

CHAPTER 1

A Conceptual and Historical Basis for Studying Juvenile Delinquency

Sociological interest in juvenile delinquency dates back to the turn of the century. Sociologists are drawn toward juvenile delinquency for a variety of reasons. Many sociologists would like to better understand what causes delinquency. Other sociologists look for ways to prevent or correct delinquency. A good number of sociologists get involved with delinquency through work on a related subject like the family, drug abuse, or education. Regardless of why, delinquency has become a focus of hundreds of professional sociologists. We must remember, however, that delinquency is a multidisciplinary subject, attracting the interest of historians, psychologists, journalists and novelists, lawyers and judges, political scientists, and social workers, as well as sociologists. For this reason, our approach to the study of delinquency must also be multidisciplinary.

The discipline of sociology can be broken down into three parts. First, sociology is conceptual. It focuses on the histories and definitions of important concepts. Second, sociology is structural. It describes and explains how and why people organize in order to interact with each other. Finally, sociology examines process. It provides information about human behavior as it actually occurs. Throughout the book we will see how again and again all three parts of sociology shed light on delinquency. In chapter 1 we begin our analysis by first considering the conceptual history of children's problems. It is important to understand that delinquency and other children's problems are cross-cultural, historically rooted, and common to the history of humanity. In order to illustrate these facts in this chapter, we first identify and define core concepts related to delinquency. We consider basic types of problem children, basic parenting styles, and the history of child care in civilizations that influenced American society.

BASIC TYPES OF PROBLEM CHILDREN

In legal terms, there are four basic types of problem children in any large civilization at almost any time throughout its history. First, there are young persons known today as *delinquents*, children who are caught, found guilty, and punished for violating local, state, or federal criminal laws (Barnes and Teeters, 1959: 69; Empey and Stafford, 1991: 5). Delinquents are divided by legal officials into minor offenders (vagrants, prostitutes, petty thieves, etc.) and major offenders (murderers, rapists, arsonists, etc.).

Second, *status offenders* are children who violate no criminal law but engage in offensive behavior (Thornton and Voigt, 1992: 15). Status Offenses involve a breach of morality or of a strong social norm (frequenting gaming houses, promiscuity, truancy, possession of alcohol or tobacco, etc.). Status offenders are often considered predelinquent by law enforcement personnel, prime candidates to graduate into full-fledged delinquency.

Dependent and *neglected children* form the third and fourth basic categories of problem youth. Dependent children have lost at least one parent, or their parents are unable to provide them with sustenance and care. Studies have shown that dependent children come from families living in poverty (Thurston, 1930: 398; Empey and Stafford, 1991: 5). Neglected children have parents who intentionally treat them violently or cruelly and who withhold sufficient care (Carstens, 1930: 403; Empey and Stafford, 1991: 5). While neither dependent nor neglected children necessarily violate criminal law, they are often considered predelinquent. When dependent or neglected children do get into trouble, they are commonly incarcerated with, or close to, delinquents and status offenders. It is sometimes difficult to tell whether a child is neglected or dependent. Dependent and neglected children are often treated interchangeably by members of the law enforcement community.

OTHER IMPORTANT TYPES OF PROBLEM CHILDREN

Children with physical, mental, or learning *disabilities* do not fit easily into a legal model of basic types of problem children. Yet, disabled children are more likely to be caught violating the law, and more likely to be processed as delinquents, than are children without disabilities.

It is possible that disabled children often fail to respond to social cues and tend toward impulsive behavior. Some parents, teachers, legal officials, and other control agents probably misunderstand such behavior, thus feeling frustration and anger toward disabled children. Disabled children who are misunderstood can easily grow alienated from family, school, and legal authority. Alienated disabled children are likely to associate with other alienated children, who encourage each other to commit acts of hostility and delinquency (Murray, 1976; *Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 13, 1988: 66; Shibutani, 1986: 326).

Disabled children are also often ridiculed by classmates and potential playmates. For example, Amy, a nine-year-old disabled third-grader who lives in Indiana, wrote “[I] have a problem at school. Kids laugh at me because of the way I walk and run and talk. I just want one day where no one laughs at me or makes fun of me” (*Daily Camera*, Dec. 22, 1993: 9A). Exposure to continuous ridicule can turn disabled children away from the very groups other children depend upon for support and guidance.

Suicidal children also do not fit well into a legal model of basic types of problem children. Yet, suicide is surpassed only by accidents as a leading cause of death among teenagers in the United States. About 400,000 teenagers attempt suicide each year. Approximately 5,000 are successful (Gaines, 1991: 7). In 1991, 29 percent of a national sample of high school students reported having suicidal thoughts during the twelve months preceding the survey, and 7 percent reported attempting suicide.

