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The evolution of trends in child discipline advice in Europe and the USA from World War II until 2010.

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The Evolution of the Trends in Child Discipline Advice in Europe and the USA From World War II Until 2010.

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Abstract

Modern academic and popular literature contains an abundance of parenting advice. One of the most controversial issues is child discipline. This paper presents a historical overview of the trends in experts' discipline recommendations between the 1940s and 2010. It focuses on three delineated directions which emerged post-World War II: the permissive revolution, attachment research, and the politicization of parenting. The paper sought to establish their development throughout the years, considering the changes in reasoning which underpinned the advice. Six secondary sources were identified through searching scientific and popular platforms (i.e. Scopus, Google Scholar, Google Books and Archive). These were used to identify 46 suitable primary childrearing publications which were selected based on publication date, format, addressee, and purpose. The results revealed that each of the examined trends underwent notable evolution. Permissiveness was initially acclaimed as a respite from the behaviourist idealisation of obedience but quickly began being seen as unsustainable and potentially provoking maladjustment. Nevertheless, it was not fully rejected and presently informs the more balanced discipline approaches such as positive parenting. Attachment-based advice evolved from concerns engendered by wartime evacuation to a fascination with primal bonding and tribal cultures, and towards the modern forms of attachment parenting. The post-war popularity of democratic methods of parenting faded with the impending threat of the Cold War as overly liberal rearing was seen as politically dangerous. By the end of the 20th century, references to such aspects of parenting were no longer present in most manuals. The findings of the current study findings have implications for both academic and popular understanding of many of the discipline practices researched and recommended today.

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Introduction

History suggests that parenting advice on child discipline dichotomously fluctuated between restrictiveness and permissiveness. These shifts were often provoked by changes in social climate or economic prosperity. One of the most influential events which transformed the nature of childcare recommendations was World War II. Its impact was diverse and enduring. Firstly, understanding the consequences of societal receptiveness to totalitarian regimes brought a fear of unconditional obedience. Therefore, more attention was given to the individualistic and emotion-driven approaches to raising children suggested by Sigmund Freud. This led to the promotion of permissive methods during the post-war period. Secondly, the aftermath of evacuations and the ensuing family separation popularised John Bowlby's theories about mother-child attachment. As a result, the concepts of deprivation, overprotectiveness or separation anxiety began featuring prominently within parenting advice. Thirdly, the atrocities of war incited a desperate desire within Western nations to prevent extreme ideologies from overtaking their political systems. It was thought that raising children in a democratic spirit would ensure the attainment of that goal, thus, promoting free participation and personal freedom became an important component of childrearing recommendations. The present paper will explore how these three trends - the permissive revolution, the attachment theory research, and the politicisation of parental practices - influenced the evolution of discipline advice offered by experts in the decades following World War II.

The Permissive Revolution

Throughout the Second World War, the published childcare manuals began rejecting the rigid and severe discipline philosophies reminiscent of Victorian times. This shift was termed the "Permissive Revolution" (Cross, 2004). The historical roots of permissive morality can be traced to the late nineteenth century. However, its direct influence on childcare recommendations only became apparent within the literature of the 1940s (Fisher, 2008). In tandem with the new child discipline programme came an altered view of the child herself. The concept of children's inherent resilience and sturdiness characteristic of the 19th century was replaced with the picture of the 20th century "vulnerable child" (Stearns, 2022). This change is well-illustrated by Martha Wolfstein's qualitative investigation of the advice in the government-issue *"Infant Care"* bulletin between the 1910s and the 1940s. Her findings indicated that the socially constructed image of an infant had transformed drastically. Earlier recommendations suggested that parents were to struggle against the baby's harmful impulses, whereas the wartime advice framed the parent as a facilitator for the child's gentle exploration – *"We find in 1943-45 that the baby has been transformed into almost complete harmlessness"* (Wolfstein, 1955, p. 200). Although the stark contrast posited by Wolfstein was argued to be somewhat inaccurate, her conclusions about the emergence of a more relaxed discipline termed "fun morality" were certainly valid.

This mentality led the enthusiastically permissive experts to place many constraints on the parents. It was no longer advisable to use despotism, induce guilt or resort to physical punishment. Instead, parents were to listen and reason with their children. It was their responsibility to reduce any threats posed by the child's environment without employing punishment as a deterrent from dangerous behaviours. Facing such exigent recommendations generated confusion and helplessness. Parents struggled to effectively raise their children without employing any discipline tools (Stearns, 2022; Lassonde, 2017). Despite this, research suggests that parental behaviour in the 1940s and 1950s largely adhered to the experts' ideals of permissiveness, featuring increased indulgence (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). It is, therefore, logical to ponder the cost and sustainability of such methods and the effect they had on the parents' well-being.

Nevertheless, the belief in children's dangerous fragility justified the adoption of limited discipline philosophies. The Freudian notions of repression and arguments about the detrimental effects of negative early experiences skewed discipline recommendations towards permissiveness (Valentine, 1994). The underlying reasoning originated in fear that restrictions or the presence of disciplinarian figures in a child's upbringing would lead to psycho-emotional impairments (Vernon, 1981). A related aspect of the war's influence on discipline was the desire to limit violence within society. Due to the widely cited research published by John Dollard, it was increasingly believed that using coercion or showing inconsistency in childrearing predisposed children to aggression (Dollard, 1944; Hulbert, 2004). Consequently, these "bad" practices were to be replaced by reassurance and self-esteem boosting. However, many experts believed that these alone were insufficient and suggested going one step further. They advised discouraging and protecting children from any type of violence or fighting even when realised through sports. Such suggestions could be thought of as driven by the trauma of the collective experience of war (Stearns, 1999).

