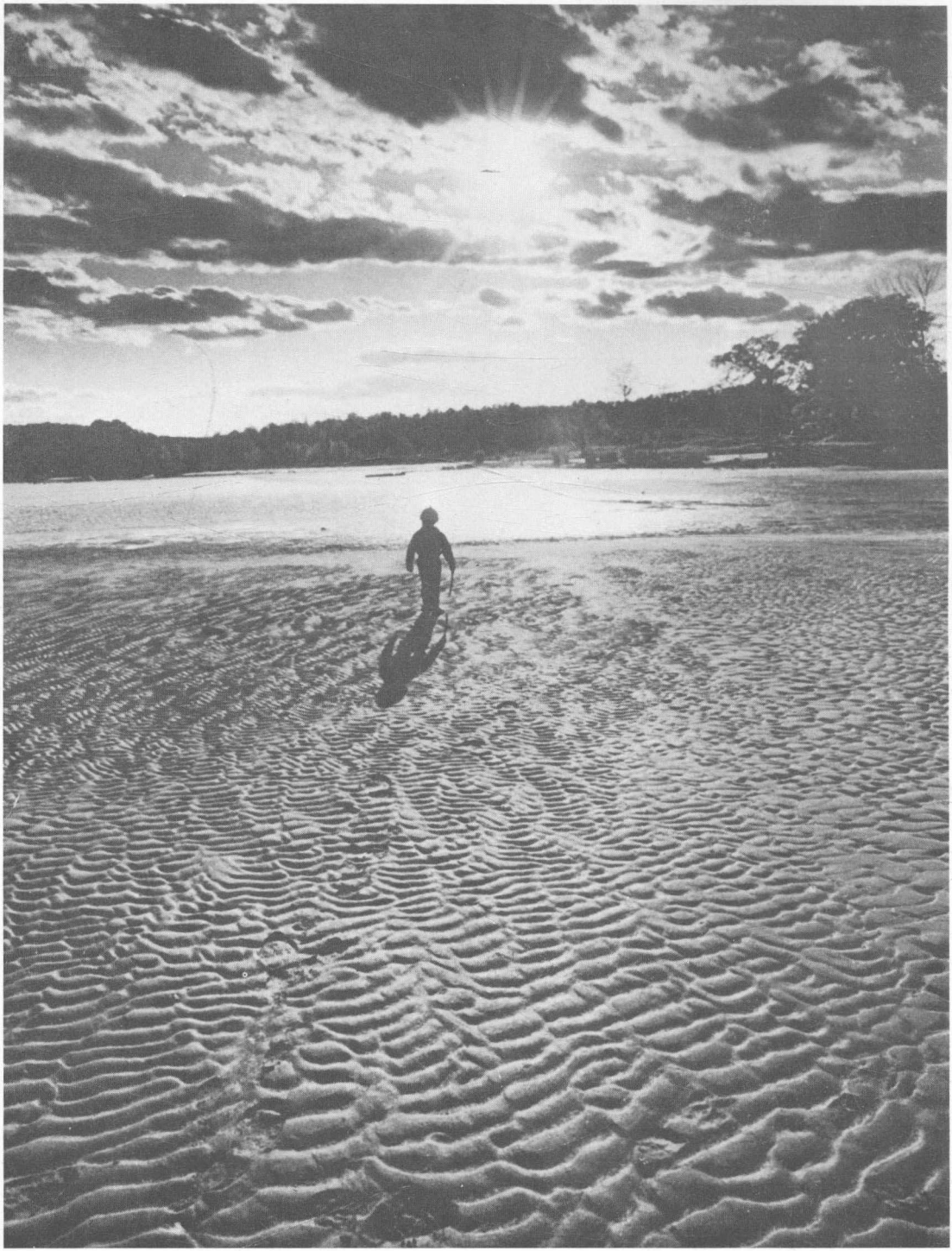

Wide World Photos

To Our Wives and Children
With much love and gratitude

Preface

The two of us who have written this book—exactly on a fifty-fifty basis so that it is difficult to know when one leaves off and the other begins (or vice versa)—are teachers by profession. We are always looking for ways to present our central preoccupation to students. This preoccupation is, of course, to communicate information and a point of view about the complex and fascinating process of human development. We earn our living this way, and we enjoy and believe in what we do.

