

Chapter 3: The Formation of the American Personality Through Psychospeciation

CHAPTER 3

FOUNDATIONS OF
PSYCHOHISTORY
by [LLOYD DEMAUSE](#)

THE FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN PERSONALITY THROUGH PSYCHOSPECIATION

*History is, indeed , a stage.
The playwright, she stayed home.*

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What caused America? What was it that changed a group of totalitarian, bigoted, head-hunting and witch-hunting Englishmen into a nation of fiercely independent Yankees in but one century? In a world accustomed to glacially slow change in historical personality, what sudden shift of psychic forces cracked open the frozen feudal mask of European man and released the powerful individualism which fashioned the world's first modern democracy?(1) Something new had happened to the human personality in America – – Condorcet thought Americans had “stepped out of history”, Turgot called them “the hope of the human race” – many agreed on what happened. But what caused it?

Historians over the past 200 years have answered this question with a single theme: trees caused America. Trees, and all that open space, giving the American colonists the freedom to start anew, substituting an institutionless American simplicity for the hierarchical European complexity they left behind.(2) Unfortunately, there are two problems with this environmental

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thesis. The first is that the most important social institutions were brought over to America intact – in the heads of the colonists – and two generations after the first Puritans landed New England was as totalitarian, hierarchical and intolerant as anywhere in Europe. Despite all those trees. And the second problem is that if trees, open space and a fresh start could produce democratic men, why didn't it do so in Brazil or Mexico, or in Siberia for that matter?

The biggest problem with discussing causality with historians is their inevitable assumption that "historical events" are caused by prior "historical events." That is the reason why most historical explanation to date has been essentially narrative: America was caused by an historical event, the encounter of the colonists with Nature. But in fact the initial methodological assumption is mistaken; scientifically, no historical action ever commits a human group to any future action, so it can never be its cause. Pearl Harbor did not cause our war with Japan, because we could have chosen not to retaliate, if we were only different. Any scientific description of the cause of adult historical events must first of all include the formation of the historical personalities involved, including their formation during childhood. The scientific meaning of the question "What caused America?" thus turns out to be similar to that of the question "What caused the giraffe?" Both are answered by evolutionary descriptions. The giraffe is the product of biospeculation from certain mammalian parents through selection and isolation of a deviant population at a specific moment in biological evolution within a certain natural environment. America is the production of psychospeculation from certain psychological parents through selection and isolation of a deviant population at a specific moment in the evolution of childhood within a certain group environment. Just as the locus for transmission of biological structure is the gene, the locus for transmission of psychic structure is the "psychogenic" parent-child interaction. Just as modern synthetic evolutionary biology studies the process of genetic mutation as the ultimate source(3) of new genotypes, so modern scientific psychohistory studies the psychogenic interaction between mother(4) and child as the ultimate source of psychotypes, that is, new historical personalities

What is most unexpected, however, is that psychospeculation, like biospeciation, turns out to be a thoroughly lawful process. The production of psychic variation moves through stages, called "psychogenic modes," similar to the stages of evolution of biological orders, as successive generations of mothers face fresh new populations of infants and attempt to meet their needs in new ways more advanced than those they had endured in their own childhood.

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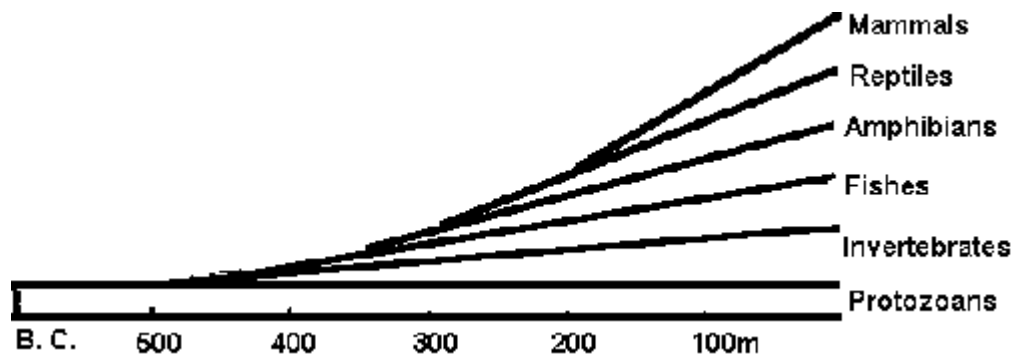


Fig. 1 Schema Of Biological Evolution

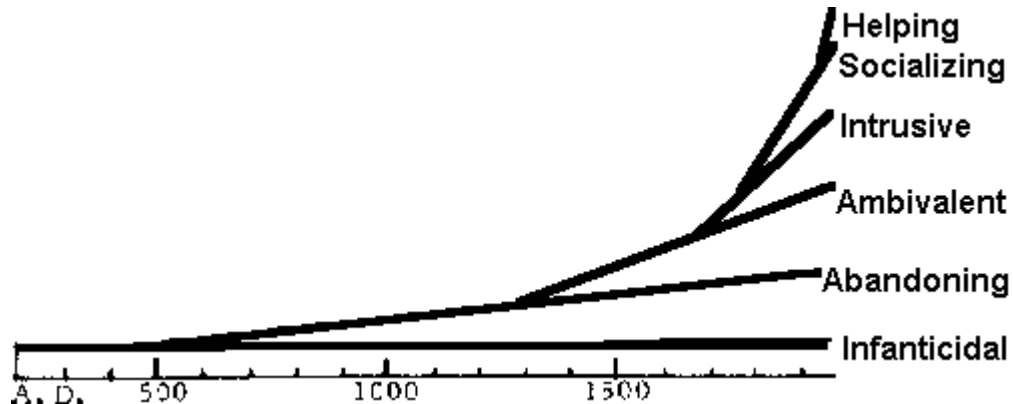


Fig. 2 Schema Of Psychological Evolution

Each advance in psychogenic mode diminishes the emotional distance between mother and child. The infanticidal mode of antiquity handled the anxiety posed by the infant's needs through measures which constantly threatened the child's life, including regular infanticide by rich and poor alike. The medieval mode of abandonment substituted continuous rejection of the child, whether to wetnurse, fosterage or monastery. The ambivalent parent, beginning in the Renaissance, viewed the infant as at once both irrevocably evil and greatly idealized. The intrusive mode of the eighteenth century produced a mother who could now guarantee the child some measure of her love but only under the condition of total control of his emotions. And the currently predominant socializing mode uses covert manipulation of the child predominantly through guilt and the delegation of parental goals.

