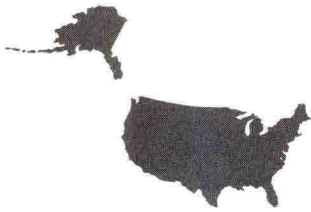


TWO WORLDS OF CHILDHOOD

U.S. AND U.S.S.R.



Urie Bronfenbrenner

With the assistance of John C. Condry, Jr.

RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION *New York 1970*

PUBLICATIONS OF RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

Russell Sage Foundation was established in 1907 by Mrs. Russell Sage for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States. In carrying out its purpose the Foundation conducts research under the direction of members of the staff or in close collaboration with other institutions, and supports programs designed to improve the utilization of social science knowledge.

As an integral part of its operations, the Foundation from time to time publishes books or pamphlets resulting from these activities. Publication under the imprint of the Foundation does not necessarily imply agreement by the Foundation, its Trustees, or its staff with the interpretations or conclusions of the authors.

© 1970

RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 71-104182

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK is the outgrowth of three sets of scientific adventures. The first is a research project, entitled "Cross-Cultural Studies in Child Rearing," conducted for the past five years under a grant from the National Science Foundation. Fundamentally, this volume is the product and by-product of that endeavor. It has provided the basic comparative data. More importantly, it was the exposure to patterns of upbringing in other cultures, especially in the U.S.S.R., which alerted me to the impressive power—and even greater potential—of models, peers, and group forces in influencing the behavior and development of children. Finally, it was this comparative research which sensitized me to the disruptive trends in the process of socialization in American society, and spurred involvement in the design of counteractive programs. It is all of these matters which make up the body of the present work. Thus, in the last analysis, not only many of the facts, but many more of the ideas presented in this volume derived from cross-cultural research. I am especially indebted to my colleagues engaged in that effort, Edward C. Devereux, Jr., Robert R. Rodgers, George J. Suci, as well as the members of a devoted technical staff, Kathryn Dowd, Elizabeth Kiely, Mary McGinnis, Jaya Narayanamurti, Carol Theodore, Jancis Smithells, and Gitta Berstein.

The second scientific adventure was the offspring of the first; namely, a series of seven visits to the U.S.S.R., which have enabled the author to acquire the background for, develop, and finally carry out the field observations, interviews, and experiments on which the analysis of Soviet methods of upbringing

and their effects is based. The writer made his first trip to the Soviet Union in 1960 as one of several scientists asked by the American Psychological Association to assess Soviet work in this field.* The second journey was made in 1961 as a member of an official United States exchange mission in the field of public health. These visits provided an opportunity to arrange for a scientific exchange between Cornell University and the Institute of Psychology in Moscow. This exchange has made possible a series of five visits, ranging in length from a few weeks to several months, in the course of which the more systematic aspects of the research were carried out. These field trips were made possible by grants from the National Science Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Committee on Soviet Studies of Cornell University.

There is no adequate way of acknowledging the generous cooperation and hospitality extended to the author by both the Institute of Psychology and its parent organization, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Special thanks are due to Dr. A. A. Smirnov, Director of the Institute of Psychology; Dr. A. N. Leontiev, Chairman of the newly established Faculty of Psychology at the University of Moscow; Dr. A. V. Zaporozhets, Director of the Institute of Preschool Education; Dr. G. S. Kostyuk, Director of the Kiev Institute of Psychology; and, in particular, Dr. L. I. Bozhovich, Head of the Laboratory of Upbringing in the Moscow Institute, and all the staff members of that Laboratory, notably I. G. Dimanshtain, E. S. Makhlah, M. Z. Neimark, N. F. Prokina, E. I. Savonko, and S. G. Yakobson, who despite heavy research commitments of their own, gave so generously of their knowledge and assistance. Similar indebtedness is expressed to colleagues in the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences who devoted many hours to answering endless questions and arranging for innumerable visits to nurseries, schools, Pioneer palaces, camps, and other children's facilities. To the extent that the author has achieved some understanding of Soviet methods of upbringing, he owes it to the patience and pedagogical skill of leading Soviet educators, notably Professor V. Gmurman, M. N. Kolmakova, L. E. Novikova, B. E. Shirvindt, and especially E. G. Kostyashkin, Z. A. Malkova, and E. M. Sokolov.

* Cf. Raymond Bauer (ed.), *Some Views of Soviet Psychology* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1962).

