



Margaret G. Weiser

GROUP CARE AND EDUCATION OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

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with **61** illustrations

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To two persons whom I hold dear and who have been
most influential in my growth as an early childhood educator:

Sarah Lou Hammond Leeper,

formerly at Florida State University and the University of Maryland,

and

Gladys Gardner Jenkins

at the University of Iowa.

PREFACE

The group care and education of very young children is a comparatively recent but rapidly growing phenomenon throughout the world. The rising demand for infant and child group day care, irrespective of its setting (center based or home based) is emerging from a variety of factors: a growing consciousness of the lasting effects of deprivation, an increasing number of women employed outside the home, the isolation of the nuclear family in urbanized societies, and a growing body of knowledge and theory concerning the importance of the early years as it relates to future attitudes, values, and achievement in and out of school.

Because of the recency of the professionalization of the care and education of young children, there exists a serious lack of persons who are qualified and competent in the new profession of early childhood education and development. Although universities, colleges, and other agencies have provided laboratory schools for young children since the early 1920s, they usually have served as centers for research and training and typically have drawn children from upper-middle class families. They have been on a partial day basis and on an academic year schedule. In spite of the quality of these endeavors, the number of teachers who were trained in these centers was far less than the number of early childhood teachers needed to meet the sudden national mandate for preschool classes designed to give poor children a “head

start” on their schooling. Following the expression of federal interest in the 1960s, state departments of education issued new teaching endorsements for the years below public school, and state departments of social welfare updated their licensing standards, which had previously focused on foster homes, boarding institutions, and the like. A new profession, that of the Child Development Associate, was called for by Edward Zigler, then Director of the Office of Child Development (HEW), and the Child Development Associate Consortium was formed to devise a procedure to assess those competencies deemed valuable in the delivery of early childhood group programs. There is now a national credential signifying the meeting of these competencies for teachers of groups of children ages 3 to 5 years. Early childhood education has become a visible facet of our society. The number of research studies and textbooks has proliferated; workshops and minicourses and one-year, two-year, and four-year programs have been established and are being attended by an ever-increasing number of persons desiring to enter, or to become more qualified in, early childhood education.

Why, then, this textbook? The need for qualified teachers of children ages 3, 4, and 5 still exists, but provisions have been and are being made to meet this need. The need for qualified teachers and caregivers of very young children, of children from the very first months of life, has

been virtually ignored in teacher education programs. Therefore, this text has been designed to be used in courses that offer the theory and practice of the care and education of very young children to prospective teachers and caregivers.

As is true of most worthwhile endeavors, we need to know where we have been in order to know where we are and where we are going. This maxim is particularly appropriate for the topic at hand, because without the acknowledgement of the importance of the early years, there is no reason to pursue the issue beyond the usual instructions given in the typical "baby-sitter" manual. Unlike many methods textbooks, this one concerns itself first with the evolution of the recognition of the importance and significance of the very early years; from there the emphasis is placed on the current state of the art and on recommendations for current and future programs. The knowledge gained from the information contained herein, and the involvement in a related practicum situation, should enable the student to be a competent beginning teacher and caregiver of very young children.

Because both the adults and the children involved in early care and education are male or female, the two genders are used interchangeably throughout the text. Also, each involved adult has two interchangeable roles, those of caregiver and teacher. The involved adults are referred to as either caregiver or teacher, or caregiver/teacher. Neither role can be divorced from the other.

A completed textbook is the result of the efforts of many persons. I am especially indebted to Bettye Caldwell, for the use of the AID

developmental objectives. I am grateful to Jane Dunlap Petersen, for the descriptions of "typical days" in the lives of very young children in a center-based day care and education program, and to Jane Kaplow Rosenthal, for the explanation of the system of primary caregiving. Both have served as head teachers of the infant and toddler rooms at the Early Childhood Education Center, University of Iowa.

Special acknowledgement is also given to Dr. Alfred Healy, who reviewed the Care and Protection Curriculum, and to Dr. Gerald Solomons, Director, Region VII Child Abuse and Neglect Resource Center; to Annemarie Shelleness, Physicians for Automotive Safety; to Sandra Zimmerman, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety; and to Dr. Susan Aronson, whose endeavors in advocating health and safety for children in day care have been recognized nationwide.

Any book about children needs photographs of children to make it come alive. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Sally Antes, University Infant and Toddler Center of Western Illinois University, Richard Elardo and Jan Cronin of the Early Childhood Education Center, University of Iowa, and to the many parents of the children.

I am grateful to my typist, Connie Barthelman, not only for the typing, but the re- and re-retyping of the manuscript.

It is my hope that the text will be helpful to persons who are giving, or will give, care and education to our youngest citizens.

Margaret G. Weiser

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SECTION ONE

The importance of the early years

There can be no better way to begin a text on the care and education of our youngest children than with the statement of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, a declaration that was unanimously adopted by the representatives of the 78 countries in the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1959.