Each psychogenic mode in turn produces historically new adult psychospecies: the schizoid character of antiquity gives way to the autistic character produced by the abandonment of medieval childhood, the late medieval manic-depressive character being followed by the early modern compulsive character, the result of intrusive mode parenting, and finally by the various types of anxiety characters so commonly found in contemporary society.

Each of these modes of parenting is only achieved historically. As in every evolutionary scheme, as Darwin first noted, the table of past stages also turns out to be a table of contemporary taxonomy, so that the sequence of psychogenic modes from the past becomes a list of contemporary psychoanalytic personality types, produced by the current spectrum of family types, from "battered child syndrome" parenting to "overcontrolling" intrusive

parenting. Each contemporary type is therefore at the same time a “psychological fossil” once predominant in a past historical period, much as contemporary reptiles were once the predominant species of a past epoch.

Parallels between biological and psychological evolution are not limited to the lawful production of new types; some of the most important mechanisms explaining differential evolutionary paths turn out to be identical. Two evolutionary mechanisms—selection and isolation—are central both to modern synthetic evolutionary theory and to the psychogenic theory of history, in particular to our present question of the evolution of the American personality. For the production of variation, through mutation or through psychogenic mother-child interaction, is of course only half the story. Equally important are the laws explaining the growth and preservation of variant populations. With the mechanisms of selection and isolation we can return our inquiry into “the origin of psychospecies” back to the question of “What caused America?” For just as the selection of a narrow range of variants from a biological population followed by their geographical isolation prevents the “swamping” of emergent genetic variation so too selection of a narrow range of mothers from the European population and their geographical isolation in America prevented the “swamping” of emergent psychogenic variations by less advanced modes of parent-child relations. The American colonies thus became most prolific in the emergence of new psychospecies, sort of the Galapagos Islands of psychohistory.

Let’s take a look at these unusual mothers. The evolutionary moment was the seventeenth century, late in the ambivalent mode of parenting. The production of new mothers from little girls had just reached an important turning point in the evolution of childhood—the virtual disappearance of the conscious and unconscious killing of girl babies as unworthy of living, a practice which stretched back not only to antiquity but even beyond, to our Paleolithic beginnings. (For this and subsequent demographic references, see Appendix.) Now it is unfortunately true that little girls who know their parents are murdering their siblings tend to grow up crippled in their own ability to mother. Although the open infanticide of antiquity – where “more than one daughter was practically never reared” even by the rich—was mildly opposed by the Church, the decline of differential filicide was slow, continuing through the Middle Ages both in open infanticide and through such common practices as sending girls more often to “killing nurses” with only enough money for a few weeks of nurturance, breast-feeding girls for a much shorter time than boys so that they became susceptible to death by

disease, and so on. Although little girls are biologically more hardy than boys in most contemporary societies and have a lower death-rate, the proof that excess girl-killing continued can be seen in the census figures we have showing boys outnumbering girls by one-third, a ratio which did not decline to near equal proportions until the seventeenth century.

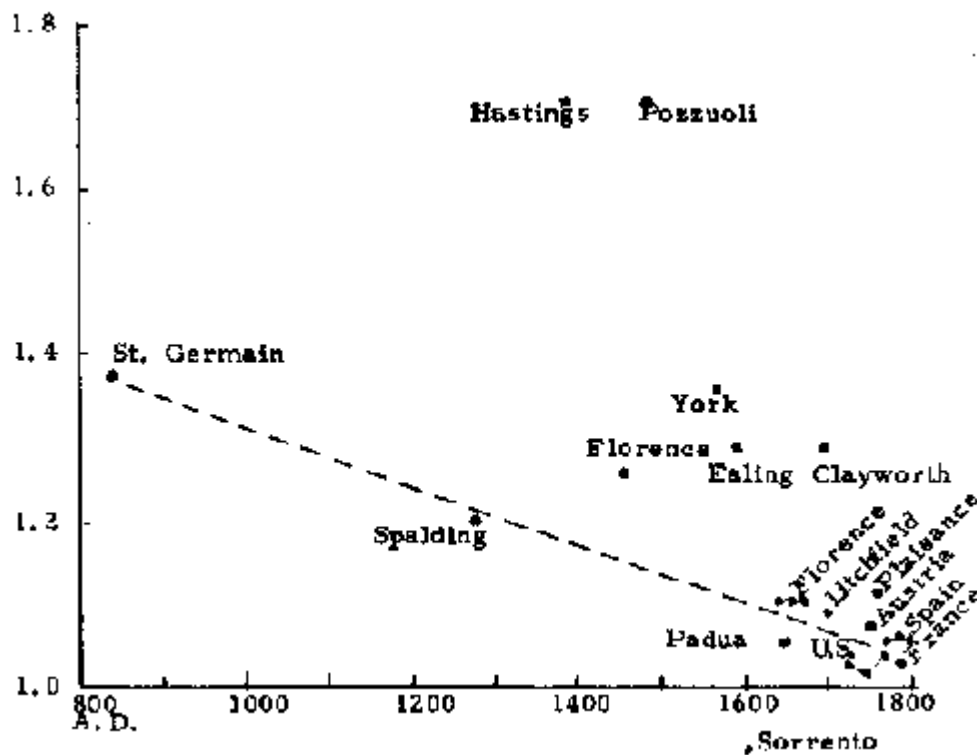


Fig. 5 Boy-Girl Ratios As An Index Of Filicide

Even then, there were many areas and classes with higher boy-girl sex ratios, a reflection of the wide variation in psychogenic modes in seventeenth-century Europe. England was a century ahead of France and two centuries ahead of the rest of Europe in such crucial indices as the decline of infanticide, the giving up of tight swaddling and the reduction of the shipping out of infants to wetnurses – a practice still so widespread in eighteenth-century France that 80% of all the children in Paris were shipped out to the country to hired wetnurses returning only years later and then often immediately sent out again to school or to apprentice, so that many Frenchmen could truthfully say with Tallyrand that they had not spent one week of their lives under their father's roof.(6) At the same time, in Germany and Italy parents were still having their little boys castrated by the tens of thousands in the hope of being able to hire them out as singers, newborn Russian infants were still being subjected to hour-long ice-water baptisms to "harden" them, and Italian babies were still being nailed up on display carts in religious processions, donated by infanticidal mothers who hoped that their painful death in the service of religion would guarantee their babies a passage straight to Heaven.(7)