The third set of adventures had to do less with research than its implications. The results of our cross-cultural studies called attention to problems of child rearing in American society of sufficient gravity to require some programmatic action. As a result, the author became heavily involved in the development of Project Head Start, serving as a member of the committee which designed and gave professional direction to this national program. The last two chapters of this volume had their beginnings as a document prepared at the request of Project Head Start for presentation at a conference of researchers and practitioners concerned with the development of intervention programs. Many of the ideas in that document emerged from the experience of the author as a member of the Head Start Planning Committee. In addition, appreciation is expressed to the following colleagues with whom I have discussed ideas presented in Part II of this volume, and some of whom have read and generously commented on earlier drafts of the manuscript: Robert Aldrich, Albert Bandura, Leonard Berkowitz, David Cohen, James S. Coleman, Robert Cooke, Nicholas Hobbs, David Hoffman, Melvin Kohn, John Lear, John Marcham, Walter Mischel, Francis Palmer, Thomas Pettigrew, Julius Richmond, Jules Sugarman, and Edward Zigler.

Finally, the author owes much to his friend and colleague John C. Condry, Jr. In addition to taking responsibility for editing the final draft for publication, throughout the preparation of the manuscript he gave generously of his knowledge and social concern. His searching questions, constructive criticism, and hard-headed encouragement did much to enrich the contents of this book and bring it to completion. Many of his suggested additions have been incorporated in the text.

The writing of this book was made possible by a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation. I am especially indebted to Orville G. Brim, Jr., President of the Foundation, for his encouragement, firmness, and patience in seeing this volume through to the light of day. And last but not least, I am deeply indebted to Lovetta Cahill for typing the manuscript of this book, not once, but twenty times.

Pictures generously provided by Soviet colleagues appear on pages 24 (*top and bottom*), 25 (*middle*), 27 (*bottom*), 52 (*top and bottom*), and 53. The rest of the photographs were taken

by the author. He is also responsible for the translations of all citations from Russian sources. The transliteration system used is that employed by the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*. Revised sections of various chapters have previously appeared in published articles by the author in *The Saturday Review* (Science and Humanity Supplement), *The American Psychologist*, *The Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, the research supplement to *Religious Education*, and as a chapter in *The Role and Status of Women in the Soviet Union*, edited by Donald R. Brown and published by Teachers College Press, Columbia University, in 1968.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	<i>A Criterion for Two Cultures</i>	1
PART I	THE MAKING OF THE NEW SOVIET MAN	5
CHAPTER 1	Upbringing in the Soviet Family	7
	<i>Patterns of Maternal Care</i>	
	<i>Values and Techniques of Discipline</i>	
CHAPTER 2	Upbringing in Collective Settings	15
	<i>Techniques of Upbringing in Preschool Centers</i>	
	<i>Upbringing in Soviet Schools</i>	
CHAPTER 3	The Psychological Implications of Soviet Methods of Upbringing	70
	<i>The Effects of Affection and its Withdrawal</i>	
	<i>Father Absence and the Mother-Centered Family</i>	
	<i>Collective Upbringing in Social Psychological Perspective</i>	
	<i>Portents of Change</i>	
PART II	CHILD REARING IN AMERICA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE	93
CHAPTER 4	The Unmaking of the American Child	95
	<i>An Outmoded Past</i>	
	<i>The Split Society</i>	
	<i>Adults vs. Peers</i>	
	<i>Children and Television</i>	
	<i>The Impact of Peers</i>	
	<i>The Impact of Television</i>	

	<i>Looking Backward</i>	
	<i>Looking Forward</i>	
CHAPTER 5	Principles and Possibilities	120
	<i>Conserving Biological Potential</i>	
	<i>The Potency of Models</i>	
	<i>Social Reinforcement</i>	
	<i>Intensive Relationships</i>	
	<i>Group Forces</i>	
	<i>Superordinate Goals</i>	
	<i>Soviet Upbringing Revisited</i>	
CHAPTER 6	From Science to Social Action	152
	<i>The Classroom</i>	
	<i>The School</i>	
	<i>The Family</i>	
	<i>The Neighborhood</i>	
	<i>The Larger Community</i>	
	<i>Source Notes</i>	167
	<i>Index</i>	187

Introduction

A Criterion for Two Cultures

How CAN WE judge the worth of a society? On what basis can we predict how well a nation will survive and prosper? Many indices could be used for this purpose, among them the Gross National Product, the birth rate, crime statistics, mental health data, etc. In this book we propose yet another criterion: *the concern of one generation for the next*. If the children and youth of a nation are afforded opportunity to develop their capacities to the fullest, if they are given the knowledge to understand the world and the wisdom to change it, then the prospects for the future are bright. In contrast, a society which neglects its children, however well it may function in other respects, risks eventual disorganization and demise.