Before 1960, suicide among teenagers was hardly noticeable in the United States. The teenage suicide rate in 1960 was 3.6 per 100,000 American adolescents. By 1970, the rate was up to 5.9. In 1980, the suicide rate climbed to 8.5 children. Currently, 11.3 out of each 100,000 adolescents in the United States commits suicide. Today, roughly 5 percent of all teenagers try to take their lives each year, compared to 1 percent in 1960 (Bennett, 1993: 12). The number of American youth taking their lives continues to climb (Gaines, 1991: 7).

Teen suicide touches all social classes, although poor children are most at risk. Suicide engulfs honor students as well as underachievers (*Daily Times-Call*, Dec. 4, 1993: 10A). Teen suicide eliminates alienated youth, those left without hope, children who have given up on their families, schools, communities, friends, and

neighbors. Suicidal teenagers are often labeled burnouts, dropouts, dirtbags, druggies, grinders, mall rats, or punks. They rebel against the favoritism shown other teens called preps, jocks, or brains (Gaines, 1991: 9). Girls report thinking about suicide more than do boys. There is some disagreement over whether boys or girls more often attempt suicide (see U.S. Dept. of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993: 319; Gaines, 1991: 7). Some suicidal teens are known to school and legal authorities as “fuck-ups,” long before they “do it.” Other suicidal adolescents gain public attention only with their last act (Gaines, 1991: 3).

Data about teen suicide, for many reasons, probably underestimate the dimensions of the problem. For example, because of the stigma attached to suicide in the United States, many young persons who take their lives are recorded as having experienced accidents involving automobiles or drugs. If we accept the assertion that suicidal people are also often murderous, when an object of aggression is available, then many teenagers engaging in extreme violence—youth out “wilding,” skinheads, gang bangers, as well as robbers, murderers, arsonists and rapists—might be trying to get someone else to take their lives, possibly a victim, a rival gang member, or a police officer. If, as Gaines suggests, the United States is one of the most dehumanizing and alienating of all countries, if growing numbers of children feel exploited, dominated, and hopeless, then teen suicide can no longer be considered inconsequential (12).

BASIC TYPES OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Juvenile delinquency begins, like socially desirable behavior, in the home. Parent-child relationships are the cornerstones upon which good citizenship and misbehavior are built. According to Demause, six basic types of parent-child relationships exist (1974a: 553–56). In some cultural and historical settings one or two types prevail. In other societies, especially in mass, postindustrial civilizations like the United States, several basic types of parent-child relationships operate side by side. Demause observes that all six types exist today and combine to form a fairly good scheme for classifying contemporary parental behavior. Below, the history of each type of relationship is described.

Infanticide

Infanticide is the willful murder of newborn children, usually by exposing, starving, strangling, smothering, or poisoning them or by employing a deadly weapon (Langer, 1974: 353). Infanticide is a common solution to the problems presented by handicapped or weak babies. Murder is an option pursued by parents who lack the material, emotional, and physical resources necessary to raise children. Mortality data suggest that children risk infanticide until the age of five, although most murders occur early in the first year of life. Fathers usually decide which children will be kept, if any, and girls are at greater risk than boys (Langer, 1974: 354). Infanticide minimizes the number of problem children in a society by eliminating many who would presumably be dependent, neglected, and delinquent. Infanticide has been employed by parents throughout history, and it remains in use today.

Abandonment

Another option is dumping unwanted children in places where they are likely to die, or where they will be found and kept alive by others. In ancient China urns were put in public places for this purpose. Before the twentieth century, dung heaps and irrigation ditches were favored by the parents of problem children in other countries. Wet nurses and their intermediaries were used in early France, England, and America. In the United States, churches, public parks, spots adjacent to freeways, and even dumpsters have been favored places to abandon children.

In England, France and the United States, numerous organizations emerged to take care of unwanted children. The earliest were almshouses, which sequestered and exploited children for their labor alongside destitute, handicapped, diseased, and deranged adults. Before 1875, placement in the almshouse, for the young, or indenture, for older youth, was the most likely fate for children abandoned in the United States (Thurston, 1930: 399–400).

In France, hospitals for poor, abandoned children were opened by the church and government. This development lessened the rate of infanticide and precipitated a torrent of abandonment. Most abandoned children in French hospitals died shortly after arrival.

Few thrived. Abandonment places children where they can be exploited by uncaring adults.