Not only was England in the seventeenth century ahead of the rest of Europe in child care, but it was more particularly the English middle class, from which so many American mothers were drawn, which first achieved these historically new attitudes toward children. At a time when the English nobility still sent their children out to wetnurse, numbers of brave English middle-class mothers, particularly Puritan mothers, who were encouraged to pray with and watch closely over their children, began for the first time in history to face the enormous anxieties of actually relating with empathy to the emotional needs of the infant at their breast. When, for instance, their babies cried upon being swaddled, these mothers stopped complaining that man was born in shackles", a phrase repeated ad nauseum since Pliny(8), and instead empathized with their infants and tried

leaving them unswaddled, over the horrified objections of their doctors. Frenchmen thought the sight of these unswaddled English infants “deplorable” and complained of the excessive “indulgence of Mothers . . . among the English.”(9)

It was from such mothers as these that the American personality was formed. Selected from among the most advanced, and isolated from the “swamping” effects of earlier-mode parents, American mothers became the first in history to face their ambivalent feelings and to begin to fashion the modern intrusive mode of childrearing, a mode which was closer, more nurturant, more consistent and more controlling than any prior mode in the evolution of childhood. The evidence for this is everywhere. Colonial America had the lowest boy-girl ratio and the least child abandonment and infanticide in the world at that time. No huge Foundling Hospitals were required such as were in such abundance all over Europe, and at a time when one could see hundreds of infants every morning in the gutters of London or Paris. Samuel Sewall noted in his diary in 1685 that he had just seen the “first child that ever was . . . exposed in Boston.”(10) In addition, America was the earliest to set up mass public schooling,(11) the earliest to campaign for the end to beating children in the school and home,(12) the earliest to end outside wetnursing(13) and swaddling,(14) and – a certain sign that the intrusive mode had begun in earnest – the first to write anti-masturbation literature for children.(15) Predictably, European visitors to a man soon began to complain bitterly about this “spoiling” of American children, this extreme “indulgence” which “makes them petty domestic tyrants”, partly because American mothers now gave children some of the attention which previously had gone to the father and his guests. (16)

The price paid for this new emotional closeness of intrusive mode mothers was a heavy one. If the paradigm of the previous ambivalent mode mother was “You are bad inside, and I must tie you up and beat you because you are a mere container for my own projected badness,” the paradigm for the new intrusive mother became “You are bad, but if you admit it and subject your inner life to total control by me I will allow you to feel close to me.” American mothers therefore became the world’s first total control freaks, to a

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degree today only found in rare clinical cases. “Their wills ought to be entirely subject to ours,” says one colonial parent, “and that whatsoever we command or require, must be punctually comply’d with.”(17) The “continuous surveillance” of the little child, the “breaking of the will” started prior to its first birthday, the mother “contending with me will” of the little infant until it learned to subject itself completely by instant response and by the total suppression of crying, producing what Jonathan Edwards termed “cheerful obedience ever after.”(18) Whereas the ambivalent mode mother would give continuous enemas to clean out the “bad stuff” inside the baby, the intrusive mother began, for the first time in history, to toilet train the infant, as early as four weeks, subjecting even its sphincters to a regime of total control.

Since mothers were attempting to reduce the beating of children, the use of extreme psychological measures was more often relied upon. For instance, children were continuously threatened with death for disobedience, death inflicted by an angry God who “holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire,” and even penmanship lessons featured writing over and over again the phrase “Remember that you are born to die.”(20) The natural result was a child who, like David Ferris, felt death “the

most frequent companion of my thoughts", or like two-year-old Elizabeth Butcher, who would reflect on her "sinfulness and corrupt nature" while lying in her cradle.(21) Psychotic episodes abounded in these children, as when the Paris children "began to act after a strange and unusual manner . . . by getting into holes, and creeping under chairs and stools, and to use sundry odd postures and antik gestures . . ."(22)

But at fortunate moments, if the mother felt the children sufficiently cowed to be under her total control, a sweet merging with the mother was allowed, often taking the form of a conversion experience of merging with Christ. Edwards tells us of four-year-old Phebe Bartlet, who in 1735, after praying endlessly in the closet with her mother and after being instructed by her on the punishments awaiting her in hell, goes back to the closet alone and prays:

"Lord give me salvation! I pray, beg pardon all my sins!" When the child had done prayer, she came out of the closet, and came and sat down by her mother, and cried aloud . . . Her mother then asked her whether she was afraid that God would not give her salvation. She then answered Yes, I am afraid I shall go to hell! Her mother then endeavored to quiet her, and told her -- . she must be a good girl . . . she continued thus earnestly crying and talking for some time, till at length she suddenly ceased crying and began to smile, and presently said with a smiling countenance . . . Mother, the Kingdom of heaven is come to me! . . . I love God!
(23)

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The conversion process, for adult or child, consisted of stages of terror, humiliation and then final merging with a close, intrusive mother a fantasy of regression to a hellish womb and then "rebirth" in a symbiotic state of oneness with a "sweet and lovely" "Eternal Light."(24) This light, the merging with the mother's warmth, previously in history only achieved by lonely mystics, now became, with the intrusive mode, a goal of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Further, by the 1740's enough Americans had achieved the intrusive mode stage so that they got together in groups for massive fantasies of group-regression, called the "Great Awakening" by historians. Thousands of people would rush to hear preachers who would play the mother's role of terrorizer and allow those assembled to re-experience the regression-and-rebirth fantasy. Although religious revivals had been around since the seventeenth century, it was only in the eighteenth century, when enough intrusive mode adults were available, that huge groups would gather all over America to hear preachers' descriptions of hellfire and damnation, in order to undergo the "frights and terrors, shriekings and screamings, tremblings and agitations, cryings out and faintings" that would purge the badness out of their souls and lead them to the glorious merging with God.(25)

Those intrusive-mode Americans who were able to achieve this regression-rebirth process of merging with the mother, those who called themselves the New Lights, were, finally, the driving force behind the American Revolutionary War, itself a group-fantasy of regression-and-rebirth.(26) Only a personality which had reached the intrusive mode could go beyond the feelings of personal powerlessness and cosmic capriciousness which were caused by the brutality and capriciousness of pre-intrusive mode parenting. Only they could begin to

achieve the ego strength and individuality which are the goals of the modern personality. It was the closer, more consistent intrusive mothering which was responsible for the ending of the need for massive projective identification-that whole world of magic, ghosts, demons, devils and other split-off parts of the self, which disappeared in the seventeenth century, prior to any introduction of scientific thinking.(27) It was the new attitude toward children which was responsible for family limitation and the rapid development of pediatrics, the two main components of the Great Demographic Transition so important to the history of the West.(28) And, finally – since the tyranny of parents sustains every other tyranny – it was only intrusive-mode adults who were able to drop the hierarchical world of passive obedience to the “divine right of magistracy and kings”(29) and make the project of revolution against authority a central life task.(30)

That the American Revolution had psychological in addition to economic roots is a notion only recently entertained by historians. Besides such obvious facts as the total absence of economic matters (or for that matter of the supposed issue of “no taxation without representation”) from personal journals and letters written during the period 1775-6, the economic argument

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has always suffered from the implausibility of the notion that tens of thousands of men would go charging into blazing muskets and cannon for the sake of \$1.20 a year in British taxes.(33) No, the American Revolution was first of all a group-fantasy, an assertion of counterdependency from mother-England, a psychotic group process of regression-and-rebirth similar to that of the Great Awakening, except that in the Revolution it was America rather than Christ that became the mother with which one merged.