In this book, we shall explore the “concern of one generation for the next” in the two most powerful nations of our time, the Soviet Union and the United States. We shall examine what each country does for and with its children both intentionally and, perhaps, unintentionally. Then, drawing upon existing research and theory in the behavioral sciences, we shall ask what are, or might be, the consequences of the modes of treatment we observe; that is, what values and patterns of behavior are being developed in the new generation in each society. Finally, we shall look into the possibilities for introducing constructive changes in the process as it is taking place in our own country. In pursuing this last objective, we shall draw even more extensively on available resources of behavioral science to identify

what we know of the forces affecting the development of human behavior, the principles on which the forces operate, and how these principles might be exploited by our social institutions in a manner consistent with our values and traditions.

In the language of behavioral science, this volume is concerned with the process of *socialization*, the way in which a child born into a given society becomes a social being—a member of that society. It should be clear that being socialized is not necessarily the same as being civilized. Nazi youth were also products of a socialization process. The example is an instructive one, for it reminds us that the family is not the only possible agent of upbringing. The process typically begins in the home but does not end there. The outside world also has major impact, as the child becomes exposed to a succession of persons, groups, and institutions, each of which imposes its expectations, rewards, and penalties on the child and thus contributes to shaping the development of his skills, values, and patterns of behavior.

Accordingly, in our comparative study of socialization in the Soviet Union and the United States, we shall be examining the process as it occurs in a series of social contexts beginning with the family but then proceeding to other settings such as pre-school centers, children's groups, classrooms, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and, indeed, the nation as a whole.

Our selection of the Soviet Union as the object of paired comparison was not dictated by considerations of power politics but by those of social science. We wished to profit from the contrasting perspective provided by a society which differs substantially from our own in the process and context of socialization but at the same time faces similar problems as an industrialized nation with highly developed systems of technology, education, and mass communication. In terms of socialization, the major difference between the two cultures lies in the localization of primary responsibility for the upbringing of children. In the United States, we ordinarily think of this responsibility as centered in the family, with the parents playing the decisive part as the agents of child rearing, and other persons or groups outside

the family serving at most in secondary or supplementary roles. Not so in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The difference is nowhere better expressed than in the following passage from one of the most influential Soviet publications in this sphere: *A Book for Parents* by Anton Semyonovich Makarenko, an eminent educator whose methods for rehabilitating juvenile delinquents in the nineteen-twenties and -thirties became the primary basis for the techniques of collective upbringing currently employed in all Soviet nurseries, schools, camps, children's institutions, and youth programs. In this volume, which came to be regarded as a guide to ideal Soviet family life, Makarenko defined the role of the family as follows:

Our family is not a closed-in collective body, like the bourgeois family. It is an organic part of Soviet society, and every attempt it makes to build up its own experience independently of the moral demands of society is bound to result in a disproportion, discordant as an alarm bell.

Our parents are not without authority either, but this authority is only the reflection of social authority. In our country the duty of a father toward his children is a particular form of his duty toward society. It is as if our society says to parents:

You have joined together in goodwill and love, rejoice in your children, and expect to go on rejoicing in them. That is your own personal affair and concerns your own personal happiness. But in this happy process you have given birth to new people. A time will come when these people will cease to be only a joy to you and become independent members of society. It is not at all a matter of indifference to society what kind of people they will be. In handing over to you a certain measure of social authority, the Soviet state demands from you correct upbringing of future citizens. Particularly it relies on a certain circumstance arising naturally out of your union—on your parental love.

If you wish to give birth to a citizen and do without parental love, then be so kind as to warn society that you wish to play such an underhanded trick. People brought up without parental love are often deformed people. . . .¹

Nor is the family the sole or even the principal delegate of the society for the upbringing of children. Such primary responsibility is vested in still another social structure, the *children's collective*, defined as "a group of children united in common, goal-oriented activity and the communal organization of this activity."² As we shall see, such collectives constitute the basic structural units in all Soviet programs designed for the care or education of children.

The first difference, then, between the United States and the Soviet Union in the way in which children are socialized lies in the contrast between a family- versus a collective-centered system of child rearing. But, of course, the family is not the only context of upbringing in American society. Children's groups also exist in the United States. But unlike their more formalized Soviet counterparts, they are more fluid, and relatively independent of the adult society.

Accordingly, in our comparative study, we shall focus major attention on similarities and differences in two principal contexts of socialization—the family and the children's group.

We begin with a consideration of the process of upbringing in the Soviet Union.