It is possible that some more affluent parents favor short-range abandonment, a practice where children are kept within the household and are cared for by surrogates but at a distance from parents. For rich children, this means care by nurses, nannies, teachers, and tutors. Today, short-range abandonment may mean care outside the home by entrepreneurs, care at the hands of an older sibling, or care provided by some other relative.

Ambivalence

In the fourteenth century some well-educated parents began to read that children must be shaped through violent training if they are to become moral, disciplined, and productive adults. Parents fused this new information with the age-old beliefs that children are impediments to adult happiness and should be avoided whenever possible. Out of this amalgam of thoughts came the practice of ambivalent parenting, which emphasized beating children into accepting the dictates of adult society. Ambivalent parents might have loved their offspring, but training manuals asserted that sparing the rod would surely spoil the child (DeMause, 1974a: 553–54). Children raised by ambivalent parents enjoy some of the economic and physical protections life inside the family can offer, but they also acquire feelings of fear, hostility, and anger, along with a tendency to try solving problems through violence.

Intrusive Approach

As civilizations expanded and became more complex, material wealth also expanded greatly, and many European families were set free from the immediate drudgery of working long hours in order to survive. Some parents used their leisure and resources to get more involved with their children. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a philosopher, helped them by writing *Emile* (1762), a book dedicated to an aristocratic female friend about how to raise her son, Emile. Rousseau prescribed an approach that would have the parents, especially the mother, interact more with their children. Although the children would remain in the hands of nurses and male tutors who lived in the family home, the parents would “intrude” more into the child’s development. Emile was set free from the

bondage of swaddling wraps and was allowed into his mother's chambers at regular intervals to be coddled and fed at her breast.

Rousseau expanded these ideas in *The Social Contract* (1762). He portrayed the mother and child as central figures in a movement to reform and strengthen French society. Rousseau believed that, while nursing, mother and child form a love bond that becomes the cement of family life and good citizenship. He discouraged use of wet nurses because affection flows from child to nurse and severs the emotional bonds that tie family (and thus state) together. He also advocated radical early toilet training, hitting but not beating, instilling and manipulating fear in children, and regular exposure to cold temperatures. As a result of *Emile*, some rich children were seen regularly by their parents, and evidence suggests that strong love bonds developed. For the most part, however, advantaged children were left to the care of nurses, tutors, and other servants. There was little protection from violence and other forms of abuse. *Emile* left fathers with vague and unspecified duties.

While it is well known that he abandoned his own children, Rousseau's ideas set a new standard for raising children and even today dominate the thinking of many parents. For the poor, who until late in the nineteenth century spent at least some of their lives working as servants, the intrusive approach created new pressures to abstain from infanticide, abandonment, and ambivalence. Unfortunately, most poor parents lacked leisure time to spend with their children and could not find resources to hire live-in surrogates. Nevertheless, the advent of intrusive parenting among the rich helped set the forces of law against heretofore acceptable styles of parenting.

Socialization Mode

Over the last century, deeper love feelings and more contact between parent and child have become common. Fathers participate in some child-rearing activities. Children are seen as the embodiment of the family. People have come to believe that their social instincts must be drawn out and refined, which requires less violent treatment; hitting children has given way to the use of guilt, disgrace, and fear as motivators. This approach to parenting is called the socialization mode. Parents send their children away from home for part of the day, to be educated and cared for by nonfamily members.

Today, socialization-style parenting is popular in the United States, partly because of the relative affluence and leisure enjoyed by many contemporary Americans. But other parenting styles, in their pure forms and as composites, are also currently employed. The socialization mode of parenting should produce fewer problem children than the other styles we examined. However, when ambivalence and violence are combined with what appears to be a socialization mode of parenting, children can be driven toward delinquency and other forms of misbehavior.