As both of us have taught (in all settings, ranging from large state universities through relatively small private universities to public schools and foreign universities), we have been impressed with the need for a reference book that combines up-to-date research and practice concerning children and youth with a broad perspective on psychological development. In this book, we have tried our hands at creating such a product. It is up to the reader to judge how successful we have been. The collaboration has been very pleasant for both of us, although arduous. We hope it is rewarding to readers. Certainly, we have thought and discussed a great deal about what we have said here, and we believe that some of it is new and constructive.

In our attempt to provide a fresh account of human development, we have moved away from a cold, hard, factual approach and dealt with generalizations about children and youth that are meaningful to us and, we hope, to our readers. We have not neglected the hallmark of scientific writing—research data—but we have tried to go a step beyond these data to consider their implications for social action. As parents, teachers, and researchers, we have found ourselves continually faced by dilemmas about human development and interaction that are seldom articulated in our professional literature. Our desire to share with others the variety of dilemmas and points of view about human development has been a major motivation for this book. This sharing, we believe, can lead to useful discussions that are rare in courses of study about the development and behavior of children and youth.

Clearly, human development ranges from conception to the grave. For practical reasons, we begin this book with birth, not conception; and we deal very little with human development after early adulthood. The age range we consider, then, is from infancy to the mid-twenties. We know that most of life is lived *after* the mid-twenties; perhaps someday we will write a book or series of articles about adult development. For the moment, we are content to have written about children and youth with the recognition that this is far from the complete story of human development.

We emphasize again that this collaboration has been an exhilarating intellectual and social experience for us and our families. Our collaboration has gone on for a

long time, and we hope that it will continue for a long time. Many others have contributed to this book, and we deeply appreciate their help. Again, our wives and children have made significant suggestions, have (sometimes without their knowing) provided illustrative content, and have been important readers and typists. We have tried out many of our ideas on students, and often modified them as a result of our trials. Roger L. Williams, of the Dryden Press, has been a creative and kindly editor. We appreciate the help that several critic editors have given. Finally, we thank all those who have provided the scholarly thinking and research referenced throughout the book.

Atlanta, Georgia
Seattle, Washington
January 1973

Boyd R. McCandless
Ellis D. Evans

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Part I
A View of Human Development and Society

As professional developmental and educational psychologists the authors consider themselves fortunate if for no reason other than that they heartily enjoy their work. Whether the children belong to them or to others, they find children and youth pleasant to be around and interesting—even fun—to watch, talk to, become friends with, think about and study, and, hard work though it is, even to write about. They hope some of the pleasure they take in their work will come through to readers.

This book is about children and young people from the time they are born until they reach maturity. On the average, the authors believe that maturity is reached at about the age of 24 or 25, although they fully realize that many people mature much earlier; and that many remain fixed at a childish or an adolescent level until much later, some for perhaps all their lives.

In Part I of this book, comprising Chapters 1–3, the authors try to give a working definition of human development; discuss how they approach it intellectually and methodologically; present briefly the more common ways of viewing human development; and talk of the dilemmas of development, both for the individual who is developing—the child or the young person—and for the scholar who is studying and

This little fellow has just entered the world. Developmental theorists will apply many different interpretations to the course of his development over the next several years. (Photo by Inger McCabe)

attempting to systematize development. Throughout these and subsequent chapters the authors attempt to provide a discussion that is both helpful and understandable to students of human growth and development, our *Peanuts* friends, Patty and Franklin, notwithstanding.

The authors believe that a book on psychology should be good and *understandable.*

1 Basic Concepts of Psychosocial Development

INTERACTION AND THE WHOLE PERSON

Anyone who has read or listened much to what educators, philosophers, and psychologists say about human beings has heard the terms "the whole child" and "the whole person" so often that the expressions have likely become clichés to him. Nothing in particular is conveyed by the terms, which often trigger boredom. Clichés do not arise accidentally, however. When first coined, they usually summarized some common aspect of experience cogently enough that they were widely accepted, overused, and eventually fitted the classification *cliché*.