The preamble states that the child, because of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safe-guards and care, both before and after birth, and that individuals and groups should strive to achieve children's rights by legislative and other means. Mankind, it says, owes the child the best it has to give.

In ten carefully worded Principles, the Declaration affirms that all children are entitled to:

1. The enjoyment of the rights mentioned, without any exception whatsoever, regardless of race, color, sex, religion or nationality
2. Special protection, opportunities, and facilities to enable them to develop in a healthy and normal manner, in freedom and dignity
3. A name and nationality
4. Social security, including adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services
5. Special treatment, education and care if handicapped
6. Love and understanding and an atmosphere of affection and security, in the care and under the responsibility of their parents whenever possible
7. Free education and recreation and equal opportunity to develop their individual abilities
8. Prompt protection and relief in times of disaster
9. Protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation
10. Protection from any form of racial, religious, or other discrimination, and an upbringing in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood (UNICEF, 1974, p. 9)

This text offers suggestions and guidelines for efforts toward the realization of these rights for very young children in group care. A paraphrase of the introductory comments frequently found in nineteenth century children's books is just as appropriate for us.

Attend! We are now beginning.
When we get to the end of the
story we shall know more than
we do now.

2 The importance of the early years

Chapters 1 and 2 lay the foundation for the following chapters by tracing how the first few years of life have been regarded by philosophers and educators throughout history. It is not our purpose to attribute prime importance to any one stage of development, but rather to establish the fact that the beginning years are important, just as are the following years.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of selected child development theories and a general sequence of the development of behavioral characteristics from birth to age 36 months. Goals for the care and education of all children should be derived, in part, from knowledge of child development, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of goals and objectives for the group care and education of children from birth to age 36 months.

CHAPTER 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VERY EARLY YEARS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today.

Chinese proverb

What is a baby worth? In some parts of the United States a healthy newborn can be purchased for \$25,000 on the black market. The price may be as little as \$5,000 if the baby is obtained through a legitimate adoption agency. The cost in money may be even less through a public agency, but the waiting period may be as long as 5 years. Babies apparently have a high value today, at least for some adults.

We have reason to believe that babies and young children have been treasured by society even from the very beginnings of human history. Archeologists have found numerous artifacts representing pregnant women (but not children), and anthropologists have concluded that the legal and religious sanctions of marriage came into being solely for the protection of children. Children assured the continuation of the race.

Written history reveals that recognition of the importance of the early years of life has been sporadic. It has taken many forms and has frequently been selective rather than universal. The values, attitudes, and goals of societies determine the place of the young child in their midst. Depending on their time and place in history, some children have been valued as future soldiers, some as future philosophers and kings, and many as potential wage earners; others have been viewed as liabilities, even disasters. Almost always, boys have been more highly valued than girls. Until the nineteenth

century all children were viewed as miniature or incomplete adults, and their importance was determined solely by their anticipated adult roles. Childhood was brief and of little account—a period of marking time.

In spite of the various views about young children, the popular assumption is that throughout history young children have been cared for and nurtured within the family at least until they were old enough to join the work force—which may have been as young as 5 years of age. However, this was not the case. The coming of civilization meant that upper-class women, at least, assigned the role of nurse and caregiver to servants or to slaves. Old Testament prophets felt the need to tell mothers it was their duty to nurse their children; in the second century AD Plutarch strongly admonished mothers to nurse their young. In 1633, Comenius (the “father” of early childhood education in Czechoslovakia) maintained that babies received not only alien milk, but alien morals from the wet nurse. In the 1700s Rousseau stated that there would be a reform in morals and no lack of citizens for the state if mothers would nurse their own children. At that time, it was estimated that of the 21,000 children born in Paris each year, 1400 were nursed by their mothers or wet nurses in their homes; 2600 were placed in suburban nursery care, and the remaining 17,000 were sent into the country to be cared for by professional wet

nurses. The children sometimes stayed as long as 12 years!

In the United States the owners of Southern plantations customarily assigned the nursing and rearing of their young children to their slaves. During the same time period, the apprentice system was based on families rearing and training children other than their own, while sending their own children to other families.

In twentieth century America, especially during times of national stress, very young children have been cared for by others either in the home or outside the home while mothers work or receive job training. It might be assumed that voluntarily assigning the nursing and care of very young children to persons outside the immediate family implies an unawareness of the importance of these beginning months and years. It is also evident that, despite the hue and cry about the sanctity of the home for the rearing of its young, such has never existed as a universal phenomenon.