Helping Mode

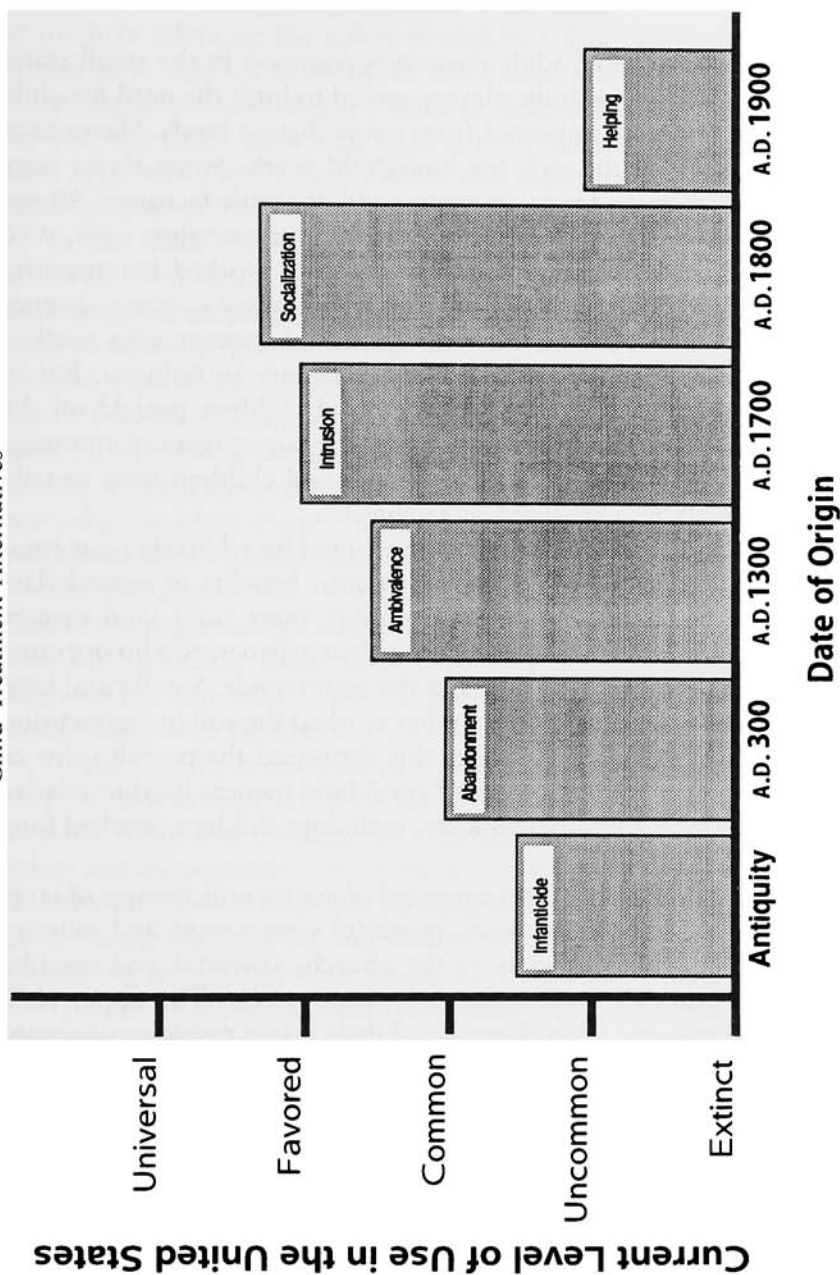
In the last fifty years, small numbers of parents have taken the socialization mode to its extreme, where father and mother share equally in intensive, selfless parenting. Helping mode parents allow the child's needs to reign over all else in the household; employ no screaming or hitting; explain everything to their children; refrain from all discipline; let the plan of nature for the child unfold through unfettered play; and encourage relatively unrestrained ventures into adult environments. The helping style of parenting requires commitment and large quantities of time and labor from both parents; thus, does not blend well with the necessity for two adult wage-earners that most American families currently face. Yet, increasing numbers of families are aware of the helping mode, and many modern parents claim to employ it.

Figure 1.1 displays the six child treatment alternatives identified by DeMause. He asserts that the two most common forms of parenting in the United States today are the intrusive and socialization modes. Millions of American parents nevertheless practice ambivalence, abandonment, and infanticide. Perhaps the pervasiveness of bad parenting helps to explain the presence of millions of problem children in the United States today.

CHILDHOOD IN PREINDUSTRIAL ITALY, FRANCE, AND ENGLAND

Growing up, surviving childhood, has always been tough. In order to illustrate this fact, we next consider the perils that youth encountered in the past—in three civilizations that have greatly influenced American society.

FIGURE 1.1
Child Treatment Alternatives



Italy

In the 1300s, use of adult slaves was common in the small states that today compose Italy. Slavery served to limit the need for child labor. Slaves were imported from many distant lands. Slaves were used mostly by the rich for household work. Some slaves were deployed on large farms, in mines, and at textile factories. Alongside slaves in the Italian lower class were propertyless serfs, who lived in oppressive conditions on land they worked for powerful lords. The lower class also included wage-earning factory workers—for example, the four thousand women who worked daily at the spinning wheels of a silk factory in Bologna. Italian factory workers were often women and children pushed off the farm. They worked long hours under the supervision of an owner or manager. Wages earned by women and children were usually paid directly to a husband or father.