The path of this group-regression in the years prior to the Revolution can be traced in the shifts in imagery used in describing mother-England. The basic group-fantasy of colonial America was one of total dependence on an all-giving mother. In 1741, despite America’s relative economic and political independence, a characteristic metaphor had it that

The colonies are yet but Babes that cannot subsist but in the Breasts, and through the Protection of their Mother Country.(34)

This dependency fantasy of the “tender mother” Britain served to defend against and deny all hostility. For instance, it was thought as ridiculous to suggest stationing British troops in America as it would be “to place two of his Majesty’s Beef-Eaters to watch an Infant in the Cradle. that it doesn’t rise and cut its Father’s Throat.”(35)

By the 1760’s, however, as enough intrusive mode adults became aware of and began to voice their unconscious hostility, the imagery began to change and the group-fantasy moved step by step backwards in years to earlier and earlier childhood traumata. First, sibling rivalry was remembered; John Otis, Jr. complained that

Then specific childhood practices began to return from repression. Britain was depicted as holding young Americans in bondage by "leading strings" (Fig. 6). The practice of putting iron collars around the necks of little children to make them keep their heads erect was transferred to complaints that Americans were "tamely yielding their necks to the yoke" and that for "generations yet unborn the chains of thralldom cannot be put about our necks." (37) By 1765, John Adams asked if "Britain is the mother and we are the children . . . have not children a right to complain when their parents are attempting to break their limbs . . .", a reference to beating with rods, still a common practice in his childhood. (38) By 1773, the group-fantasy regressed to anal imagery, mother-England being seen as "piercing . . . the bowels of her own children", and by 1775 the oral stage reached only this time the mother was seen not as nurturant but as "poisoning", not as pure and tender but as "an old abandoned prostitute", not as protective but as a murderer, "red with the blood of her children." (39)

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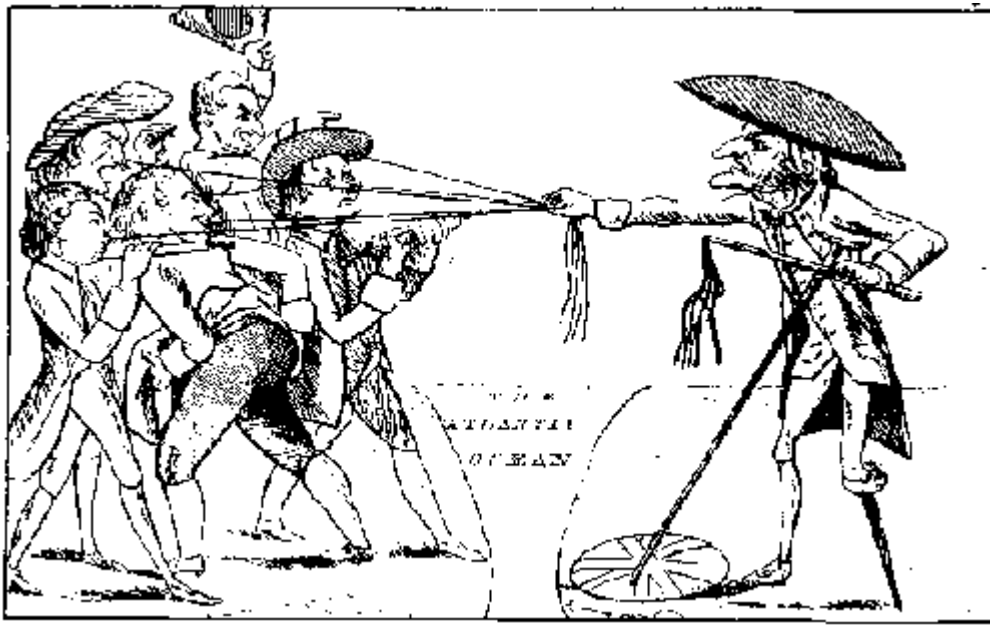


Fig. 6 Anon.: Poor old England endeavoring to reclaim his wicked American Children. The strings are leading strings, which were attached to children's clothes and used to control them. The strings also represent the umbilical cord.

At the same time, political events followed the regressive path of the group-fantasy. The British still imagine that they were stern and fair parents, while the American Loyalists, ambivalent-mode personalities still clinging to hierarchy and unable to merge with the new nation-mother image, continued to insist on the necessity of obedience, even asking that mother-England "chastise her undutiful and rebellious children." (40)

The real turning point in this group-fantasy took place with the Boston Tea Party. The incident itself was strictly symbolic, since both Britain and America were filled with hundreds of similar protest riots.(41) But the infantile symbolism was quite clear to both sides England was jamming food down America's throat, just as mothers used to jam pap down their babies' throats until they threw up (See Figures 7, 8 and 9). This time the colonists didn't take it lying down. The Boston Evening Post termed the tea "poisoned", and the Americans spit it out into the harbor. This spitting-out drove Britain wild with fury. whereas previously she had accepted with virtual indifference the loss of millions of pounds of taxes, she now reacted with military force to this spitting by this "petty little province, the creature of our own hands, the bubble of our own breath.(43) The Battle of Lexington followed, and American group-fantasy regressed to the ultimate trauma, that of birth.

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 **Fig. 7 Anon.:** *The able Doctor or America swallowing the Bitter Draught* Published by Paul Revere in 1774 after the Boston Tea Party. The tea is like pap poured down the throat, only here reversed, the mother now getting hers. Making America a mother enables the artist to merge another theme, that of birth, with the doctor looking under the skirts of the prostrate woman.