To a very large degree, any historical review of attitudes involves the drawing of inferences from happenings and writings and is always subject to some misinterpretation. The story of the evolution of the recognition of the importance of the very early years presents two additional difficulties: First, very young children have been only occasionally viewed as important enough to write about. Second, the word *infant* has been used to refer to varying age ranges, from the first 7 years of life—"in this age it cannot talk well or form its words perfectly, for its teeth are not yet well arranged or firmly implanted" (Le Grand Proprietaire, 1556, cited in Aries, 1962, p. 21)—to the entire span of years preceding adulthood. There was no term to distinguish between child and adolescent in seventeenth century France; *enfant* was used for both. As recently as 1824, a father wrote of his "infant" daughter, about 10 years old. Today the first years of compulsory schooling in Britain are

housed in the "infant school," which serves children aged 5 through 7 years. However, within these limitations, a selected review of history does reveal the evolution of the importance accorded the very early years.

BEFORE THE MIDDLE AGES Greece

Greece was the site of the beginnings of Western civilization, and some note was made of young children even in the days of antiquity. In the eighth century BC, Spartan children were less the offspring of their parents than the property of the state, and immediately after birth were inspected for physical fitness by a citizens' committee. Those deemed not fit were tested by being exposed to the elements of the mountains in northern Greece—a test that would probably have killed even a healthy baby. Those infants who were deemed fit were almost immediately immersed in the life we now call Spartan, a life away from home, with no tenderness or nurturing, a life designed from the start to teach obedience, military prowess, and stamina. Healthy children did have value, but only as future soldiers or as mothers of future soldiers.

The peak of Sparta's civilization was the military crushing of Athens, about 404 BC. Out of Athenian shame and turmoil came the first educational theorists, Plato and Aristotle, both of whom recognized the importance of the early years in the formation of good persons and good citizens. Plato's *Republic* contains guidelines for the leadership training of the future guardians of the political state, including provisions for the regulation of marriage and procreation. All children of free men were to be removed at birth from their parents and reared by state-supported nurses, but all other adult citizens were also charged with the protection and education of all the children. Plato's major concern for the very young child was the formation of character, and he admonished the nurses to tell stories that



Pottery vases from the Early Iron Age (750-500 B.C.). Baby feeding bottle in middle.

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cesnola Collection. Purchased by subscription, 1874-76.

presented only the human virtues and to ignore the ancient myths and legends that contained violence, lust, and passion. Historically, Plato is the first known writer to acknowledge the critical period of infancy. In the *Dialogues* he quotes Socrates as saying: "The beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken. . . . Anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable."

Plato's goals were twofold: (1) to train a wise ruling class, and (2) to free parents from the demands of child care so that they might actively meet their civic responsibilities. The motivating force was obviously not good child care. (We have not made much progress. When it exists at all, government interest in child care is still for the benefit of adults who need to be employed or to be trained for future employment.)

Plato (428–348 BC) concerned himself with the ideal; his recommendations were far removed from the customs of his time and were never put into practice; however, the *Republic* is the first great educational classic in historical time. Aristotle (384–322 BC) dealt with the real and based his guidelines for the upbringing of small children on direct observation of children and "other young animals." He recommended a regime of more milk and less wine; physical movement exercises; exposure to cold temperatures (with a view to future military service); minimal association with slaves; and censored tales and stories. Children up to the age of 7 years were to be reared at home by their mothers or nurses, under the guidance of a children's tutor who made certain that the stories told, the language used, and the games played were moral and appropriate for future citizens. Until the age of 5 there were no prescribed studies or tasks, because the necessary physical exercise would occur naturally during periods of



Animal-shaped pull toy (and vase) from the Early Iron Age (1200-1800 B.C.).

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cesnola Collection. Purchased by subscription, 1874-76.

free play. Unlike Plato's proposal, Aristotle's educational system was designed only for the male children of free citizens.

Plutarch (46-120 AD), although best known for *Parallel Lives*, also recommended appropriate methods of childrearing. Like Plato, he was concerned with parenting, warning against cohabitation with courtesans and concubines, and urging the husband's abstinence from wine when he approached his wife. Mothers of newborns were advised to feed their infants and nurse them themselves. Immediately after birth, they were to manipulate the child's limbs so that they would grow straight. This advice was in direct opposition to the customs of the times, when not only the Greeks but also the Romans and the Jews wrapped their infants

tightly in swaddling bands. Frequently even the infant's head was protected by a pointed, close-fitted cap that also covered the ears and the back of the neck. Swaddling is an ancient practice that has continued throughout the centuries in many parts of the world. It is simply the wrapping of the child with strips or bands of cloth, in some cases so tightly that little or no movement is possible. Swaddling as such is not practiced in the United States, but our babies are often wrapped snugly in hospital nurseries and are "tucked in" tightly in their cribs at home. The modern Chinese swaddle their babies tightly for the first month but leave legs and feet free.

Plutarch further admonished parents to be very selective in choosing the foster mothers, nursemaids, or young slaves who would be