The middle class in Italy was anchored by relatively poor rural land owners, who enjoyed some tenuous benefits of second-class citizenship. Despite holding citizenship, poor rural land owners were in hopeless competition with urban aristocrats who operated large highly capitalized farms in the countryside. Small rural land owners and their extended families worked the soil in competition with gangs of serfs and slaves; this depressed the overall value of farm products and labor. Small rural land owners lived in relative deprivation. All family members, including children, worked long hours.

The Italian upper class consisted of aristocratic owners of large land tracts, wealthy bankers, powerful government and military leaders, and high officials of the church. Powerful and wealthy persons presided over expansive urban estates. The upper class acquired country villas that rivaled their urban residences in grandeur and splendor. The upper class of Italy lived a life of extreme luxury, pretentiousness, and indulgence, rivaled only in degree by the abject poverty and oppression endured by the Italian lower class. Upper-class Italians were, in general, insecure and dangerous persons who practiced treachery, intrigue, and violent aggression, even toward their own children.

The church opened a foundling home at Milan in the eighth century. Abandoned children of legitimate birth were kept at the foundling home until they could be sent out to work or until they

died. Opening of the foundling home in Milan is important because it marks the approximate date when Italian churches began to publicly advocate the safety of children. Eventually, foundling homes were opened in many of the Italian states. Children at a foundling home were taught a trade or skill; older foundlings were set free. But death rates were high at the homes; living conditions were oppressive, and enough room was available to house only a small fraction of the area's problem children.

In the tenth century, the Italian church began to alter ideas about children. Italian churches began to teach that large families were desirable and that birth control practices were sinful. Church leaders outlawed infanticide and punished some violators. Church art and philosophy idealized childhood, portraying children as saints. Church doctrine expressed love and affection toward children. At first, these changes in religious thinking affected the lives of only a few elite and middle-class children. But eventually the new religious ideas about childhood trickled down to the masses, and some ideas became embodied in law.

On the darker side, children born to slaves and to unwed mothers were generally killed at birth. Many girls and weak babies were put to death. Rural farm families kept alive healthy male offspring but few others, since labor competition from imported slaves made large numbers of children unnecessary.

In the twelfth century, Pope Innocent III opened a foundling hospital in Rome, in order to discourage mothers from throwing their newborns into the local river (Trexler, 1974). In 1500, Church policy was incorporated into criminal law when the government of Florence established fines and punishments for persons who suffocated young children. By the end of the sixteenth century, laws prohibiting infanticide were adopted throughout Europe.

There is little evidence that early laws greatly lessened the rate of infanticide and abandonment in Italy's principalities. It is clear, however, that church policy and criminal law began to push the weight of public opinion in favor of keeping growing numbers of problem children alive. Change in beliefs came slowly. Early laws were generally used to prosecute midwives and a handful of unwed poor mothers. Offenders were treated brutally by the church and courts. Punishing isolated offenders served as a reminder to other parents of what flagrant infanticide could bring. Thus, Italian states gave birth to the practice of keeping growing numbers of

problem children alive. But death and abandonment remained a common fate for Italian children. For example, McLaughlin estimates that infant mortality, in the ninth through thirteenth centuries, claimed one or two of each three babies born in Italy (1974: 111).

In spite of church and government proscriptions, many Italian parents, especially those who could not find ways to send away their unwanted children, practiced infanticide. As infanticide grew less common, abandonment of children increased in popularity, and the number of those abandoned was only partially offset by the number placed into church-run foundling homes. Unwanted children could be kept at home and worked hard by ambivalent parents. Others could be sold or rented to strangers as laborers or servants. Eventually more and more unwanted children were indentured by their parents, sent to live with and work for strangers. Thus, by extending abandonment to include renting and selling of offspring, Italian parents got rid of problem children while keeping them alive. In sum, life for lower-class and middle class children in preindustrial Italy was fraught with hard work, violence, and risk of death. Even the most advantaged Italian child might be abandoned and abused.

France

Infanticide was practiced by parents of all social ranks in early France and abated slowly. Infanticide eventually lost ground because of the teachings of the church. However, even good Christians found it difficult to reconcile their religious beliefs with the reality of poverty and with the possibility that many of their children, if allowed to live, could slowly starve or be exploited by indenture.

The French church responded by opening several foundling hospitals, where children of legitimate birth could be abandoned. The first French foundling hospital was opened in 1180 at Montpellier. Babies could be deposited onto a turntable that would spin into the hospital, where employees took over and tended newborns. The abandoners could remain anonymous. Surviving babies were shipped from the hospital into the countryside, where unsupervised foster families and wet nurses cared for them. Since the death rate was high during this process, the turntable was in reality a slightly

more complicated form of infanticide. Most children abandoned on hospital turntables died within eight to fifteen days (Fuch, 1984: 3).