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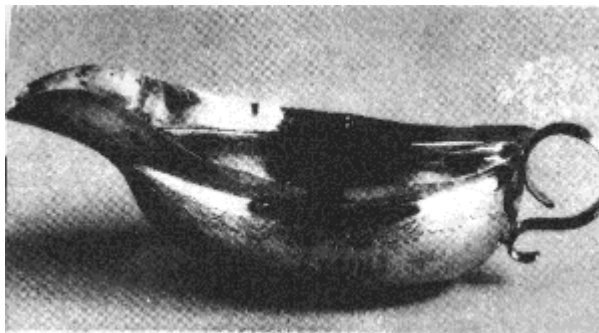


Fig. 8 William Thomson: *Papboat*. Early nineteenth-century papboat illustrates typical colonial style, used to pour bread and water or milk mixture down babies' throats.

Fig. 9 Philip Dawes; *The Bostonian's Paying the Exciseman or Tarring and Feathering*. British drawing of an actual event where the colonists forced a tax collector to swallow tea. The tea being poured into the harbor strengthens the equation.

Birth imagery infused the everyday language of politics during 1775-6. As in all wars,(44) the birth imagery was specific to the actual birth practices of the time. Whereas today, with hospital deliveries the norm, we go to war with images of “surgical air strikes”, colonial mothers gave birth at home, amidst much hemorrhaging, so the American Revolution is filled with images of the “innocent blood” of “infant babes”, “feet sliding on bespattered stones” and “streets stained with blood.” Even the familiar bedsheet of childbirth is evoked by one writer, who saw the coming Revolution as “a large sheet . . . big with Oppression and desolation . . . big with destruction . . .”(45) Another writer even imagined that “women in childbirth were driven by the [British] soldiery naked into the streets” at Concord.(46) Even the newly-invented practice of tar-and-feathering is a projected acting-out of the birth scene, with the mob turning the victim into a feces-baby, covered with black tar and often also rolled in cow- or hog-dung.(47)

Thus “the child Liberty was born,” as James Otis, Jr. put it’ “midwifed into existence” by Americans acting out the group-fantasy of war-as birth, fighting their way out of the fearful maternal womb and identifying with “the child Independence struggling for birth .”(48) Thus America was “plunged into the dreadful abyss” of war. as Edmund Burke put it.(49) And thus does the American Revolution which we celebrate this year illustrate, like all historical movements, the psychogenic law that history is the final receptacle for the repressed, the final resting-place for infantile traumata, the group-fantasy which at last reenacts and makes real that which we would most disown-our own childhood.

APPENDIX: ON THE DEMOGRAPHY OF FILICIDE

Most of my psychogenic theory of history has aroused the anxiety levels of the historical community, but no part of it has produced more extreme anger than my insistence on the long continuity of filicidal wishes of parents toward their children. The death of babies, on those rare occasions when it enters into academic discourse, is considered an unfortunate accident of demography, a mere side-effect of ignorance, poverty, or the lack of medical technique – anything but a wish of parents. As Dorothy Bloch and Joseph Rheingold have shown over and over again in their writings,(50) the child always vigorously denies knowledge of the parents’ death wishes, preferring to believe the worst about himself or herself rather than admit being completely unwanted. Historical opinion echoes this deep revulsion against the reality of filicidal wishes.

As just one example, Joseph Kett, in his review of my work in *The American Historical Review*(51) says “almost everything” is wrong with my notion that child abuse was widespread in the past, because

To establish the pervasiveness of exposure of female children, he cites a few instances of grossly imbalances sex ratios but passes over the work of serious demographers who treat the evidence for infanticide more cautiously.

Despite Kett’s unnamed serious demographers,” however. the facts are precisely the opposite-out of the fifty-three articles written by historical demographers on infanticide and sex ratios, all but one agrees with me that infanticide on a large scale did indeed exist during antiquity and the middle ages, only declining slowly in modern times. Since this one exception, the medieval demographer David Herlihy, is no doubt the authority for Kett’s reference to “serious demographers,” his statements should be examined in detail before moving on to the mass of direct evidence for the steady decline of filicide shown in Figure 5 above.

Herlihy’s contention that “exposure of girl babies does not appear to have been a common practice” in fifteenth-century Italy is based on a single assertion, repeated throughout his writings, that the constant excess of boys in the census figures he reports is “principally due to a failure to report girl babies.”(52) The only evidence he gives in any of his writings for this strange propensity to err only in counting girls-a propensity that mysteriously declines after plagues, when girls are more welcome-is that “surviving sermons provide a complete list of the sins of the age, and that crime attracted no particular attention.”(53) The possibility of the crime being rather commonly accepted, and therefore not of “particular attention,” is not considered by Herlihy.

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His actual figures show far more boys than girls in Renaissance Pistoja: “The sex ratio of the population, urban and rural, for children 15 years of age and younger, is very high, 125 boys to every 100 girls. This may reflect a peculiarity in the sex ratio at birth. Giovanni Villani, for example, stated that at Florence in the 1330s, out of 5500 to 6000 babies baptized yearly, the number of boys surpassed that of girls by from 300 to 500, but even this distribution, if accurately reported, would at the maximum result in a sex ratio during childhood of about 118.”(54) This excess of boys (105/100 being the normal birth ratio)(55) is but another disproof of Herlihy’s “miscounting” thesis, since one does not differentially miscount individual baptisms by sex. Further, since girls are everywhere biologically hardier and less susceptible to disease than boys,(56) a 125 to 100 sex ratio from ages 0-15, later filicide excluded, would mean an infanticide rate of something on the order of a third or more of all girls born.(57)

In all his writings, Herlihy gives only one instance actually backing up his oft-repeated “no infanticide” thesis by figures. in his comments on two Carolingian surveys, he finds one, that of St. Victor of Marseilles, with “106 female children but only 99 males. a ratio of 93.40,” and concludes from this that “there is no suggestion of female infanticide among the peasants of St. Victor.”(58) This conclusion, however. manages to overlook one crucial fact: in over a third of this count, no sex was slated for the child. To conclude that the unstated sexes of

such a small sample must have been precisely in the same ratio as the stated ones is completely unwarranted. Further, in Santa Maria of Farfa, the second Carolingian study Herlihy cites. where the number of “no sex stated” is much lower and the total population high so that the survey is far more trustworthy to a demographer. boys outnumber girls by 136 to 100. Herlihy can only comment that this higher ratio is “scarcely creditable . . . a further indication of the erratic reporting of children.”(59) For Herlihy, low ratios and incomplete surveys prove conclusively “no infanticide,” while high ratios and more complete surveys prove “erratic reporting.”