PART I

THE MAKING OF THE NEW SOVIET MAN

TO DATE, no systematic studies of methods of child rearing have been carried out in the Soviet Union either by Soviet or non-Soviet investigators. The generalizations which follow are based on field notes of observations and interviews made by the author as a visiting scientist on seven different occasions from 1960 to 1967. Over the course of these visits, which ranged in length from two weeks to three months, opportunities were provided,

through the courtesy of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, to observe and talk with children and adults in a variety of settings, including nurseries, kindergartens, regular schools, boarding schools, and the so-called schools of the prolonged day, as well as Pioneer palaces, camps, parks, and other community facilities for children and parents. In addition, particularly after the first one or two trips, there developed informal opportunities to become acquainted with Soviet family life. The presence of our own children on three of these visits not only increased such contacts considerably, but also set in high relief the contrasts between Soviet and American modes of upbringing both within and outside the family.

Although some observations were made in rural areas in the Russian, Ukrainian, and Georgian republics, and in the Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakstan, the great bulk of the field work was done in several large cities in various parts of the U.S.S.R., specifically Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Tallin, Tbilisi, Tashkent, and Alma-Ata.

1

Upbringing in the Soviet Family

THE DESCRIPTIONS which follow are drawn both from field data and from published manuals on child care. Although the latter have wide circulation throughout the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with translations published in the languages of the several republics, the observations were essentially limited to Russian-speaking families in and around large metropolitan centers.

We begin with a discussion of parental treatment in infancy and early childhood.

Patterns of Maternal Care

In this sphere, differences between Russian and American practices are most apparent in three areas.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Russian babies receive substantially more physical handling than their American counterparts. To begin with, breast feeding is highly recommended and virtually universal. And even when not being fed, Russian babies are still held much of the time. The nature of this contact is both highly affectionate and restricting. On the one hand, in comparison with American babies, the Russian child receives considerably more hugging, kissing, and cuddling. On the other hand, the infant is held

more tightly and given little opportunity for freedom of movement or initiative. Manuals on child care, prepared by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, frequently inveigh against this practice. Witness the following excerpt:

There are still mothers who, when the child is not asleep, never allow him to remain in his bed but continually hold him in their arms. They even cook holding the child with the left arm. Such a position is very harmful to the child, since it leads to curvature of the spine.¹

SOLICITOUSNESS

The mobility and initiative of the Soviet child are further limited by a concerted effort to protect him from discomfort, illness, and injury. There is much concern about keeping him warm. Drafts are regarded as especially dangerous. Once the child begins to crawl or walk, there is worry lest he hurt himself or wander into dangerous territory. For example, children in the park are expected to keep in the immediate vicinity of the accompanying adult, and when our youngsters—aged nine and four—would run about the paths, even within our view, kindly citizens of all ages would bring them back by the hand, often with a reproachful word about our lack of proper concern for our children's welfare.

DIFFUSION OF MATERNAL RESPONSIBILITY

The foregoing example highlights another distinctive feature of Russian upbringing, the readiness of other persons besides the child's own mother to step into a maternal role. This is true not only for relatives, but even for complete strangers. For example, it is not uncommon, when sitting in a crowded public conveyance, to have a child placed on your lap by a parent or guardian. Strangers strike up acquaintances with young children as a matter of course, and are immediately identified by the accompanying adult or by the child himself as "*dyadya*" [uncle] or "*tyotya*" [auntie].

Nor is the nurturant role limited to adults. Older children of both sexes show a lively interest in the very young and are com-

petent and comfortable in dealing with them to a degree almost shocking to a Western observer. I recall an incident which occurred on a Moscow street. Our youngest son—then four—was walking briskly a pace or two ahead of us when from the opposite direction there came a company of teenage boys. The first one no sooner spied Stevie than he opened his arms wide and, calling “*Ai malysh!*” [Hey, little one!], scooped him up, hugged him, kissed him resoundingly, and passed him on to the rest of the company, who did likewise, and then began a merry children’s dance, as they caressed him with words and gestures. Similar behavior on the part of any American adolescent male would surely prompt his parents to consult a psychiatrist.

Given this diffusion of nurturant behavior toward children, it is hardly surprising that Soviet youngsters exhibit less anxiety than their American age-mates when their mother leaves them in the care of another person or in a nursery. Such delegation of the care of the child is, of course, standard practice in the U.S.S.R., a nation of working mothers in which 48 per cent of all age-eligible women are in the labor force. But before turning to methods of upbringing outside the family, we must consider another aspect of parental child rearing, values and techniques of discipline.

Values and Techniques of Discipline

It would be a mistake to conclude that the affection and solicitousness that Russians, in particular Russian mothers, lavish on children imply permissiveness or indulgence with respect to conduct. On the contrary, much emphasis is placed, no less by parents than by professional educators, on the development of such traits as obedience [*poslushanie*] and self-discipline [*distsiplinirovannost*].

What is meant concretely by these terms? For an answer we may turn to the authoritative volume, *Parents and Children*, prepared by a group of specialists from the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences with the aim of “helping parents to bring up their children properly so that they can grow up to be worthy