Children who survived abandonment and foundling hospitals were kept in the countryside until the age of three or four, when they were returned to the hospitals and put to work, often alongside adult residents who were suffering from acute illness. This practice continued until the end of the nineteenth century. At about the age of seven, foundlings were sent away from the hospital to make a living elsewhere.

In 1552, the French Parliament passed a law requiring church officials to provide housing and care for abandoned children. The church responded by opening foundling hospitals throughout France. In 1556, Henry II, king of France, decreed that infanticide was punishable by death. It was nevertheless legal for parents to sell children. One foundling hospital in Paris housed 312 children in 1670. By 1772, the hospital admitted almost 8,000 castoff children per year (10). By 1800, maintaining foundling hospitals proved too costly for the church. Government agencies took over.

Thus, by 1800, the French had developed a society-wide hospital system that kept large numbers of problem children alive. Care for children in foundling hospitals was, in theory, supervised by religious women. In reality, child care was relegated to untrained, unsupervised underlings. Foundlings were fed by wet nurses when they were available. When they were not, unwanted babies were fed by less sanitary and nutritious means. French foundling hospitals were cold, dirty, overcrowded places. Older children worked hard. Babies and younger children were seldom given affection (123–26). By the 1830s, foundling hospitals became too costly for the French government to run. Consequently, admission rules were stiffened. Fewer and fewer unwanted children were taken in. Foundling hospitals eventually disappeared. In 1840, French lawmakers passed a harsh new law forbidding the abandonment of children. The French Church and federal government had set a cultural precedent, however, by briefly assuming responsibility for large numbers of abandoned children. Other European countries followed the French example, extending legal protection to at least some problem children and setting the stage for new bodies of juvenile law.

Most French children worked long hours. In the eighteenth century, French parents put their children to work at the age of

three. By six years of age, children were expected to earn wages (Schorsch, 1979: 134). Parents and other adults regularly beat children, believing that physical violence was an essential part of child rearing. Hospitals and parents rid themselves of children by putting them out under the care and supervision of strangers. Children's work often involved menial labor and harsh physical abuse. Orphans could be legally put out to work until they reached twenty-five years of age, at which time they were set free.

Advantaged families sought more rewarding positions for their children in the shops of craftsmen or artisans, where a trade could be learned. Advantaged girls often worked as servants. Farm children could be kept at home and put to work. Surplus farm children were indentured to neighbors or distant strangers. Even elite French children could be sent away to work in the homes of other kin. Many indentured French children suffered sexual abuse at the hands of their guardians (Langer, 1974: 357). Lower-class children working as servants were especially at risk.

In sum, as ideas about childhood developed in France, the practice of infanticide gave way to abandonment as a common way to deal with problem children. The French Church assumed responsibility for some unwanted children. In time the French central government attempted to provide for abandoned children. Unfortunately, neither the French church nor the government was able to provide care for the large numbers of abandoned children who needed help. As foundling hospitals disappeared, French problem children were set adrift and exploited for their labor. The French, however, introduced society-wide mechanisms for eliminating infanticide and for housing unwanted children.

England

During the fourth and fifth centuries, under Roman occupation, the British provinces procured ample numbers of adult slaves to meet their labor and service needs. Consequently, relatively few poor British children were kept alive. Thousands of British children were exported to Rome as slaves. Even upper class British children were raised in households where violent discipline was common. Thus, most youngsters in early England could anticipate a childhood filled with hard labor and beatings.

British law grossly favored elites and made life hard for slaves and peasants. Also, the law left women and children under the

complete control of their fathers or husbands in all social classes. British law made it easy to get rid of children. The law made infanticide a family matter, with the father having final say. Children (and wives) could be rented out or sold as slaves. Babies born to slaves experienced either infanticide or lifelong enslavement. Free males could sexually exploit slave women but had no legal or economic obligations to children born out of such unions.

In the seventh century, the powerful archbishop of Canterbury issued a declaration making infanticide a crime. The church prescribed fifteen years of penance as punishment but exacted only seven years from poor parents (Kellum, 1974: 367–88). However, enforcement of child murder laws was lax and remained so for hundreds of years. In the rare cases where infanticide came to the attention of the courts, it was usually treated as a minor offense. English law exempted men from liability in child murder cases.