Figure 13 Carolingian Children’s Sex Ratios

	Males	Females	Ratio	No Sex Stated
St. Victor of Marseilles	99	106	93.40	155
Santa Maria of Farfa	328	242	135.54	123

In contrast, an accurate and extensively analyzed study of Carolingian sex ratios which agrees with my thesis of widespread infanticide is provided by the work of Herlihy’s former student, Emily Coleman.(60) Her studies of the polyptych of Saint Germant-des-Prés (ca.801), which include the extensive use of product-moment correlation analysis, conclude that the childhood sex ratio (136 boys to 100 girls) is not explained by miscounting, since it

correlated (inversely) with the size of the farm, and therefore that differential female filicide was definitely being practiced.(61) This principle, in fact, applies to all our figures, since one can hardly imagine a “propensity to miscount” which correlates with size of land holdings and goes up and down before and after plagues.

The evidence cited by other historians agrees with this picture of widespread filicide prior to modern times. Although census figures are sparse in antiquity, and one might be tempted to doubt such studies as Kirchner’s *Prosopographica Attica* showing a ratio of five boys to every girl in 346 families,(62) more recent studies confirm the thesis of massive filicide in antiquity. William Tarn summarizes the Hellenistic data:

Of some thousand families from Greece who received Milesian citizenship c. 228-230, details of 79. with their children, remain; these brought 118 sons and 28 daughters [a ration of 42 /100], many being minors; no natural causes can account for those proportions. Similarly Epictetus’ families, 32 had one child and 31 two; and they show a certain striving after two sons. The inscriptions at large bear this out. Two sons are fairly common, with a sprinkling of three; at Eretria, third century, certainly two families in 19 had more than one son, which is lower than the Miletus immigrants, but agrees with the evidence from Delphi . . . more than one daughter was practically never reared, bearing out Poseidippus’ statement that ‘even a rich man always exposes a daughter.’ Of the 600 families from Delphic inscriptions, second century, just 1 per cent reared 2

daughters; the Miletus evidence agrees, and throughout the whole mass of inscriptions cases of sisters can almost be numbered on one's fingers. . . (64)

In his massive volume on Italian Manpower, classical demographer P. A. Brunt confirms the existence of massive differential female infanticide, noting that

we are told of a 'law of Romulus' whereby citizens were bound, on pain of forfeiting half their property (a sanction of no force against the proletarii), to raise all male children and the firstborn girl, unless the child were maimed or monstrous, when it might be exposed if five neighbors approved. The exposure of deformed infants seems indeed to have been obligatory under the Twelve Tables and to have been a normal practice. (64)

The demographer J. C. Russell, who spent his life studying ancient and medieval populations, agrees that the high sex ratios in Roman times are only explainable by differentially greater female infanticide, and cites the English enumeration of John of Hastings (1391-2) as similar evidence for the medieval period (170 boys to 100 girls).(65)

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Renaissance demographer Richard Trexler agrees,(66) and devotes a careful analysis of the records of fifteenth-century Florence which illuminates the important distinction between the open infanticide of previous times and the more common filicide of the later middle ages which more and more replaced it. Trexler cites the Florentine Catasto of 1427 which shows a growing imbalance between the sexes as the age increases:

Figure 14 Childhood Sex Ratios in Florence (1427)

birth	115
0-1	118
1-2	119
2-3	120
3-4	119

Now this increasing sex ratio is not only the opposite of the normal case in most populations today where female hardness is allowed to have its effect, but in addition Trexler shows that it is mainly only true among the

babies taken care of by paid wet-nurses: while among those babies sent to the hospital girls fared about as well as boys. almost twice as many girls as boys died before their first birthday while at wet-nurse, either because of preferential treatment while at wet-nurse or because of a greater propensity to send girls to ill-paid wet-nurses, or both. This combination of outright infanticide at birth by strangling, drowning or exposure plus later filicide by sending more often to wet-nurse or by sending with only enough money for a few weeks upkeep to “killing nurses” used to taking the hint(67) produces the overall filicide rates which are used in my chart (Figure 5).

Although occasionally very high boy/girl ratios are found in birth registers [Feuchere’s ratio of 162/100 for French nobility in the late middle ages being the highest I have encountered(68)]. more often the birth ratio ranges in the 110-120 area, while the census figures range higher. so that both differential infanticide and later filicide combine to produce the overall imbalance reflected in the raw census figures. Perhaps the most extensive overall study of this combination of infanticide at birth and filicide later on is the work of Ursula M. Cowgill, a biologist at Yale, who has not only presented figures breaking out the exact degree of differential infanticide and filicide in York, England over three centuries, but also has actually observed the mechanisms at work in the field in Guatemala. Working with the parish registers of York from 1538 to 1812, Cowgill fed 33,000 births into a computer and produced a graph of death rates for children which showed girls dying at every age at a greater rate than boys, which Cowgill says “suggests that parents in York took better care of their boys than of their girls.”(69) This differential treatment, added to the infanticide occurring at birth (sixteenth century ratio at York of 110.8),(70) produced the overall ratio of 136/100. In a pair of fascinating articles written with G.E. Hutchinson, (71)

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Cowgill describes observing an Indian village in Guatemala where the sex ratio is 178/100, an imbalance she says is wholly due to the tendency of parents “to favor males . . . by breast feeding male infants for a longer period than females. it is in fact possible to find male children still being breast fed while younger female siblings have already been weaned. Living with the people, one gets a strong impression that, after weaning also, boys are better cared for than girls” The practice of nursing boys longer than girls can, of course, be found in the historical literature right along with the other differential treatments mentioned. It is an interesting parenthetical note that these filicidal Indians, like the filicidal Europeans of half a millennia earlier, dressed their children as miniature adults, unlike nearby tribes who had less differential treatment of girls. In fact, Cowgill and Hutchinson even suggest that little girls’ sexually provocative behavior toward adult males might function as an evolutionary mechanism necessary to prevent “demographic catastrophe” by eliciting interest on behalf of little girls in cultural systems so hostile to them-a polite way of saying that little girls have to seduce males into letting them live!