In the authors' minds, "the whole child" or "the whole person" also evokes the notion of a globe—something round, large, undifferentiated, and thus difficult to manipulate, analyze, study, or write about. In thinking about or working with people, one cannot cope with "all of the person," at least at any one time. He has emotional–social, intellectual, or physical dealings with another person, or a mixture of all three. Professionally, it seems sensible, and has been useful to the authors, to conceive of human beings according to certain broad classes of behavior and personal characteristics. With his own children, one has intellectual dealings, social and personal dealings, and physical dealings. With one's college students, the professorial–student relation is by far the most common; interactions are mainly academic and intellectual, but there are prominent and frequent personal–social, and sometimes quite intensely emotional, interactions. Unless a person is a physical education teacher, a doctor, or a nurse, however, he has few dealings with his students in terms of their physical–motor development.

The authors have found it helpful to formulate their thinking about children and youth according to the following model. Each of the three major portions of the model represents for them a concen-

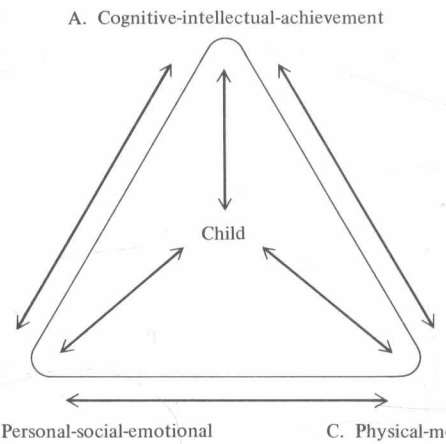

Figure 1.1 *A sketch of how the child and his behavior and characteristics may be usefully viewed. The double-headed arrows indicate interactions.*

tration of certain behavior or developmental characteristics. Each of these three concentrations interacts in important ways with the other two. This model, or schema, is given in Figure 1.1.

From kindergarten or first grade on, teachers are likely to concentrate on corner A, cognitive–intellectual–achievement. Unfortunately, however, because there are children and young people who "present problems," teachers are often forced to concentrate on corner B, the personal–social–emotional behavior of a given child or young person. The regular classroom teacher is seldom concerned much with corner C, the physical–motor, or body, build, time of physical maturity area of behavior. For those who present problems in this area, attention is compelled; extra attention is often received by those who are especially strong, or large, or graceful, or early maturing, or handsome or beautiful. Doctors, nurses, dentists, and physical education teachers are more likely than classroom teachers to concentrate their thought and efforts in corner C, neglecting A and B. Personnel workers, clinical and school psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers are typically preoccupied with corner B, all too often neglecting A and C. Parents are usually aware of "the whole child" or "the whole youth," because they must live with him all day long, year in and year out. But bookish parents may concentrate heavily on corner A, the father who is or was an athlete on corner C, and so on.

Examples of Interaction

James was a small, thin, somewhat sickly farm boy, the third in a family of four brothers. The other three brothers were husky, well built, athletic, and able to work usefully with their father in the fields. The youngest brother was a particular thorn in James's side: Although two and one-half years younger than James, he caught up with James in size while both were still of preschool age and, by the time James was 9 and his brother $6\frac{1}{2}$, the brother could outrun, outwrestle, and outwork James. The brother inflicted the final humiliation when he reached puberty earlier than James.

From elementary school years on, the three husky brothers, because they worked with their father, were closer to him than James was. James, sickly, spent much more time with his mother, a bookish woman who had been a school teacher before she married. James became the recipient of her confidences, and was perhaps her favorite. Somewhat aloof from his brothers and his father, James developed into a book-loving, somewhat effeminate boy with strong academic interests supported by a good mind. His brothers, bright enough, were only mildly interested in academics. Eventually, James was the brother who went to college.

When farms were mechanized, there was not enough land for more than one son, and the eldest brother eventually took over the family farm. The second and the fourth brothers moved from the farm, went into construction work, and have led modest lives, the one as a skilled carpenter and the other as a small-business man. James's college education led to a job as teacher in high school, then to graduate school, and finally to a successful university career in the sciences. As a young man, James became aware of his effeminacy, pushed it aside, and, like his brothers, married quite well and is a reasonably good father to his three children.

For James, sickliness, slight stature, and late maturity (corner C of our schema in Figure 1.1) pushed him into a way of life almost by default—he became his mother's boy, rather than his father's, somewhat out of the mainstream of healthy, rural, male life (adaptations within corner B). The entire pattern of his life has been one of interaction of slight, frail body, forcing him into a concentration on academics (corner A) in order to survive in the setting in which he was born.