English tradition had established fathers as the ultimate authorities in their homes and had given to fathers the right to physically punish children in the amount and degree that they felt fit each offense (“Law Relating to Children,” 1910: 138). So, before the nineteenth century, most English children remained vulnerable to violence and murder with no consequences for the offenders. For example, between 1265 and 1413, English court records show no cases of infanticide. But the same records show that 60 to 80 percent of the known deaths of children resulted from drowning—in a ditch, in a well, or in a pail of water or milk at home (Kellum, 1974: 371). Such drownings would today very likely be investigated as possible cases of parental neglect. Only a handful of English parents, the ones who murdered their children awkwardly, in public places, were prosecuted for infanticide. Almost always, the persons prosecuted were women. Almost always, courts found them not guilty. In fact, court records from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England show that only six parents were convicted of infanticide. In one province of England, only one case of infanticide was recorded during the thirteenth century, even though three thousand cases of adult homicide reached the courts.

The English considered infanticide far less serious than many other offenses. English culture painted newborns as subhuman, and babies were thought to be highly susceptible to control by the devil. Such cultural beliefs were used to rationalize infanticide, especially in the form of overlaying, the parents’ taking a baby to

bed with them and smothering it with their bodies during the night. English law conveniently failed to include parental overlaying as a punishable form of infanticide. English culture subtly excused the killing of children up to the age of five by rationalizing that some too-assertive, or willful, children are likely to have more accidents than normal youngsters.

Through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such attitudes underwent little change in England (Tucker, 1974). Most adults believed that children were simply another form of private property. Most parents practiced ambivalent childrearing. Tucker reports that a few elite English children were loved and liked by their parents, but even elite babies were seldom nursed by their mothers. Some elite youth emerged as literary objects, usually displaying innocence and bringing joy and happiness to their rich parents. A handful of elite children were formally educated. However, infanticide remained common throughout England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Almost all children were repeatedly beaten. Upper-class girls were generally denied access to formal education. Almost all English youth began life bound tightly in swaddling clothes, which exposed them to dangerous bacteria and caused painful rashes (232–49).

By the sixteenth century, poor children on the loose in the streets of English cities had become a significant problem, meriting legal attention (Schorsch, 1979: 137). A series of laws were passed to protect English citizens from vagrant children; one law gave local officials the authority to seize unwanted youngsters and put them out as indentured apprentices to property-owning masters.

In general, English parents had three options with the children they chose to keep alive. These options defined parenting in England and her colonies until the end of the nineteenth century. First, children could be put to work at the about age three in the home, at a family business, or on a farm. A second option, as youngsters neared seven, was to send them away to become apprentices in the homes, businesses, or farms of unrelated masters. Child abandonment was practiced by parents of all social classes. Elite children were sent to the residences of other elite families, where they served as pages under the direction of a presumably sophisticated master. Some middle-class children were placed in the shops of craftsmen, in the studios of artists and artisans, or as servants in refined households and thereby acquired marketable

adult skills. Many children were abused by their masters, and a good number were violated sexually. Lower-class children were put out as apprentices. Apprenticeships lasted until age twenty-four and often involved dangerous gang labor on large farms (135). Young girls were married early or put out as prostitutes.

Advantaged parents could afford a third option: sending children away to boarding schools for formal education. Formal schooling was a luxury, of course, and became a way for rich parents to communicate to others their high social status.

The British Empire expanded and prospered throughout the nineteenth century. Ever larger numbers of unwanted children roamed the streets of English towns and cities. Vast numbers of lower class English children fell under the control of colonial governments in foreign lands as well (Illick, 1974). English government and churches responded by opening almshouses, where excess children could be quartered, and by expanding the apprenticeship system into the colonies. Using almshouses, apprenticeship, and infanticide, the English rid themselves of a good number of problem children.

By 1820, the industrial revolution was under way in England. Early industrialization required large numbers of unskilled laborers, and English children adapted well to factory work. Unwanted children were sent from farms and almshouses to factories and were worked in gangs. Once a child had been put out to a factory, no one in authority monitored how the youthful worker was treated. Rapid industrialization, and unprecedented growth in the size of industrial cities, led to increased exploitation of English children (Deardorff, 1930). Many poor English children were put to work in large cotton and textile mills. The young were used as laborers in the mines, on large farms, and in garment factories. Children worked alongside adult wage earners but earned only 25 to 50 percent of the adult wage—when they were paid. Poor English children worked sixteen-hour days, six days per week. Some youngsters were forced to live at the factories where they worked; others were allowed to return to an almshouse at night or to an exploitive home. Since birth certificates were uncommon, letters from parents or local officials sufficed to establish the age of a youth. Thus, many children under seven years of age worked in industry.