Although Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, assumed his audience was thoroughly familiar with “the birth-strangled babe/Ditch-deliver’d by a drab,” by early modern times, especially in England and America, differential infanticide proper had been almost entirely replaced (for legitimate babies) by differential filicide after birth.(72) Although F. G. Emmison calls infanticide in sixteenth-century Middlesex and Essex “woefully common,”(73) by the seventeenth-century Keith Wrightson, in an article reviewing infanticide in seventeenth-century England, concludes that, although disposal of infants “took in part the more familiar form of killing at birth,” in the main

it was accomplished “by studied neglect during nursing, a form of infanticide which would appear to have been regarded as less unambiguously criminal.”(74)

The ratios which I used in the graph for Figure 5 above confirm the major thesis of my psychogenic theory of childhood evolution on the gradualness of the decline of filicide, conscious or unconscious, throughout history:

Figure 15 Sex Ratios Used in Graph (Fig. 5)

<u>Place</u>	<u>Source: Footnote</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Ratio: Boys/Girls</u>
St. Germain, France	75	801-829	136
Spalding, England	76	1268-9	120
Hastings, England	77	1391-2	170
Florence, Italy	78	1427	125
Pozzuoli, Italy	79	1489	170
York, England	80	1538-1600	136
Sorrento, Italy	81	1561	91
Ealing, England	82	1599	128

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Padua, Italy	83	1634	104
Florence, Italy	84	1622-42	109
Clayworth, England	85	1688	34
Lichfield, England	86	1695	108
Austria	87	1754	107
Plaisance, Italy	88	1758	110
Spain	89	1768	104
Spain	89	1787	105
Spain	89	1797	104

France	90	1776	102
U.S.A.	91	1703-1774	1014

What, finally, is one to make of such a long history of filicide. One thing one must not conclude, and that is that it is a result of poverty. The evidence is clear that rich as well as poor killed their children. Coleman's figures on land holdings, for instance, show a slight tendency for richer peasants to kill fewer girls, but even the richest farmers had children's ratios running as high as 130-140, only lacking the highest ratios of 150-200 which were sometimes found among the poor. And the Florentine Catasto showed a much higher ratio for the rich (those assessed more than 400 fiorins) than the poor!(92) Since these are just the amounts of filicide revealed in the sex ratio statistics, it is likely that one can conclude that being born of rich parents and therefore being more likely to have been sent out to wet-nurse gave one little if any advantage over being born poor, considering the vast literature proving the increased death rate for infants sent out to wet-nurse. (93)

Nor should it be imagined that these are all illegitimate children who are being killed. Even if we did not have direct evidence of parents ordering the killing of legitimate children,(94) almost all those sent to wet-nurse were in fact legitimate (the notion that Europe was ever 'tolerant' of illegitimate babies is of course quite untrue)-when, for instance, the parents of Lyon sent one-half of their newborn to the countryside to wet-nurse, and half of these died(95) the effect of not keeping them home is clear. Therefore, I have to stick with my original statement that legitimate children were killed in great numbers throughout antiquity and the early middle ages, declining in the later middle ages, and that only by the seventeenth century was infanticide generally restricted to illegitimate babies.

What, then, can one conclude from all this demographic evidence as to the filicidal atmosphere surrounding growing up in the past? First, as to the extent of this filicide, my best estimate at this time is still that the extent continues to be enormously underestimated – that from a third to a half of all babies born in antiquity and the early middle ages were probably killed, a

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ratio only slowly to decline by early modern times. Since virtually all illegitimate babies seem to have been killed, boys and girls at the same rate,(96) and since a third or more legitimate girls than boys were killed, one must account for literally millions of dead babies when judging the emotional effect on those remaining. To illustrate the kinds of proportions which can be hidden behind a childhood sex ratio, a recent detailed study of a Japanese village from 1717 to 1830 showed a sex ratio at birth of only 114 boys to 100 girls, about where much of Europe was in the early modern period after much of the gross infanticide of legitimate babies had died down-yet a more careful analysis of the age groups showed far more infanticide than was at first apparent, since a large percentage of boys were also killed (as revealed by probability analysis by age), the infanticide being practiced "less as part of a struggle for survival than as a way of planning the sex composition, sex sequence, spacing, and ultimate number of children."(97) Boys were killed both to avoid division of property and also simply because parents had had enough, so the sex ratio was unbalanced by 114 to 100 but only because girls were killed in yet even greater numbers than boys. I estimate about a quarter of all legitimate children

born in this village were killed, from the figures given, to which must be added almost all the illegitimate children, for a total of certainly over a third of all children born. Societies still in an earlier psychogenic mode would run still higher filicide rates, with half the children born being killed a not unlikely figure for antiquity.(98)

The effects on the survivors can barely be imagined. The remaining children would surely be impressed with the filicidal atmosphere of the people around them, as they saw the rivers, ditches and latrines filled with dead and dying babies, watched baptisms in icy rivers, and visited villages of "killing nurses." Our demographic and literary evidence may always fail to capture that crucial moment as the parent screams at the child "I could have killed you, you know," and only a literary genius like Louis Adamic can describe his internal horror as he watched the "killing nurse" who wet-nursed him croon to the infant at her breast that she would strangle it that night.(99) Yet, all said, we surely by now have enough evidence to warrant my statement in the main text of this essay that little girls, hardest of every species, grew up in a filicidal atmosphere, knowing that their life was cheap, that their siblings were being killed through infanticide and neglect by the millions, and that the decline of this massive filicide by early modern times was part of an important improvement in their ability to mother their own children in turn when they grew up.

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2. The consistency with which American historians even today have stock to the notion of the environment causing major psychic and social change can best be found in David W. Nobile, *Historians Against History; The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965. The most popular book to depend on the environment thesis is by Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt, 1920. Most historians, of course, avoid the question of cause entirely by remaining purely narrative and describing "preconditions" rather than causes, which is to say previous adult historical events, as for instance in Jack Greene's "An Uneasy Connection: An Analysis of the Preconditions of the American Revolution" in *Essays on the American Revolution*, edited by Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973. pp. 32-80. Even then, however, the environmental argument creeps back, which in Greene's case takes the form of claiming the rough American woods needed "manly" personalities which then turned into the need for a "manly" Revolution.
3. Mutation is "the ultimate source" not "the only source" of genetic variation in modern synthetic biological evolutionary theory. "Recombination. . . is by far the most important source of genetic variation" says Ernst Mayr in his definitive statement of modern synthetic theory, *Animal Species and Evolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 179. So it also is with psychogenic variation, with the "recombination" accomplished through marriage.
4. Fathers only enter into the care of the child in its main formative period, the first seven years or so, in the

nineteenth century, so the term "mother" here is correct for most of the evolution of childhood, and is used here to best convey the colonial American situation. For more on this and on the additional elements of the psychogenic theory of history, see my article "The Evolution of Childhood" in deMause, Editor, *The History of Childhood*. New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974 and Harper & Row, 1975.