Judy has inherited the busty, stocky, almost squat body of her peasant ancestors, but she has been born into a world where men's choices of women are dictated more by *Vogue*, television, and Hollywood than by a suitor's estimate of how well a woman can work and how easily she can bear children. Judy's parents had worked themselves up from lower-middle-class origins (both their own parents had been struggling shopkeepers) to high-level, financially comfortable professional status. Judy had as much intelligence as her parents. In the excellent suburban or private schools she attended, she achieved intelligence test scores ranging from a low of 130 (superior) to 165 (truly exceptional). But she never did well academically after the fourth grade, at which time she became aware of and began to brood about her ungainly body. Her body complicated matters still further for her. She matured early and began to menstruate shortly after her tenth birthday. At the time, she was a head taller than any other girl or boy in her class. From that time, she became more and more socially aloof, and had no close friends through the rest of elementary school and all of high school.

Judy barely made it through high school, refused even to apply to the prestige colleges her parents wanted her to attend, was admitted to a small state college that had previously been a state normal school, and was graduated after five years with a degree in business administration and a scholastic average barely high enough to merit receiving her degree. She had a few girl friends and no boy friends during college, and blamed her entire situation on her "ugliness."

She began to talk of suicide shortly after college graduation. Her parents pushed her firmly into psychotherapy. A year of counseling produced some understanding of her years of conflict and gave her some hope of self-sufficiency. She made determined efforts at weight control and good grooming, and began to date occasionally—young men she met in the business firm where she had found a job (more because of her parents' prestige than her own record). To her surprise, she enjoyed her job and was successful at it. By the time she had reached her mid-twenties, she seemed to have handled the old bad years and looked forward to some better ones.

Again, Judy represents an interaction. Corner C of our rounded triangle (Figure

1.1) was unfortunate for Judy. A stocky, busty, build was not *de rigueur* in Judy's world. Her reaction was self-negation so severe that for many years she failed to use her high-level intelligence (corner A of Figure 1.1) and allowed her personal–social–emotional life (corner B) to be blunted. Depression so deep that suicide seemed imminent finally mobilized her and her parents, and, fortunately for Judy, psychotherapy worked. Of course, she had the background and the basic personal tools to make it work; it was just that they had not been used previously.

Matthew is the third and final example of interaction of body, mind, and social–personal interaction. He is the fourteenth of a family of fourteen children born to a poor black woman who had come north from rural South Carolina, where she had been born and lived until she was 15. As the baby, Matthew received more attention from his mother than she had been able to give most of the older children. By the time he was 14, he was a bright, somewhat delinquent, exceptionally handsome boy with more self-confidence than many poor black male youth seem to have. He was thinking of dropping out of school, and his borderline delinquencies had alerted the police who manned his slum neighborhood to keep a watchful and a usually hostile eye on him. Truant one day, he came to the attention of a young patrolman, who summoned Matthew to him. Instead of subjecting Matthew to a barrage of pointed and unfriendly questions (which he expected), the policeman seemed interested in *why* Matthew was truant. This friendly, big-brother kind of questioning proved the beginning of a friendship, and, after some weeks, Matthew consented to go, as the young patrolman's protégé, to a recreation center operated by the police department. Here, his potential as a boxer came to light. By his late teens, Matthew was an outstanding Golden Glover with the prospect of a successful ring career ahead of him. As a result of the friendship of the patrolman and the reception Matthew received in the recreation center, Matthew did not drop out of school, but finished high school and received his diploma.

At this time a woman sponsor of the recreation center, divorced, lonely, wealthy, and much older than Matthew, who frequently came to the center to watch the boxers, took a special interest in Matthew. Her friendship led to a sexual relationship, and Matthew moved into her home. The woman urged him toward college. Matthew went, succeeded, and eventually received a law degree. The sexual relation was finally terminated by mutual consent and with no apparent hurt to either Matthew or his partner. Matthew is a promising civil rights lawyer, and his sponsor and long-time mistress is the godmother of the first child born to Matthew's marriage to a social worker at about the time he finished law school.

The grace and strength of Matthew's body and his good looks (corner C of our schema in Figure 1.1) interacted with his special place as baby in the family (corner B) and his better-than-average mind (corner A) to make life very different from what sociologists would have predicted from the formal circumstances of his birth and upbringing. His present life, although the pathway toward it has not been conventional, seems to him, and probably is, much better than the life of unskilled labor and crime that would logically have been predicted when Matthew was 14. Certainly, he is much happier and more useful within society.