Marx and Engels saw child labor in factories as a natural

development of capitalism, since children ranked among the least protected laborers and were therefore easy prey. Political officials and business leaders pointed out that the alternatives to factory work available in England for most unwanted youth led to violence, theft, or prostitution. Thus, many English persons lauded early industrialization and the factory system as ideal solutions to problems posed by unwanted youth.

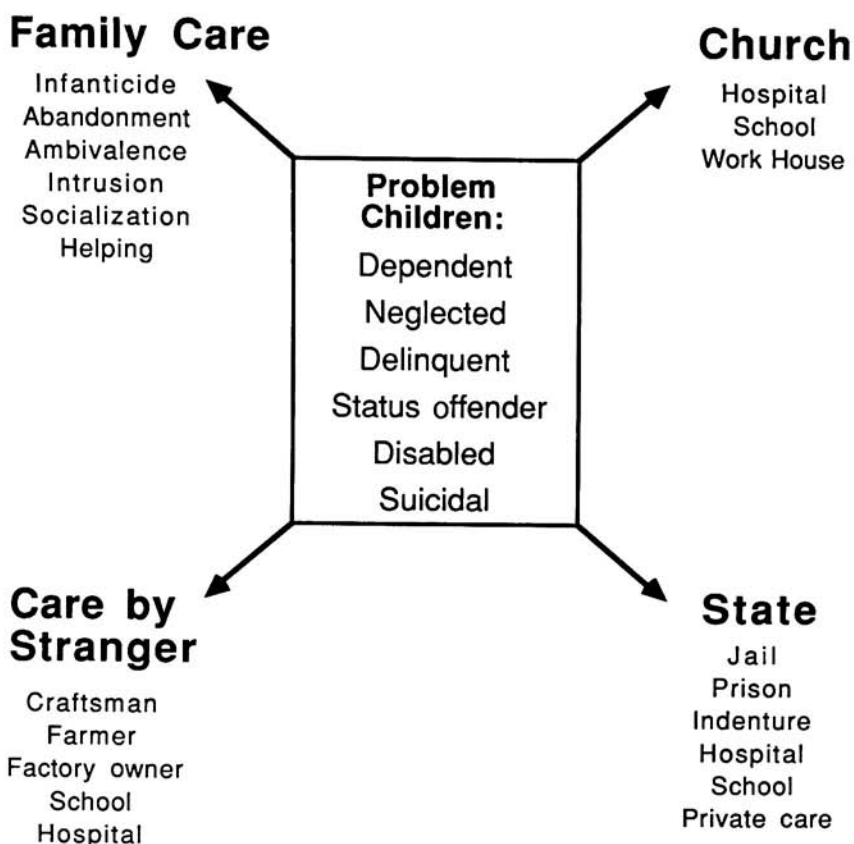
As industrialization matured, technologies, machines, and energy sources changed. Mature industry required fewer unskilled workers and employed persons who had acquired knowledge and skills that went beyond the limits of youth. Thus, as the twentieth century opened, a process began that replaced youthful industrial workers with better-trained and more highly educated adult wage earners. Consequently, unwanted children were sent back into the homes, almshouses, and small, privately owned workplaces from which they had come. The English government responded to the industrial displacement of problem children by expanding public education and by assuming responsibility for large numbers of young law violators. In order to protect children from abusive, neglectful families and from oppressive employers, English children's law was expanded, and jurisdiction over many family matters was assumed by government.

SUMMARY

This chapter offers a conceptual and historical backdrop for viewing delinquency and other problems children face. We identify six basic types of problem children, namely, delinquents, status offenders, dependent and neglected youth, and disabled and suicidal adolescents. We review six basic types of parent-child relationships. Infanticide, abandonment, and ambivalence are ancient styles of parenting. Intrusion, socialization, and helping approaches are more recent, and apparently more benign, developments. All six forms of parenting are practiced in industrial societies, although many parents today combine elements of several styles into hybrid approaches to childrearing.

Cultures offer four basic childcare alternatives. Figure 1.2 displays these in graphic form. Family care and care by a stranger are the oldest ways to care for children. During the last four hundred years, however, churches and governments have become major

FIGURE 1.2
Basic Child Care Alternatives



caretakers of problem children. Unfortunately, church and government solutions have been more limited than the scope of children's problems they confront. Church and government officials again and again have encountered more problem children than their hospitals, apprenticing techniques, and juvenile institutions can care for. In fact, church and government efforts to care for problem children can be oppressive themselves. Problem children abound in all large civilizations because large numbers of youngsters are exposed to mistreatment and other forms of exploitation. Thus, no one should be surprised to find that several million problem children currently live in the United States.