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6. Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, *Memoirs*. Vol.1. Paris, 1895, p.8. For the 80% wetnursing rate in Paris, see my chapter "Evolution" in *The History of Childhood*, p.8; also Maurice Garden, *Lyoti ct les Lyonnais au xvllle Siecle*. Paris, 1 970; George D. Sussman, "The Wet-Nursing Business in Nineteenth-Century France." *French Historical Studies* a(1 975): 304-28. For evidence for the remainder of this sentence, see the Appendix to this article; my "Evolution" article; Elizabeth Wirth Marvick's chapter on seventeenth-century France, "Nature Versus Nurture: Patterns and Trends in Seventeenth-Century French Child-Rearing" in *The History of*

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72. R. Thompson, "Seventeenth-Century English and Colonial Sex Ratios: A Postscript." *Population Studies* 21(1974): 153-165 reviews Herbert Moller's earlier work, and cites a birth ratio of 107/100 in Graunt's tables for London covering the period 1629 to 1664. D. F. C. Eversley, "A Survey of Population in an Area of Worcestershire from 1660-1150 on the Basis of Parish Records." *Population Studies* 10(1957): 253-279 says childhood mortality in England as early as the seventeenth century was the lowest in Europe." By the 19th century, all (if Europe showed sex ratios for children of approximately 100/100: charts showing this material can be found in Sweden. *Statistiska Centralbyrån*. [Gustav Sundbarg, ed.] *Ape-cus Statistique Internationale*. Vol. 11. Stockholm, 1908, p. 118; Michael G. Hulthill. *The Dictionary of Statistics*. 4th Ed. London, 1899, p. 443; Alexander von Oettingen *Die Statistik in ihrer Bedeutung für die Sozialpolitik*. Erlangen. 1882. pp. 60-61: and *Statistica del regno d'Italia*. *Popolazione* (classificazione degli abitanti negli Stati Sardi e censimenti di Lombardia. Torino. 1862.

73. F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Litter: Disorder*. London. 1970. p. 156.

74. Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England." *Local Population Studies* 15(1975): 10-21.

75 Emily Coleman, "Infanticide in the Early Middle Ages" in *Stuard, Women Or Medieval Society*, p. 511.

76 H. F. Hallam, "Some Thirteenth-Century Censuses." *Historical Abstracts: Review*. 2nd ser. 10(1957): 353. Accumulates the censuses of Weston, Moulton and Spaulding.

77. Russell, "Late Ancient and Medieval Populations," p. 1611.

78. Herlihy *Pistoia*, p. 110.

79. Russell, "Late Ancient and Medieval Populations," Table 34. Here, as elsewhere in Figure 15, I have computed life ratios for the nearest possible age to (#14 years old allowed by the data.

80. Cowgill, "York," pp. 106ff, computed for the 16th century from figures given for birth ratio in 16th c. in Cowgill, "Life and Death in York," p. 61 and then applied to graph on p. 108 "York."

81. Russell, "Late Ancient and Medieval Populations," Table 34,

82. D. F. C. Eversley, et al., *An Introduction to English Historical Demography: From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. London, 1966, p. 204.

83. Karl Julius Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*. Vol. 1. Berlin, 1939, p.37.

84. Beloch, *Italiens*, Vol.1, p.43; Vol.2, pp.144-5.

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85. Peter Laslett and John Harrison, "Clayworth and Coggeshall" in H. E. Bell and R. H. Ollard (eds.), *Historical Essays 1600-1800 Presented by David Ogg*. London, 1963, pp.157-184.

86. D. V. Glass, "Two Papers on Gregory King," in D. V. Glass and D. F. C. Eversley (eds.) *Population in History*. London, 1965, p. 181.

87. Roger Mols, *Introduction à la démographie historique des pays d'Europe du XIV^e siècle*. 2nd vol. Louvain, 1955, p. 191. I have averaged the areas given by approximate population size.

88. Beloch, *Italiens*, Vol. I, p.45.

89. Massimo Livi Bacci, "Fertility and Nuptiality Changes in Spain from the Late 18th to the Early 20th Century." *Population Studies* 22(1968): 93.

90. Louis Henry, "The Population of France in the Eighteenth Century," in Glass and Eversley, *Population in History*, pp. 500, 502.

91. A compilation from all state censuses which show age and sex breakdown for children, averaged for three quarter-centuries, from U.S. Bureau of the Census. *A Century of Population Growth 1790-1900*. Tables 81-103. Washington, D.C., 1909; Herbert Moller, "Sex Composition and Correlated Culture Patterns of Colonial America." *William & Mary Quarterly* 2(1945): 113-153; Everts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*. Gloucester, 1966.

92. Trexler, "Infanticide," p. 101.

93. See references in my "Evolution" essay. pp.34-5 and Table 5 in John Knodel and Etienne Van de Walle "Breast Feeding, Fertility and Infant Mortality: An Analysis of Some Early German Data." *Population Studies* 21(1967): 118. Also see George D. Sussman, "The Wet-Nursing Business in Nineteenth-Century France." *French Historical Studies* 9(1975): 304-28.

94. DeMause "Evolution," pp. 25ff; Marvick, "Nature," p.282.

95. Pierre Goubert, "Historical Demography and the Reinterpretation of Early Modern French History; A Research Review." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1(1970): 47.

96. The portion of illegitimate babies born and allowed to live but abandoned to institutions in 18th-century France was about one-third [Louis Henry, "The Population of France in the Eighteenth Century" in Glass, *Population in History*, p. 451]. So the real rate of illegitimacy must have been even higher. Of course, societies differ in actual illegitimacy rates, but the notion held by some demographers that illegitimacy was virtually non-existent in the Christian middle ages and later is as fantastic as their faith that infanticide was lacking, both stemming from the same source. "No marked sex differential is observable in the children allegedly murdered" and "fifty-three of the sixty-two children are unambiguously described as bastards" in Essex in the seventeenth century, says Wrightson, "Infanticide," p. 12.

98. Sex ratios of 248 boys to 100 girls were reached in parts of 19th-century India. See Kanti B. Pakrasi, *Female Infanticide in India*. Calcutta, 1971. pp. 88, 235. Also see J. Hainal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective" in Glass and Eversley, *Population in History*, p. 127 for more on India, China and Eastern Europe.

99. Louis Adamic, *Cradle of Life: The Story of One Man's Beginnings*. New York, 1936, p.23.

100. Robert D. Rutherford, *The Changing Sex Differential in Mortality*. Westport, Conn. 1975, p.9.