Attachment, Bowlbyism & Discipline

A second significant influence of war on childrearing and discipline was the publication of John Bowlby's research on attachment. Its initial impact is simple to delineate since the onset of military action in Britain caused the evacuation of many children into the countryside – away from the bombs but also, away from their families (Thomson, 2013). Concerns emerged regarding the potential consequences of such prolonged estrangement. As a result, John Bowlby's work on separation anxiety, completed in the interwar period, received increased social attention (Newcombe & Lerner, 2016). The findings, presented in the seminal report *"Maternal Care and Mental Health"* (1951) hailed caregiver presence as a critical factor for successful development in the early years. Since mothers were primarily responsible for childrearing in Western families at the time, such recommendations intensified their role. In addition, as an extrapolation of Bowlby's research, certain authors implied that maternal

deprivation and improper care were to blame for the emotional instability of World War II soldiers. This, in turn, supposedly predisposed them towards perpetuating irrational military destruction (Vicedo, 2013). Overall, the concept of "deprivation" which governed expert advice in the early 1950s encouraged inflated claims about the effects of certain parenting practices on children's long-term risk of delinquency or mental illness. Throughout the following decades, the burden put on mothers grew only heavier. This was, in part, related to the popularization of Mary Ainsworth's findings in the late 1960s which emphasised caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness as critical for attachment security (Ainsworth, 1964). Many childrearing experts interpreted her research in an exigent manner which caused confusion about what constituted "insensitive" or "unresponsive" parenting. This led not only to a lack of clear discipline guidelines for parents but also to unrealistic expectations about maternal involvement (Kelso & Porter, 2009).

Another facet of attachment research which also developed post-war, focused on the opposite of deprivation - "overprotectiveness". Overprotective mothers were argued to employ discipline and rearing practices which encouraged infantilization of the child, preventing them from growing up. The quest for achieving the elusive balance between deprivation and overprotectiveness translated to contradictory child-rearing advice which undermined maternal instinct. Providing too much love, permissiveness and indulgence was portrayed as equally dangerous for attachment as withholding affection (Lee et al., 2014; Nakamura, 1959). To that point, it has been demonstrated that mothers of insecurely attached children were more prompt in responding to crying behaviour. This was attributed to their discomfort and desire to control negative emotional expressions, hampering the development of the child's regulatory skills (Van Ijzendoorn & Hubbard, 2000). The concern with over-involved parenting can also be traced in modern literature through the emergence of the term "helicopter parent". It is characterised by an obsessive approach to safety and imposing a host of restrictions upon the child (Bristow, 2014).

A final effect of the war-driven trauma of separation was an idealisation of the concept of family. The conflict spawned a relational mayhem brought about by the military service obligations and evacuation procedures. This created a new appreciation of interpersonal attachment bonds which was reflected in a shift in the post-war child discipline climate (Hendrick, 2016). Children gained the ability to play and explore unencumbered by strict rules, but they lost their freedom to access the streets and wander through cities. They were to remain under the constant protection of the household. Overall, the security of the "family" began to be seen as a critical contributor to children's capacity to navigate the challenges of the outside world. This is why it became critical for child discipline to incorporate the ideas of collaboration and togetherness (Thomson, 2013).

The Politicization of Parental Discipline

The final effect which emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War was the political contextualisation of childrearing. It was driven by the belief that children held a unique potential to secure a better future for Western nations. Although these ideas were present long before the war, the horrors of the conflict accentuated their importance. The unfortunate outcome of assuming that a specific child-rearing approach would safeguard world peace was the pressure put on parents and children (Lee et al., 2014). Given that researchers related experiencing authoritarian parenting to heightened susceptibility to totalitarian ideologies, it was clear that a parent could be blamed for their child's political views. A landmark study conducted in the US by Theodor Adorno and his team argued that parental tolerance and reticence towards conformity encouraged open-mindedness and individualism (Adorno, 1950; Gordon, 2017).

As a result of these insights, family life was put under the microscope as raising children became a matter of public concern. Despite its apparent intrusiveness, this approach was in line with the post-war social climate best described by the popular slogan - "personal is political" (Lassonde, 2017). It not only related to the feminist revolution of the time but also addressed domesticity and childrearing. It was argued that to ensure that children's political views are appropriately shaped, the public must know the details of their everyday home life. Only then could the parenting practices be evaluated and expertly modified (Rose, 1999). Consequently, legislation regulating the family and professionalising parenting continued to be implemented in the United States and across Europe from the late 1940s. It should, therefore, be considered whether this scrutiny contributed towards disempowering parents and damaging their confidence. This is especially relevant given that parenting and discipline were seen as the root cause as well as the solution to many socio-political issues (Furedi, 2001).

The last component within the post-war political interference in parenting was the rejection and gradual sanctioning of corporal punishment. In relation to the discussed attachment research, concerns about protecting children from cruelty began strengthening, fuelled also by the publication of prominent research on the battered child syndrome (Kempe et al., 1962; Lomax et al., 1978). This facilitated the passing of child protection legislation during the late 1940s and 1950s in numerous Western nations (Hendrick, 2016). Readily discouraged by experts, the use of physical punishment became a societal mark of low cultural capital and a basis for class differentiation. Despite professional advice and governmental control over what came to be considered abusive discipline practices, many parents continued covertly using them throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Forehand & McKinney, 1993). Nevertheless, physical punishment was gradually discarded except for certain writings rooted in Christian ideology. Consequently, the debate about child protection shifted towards a more general

consideration of children's rights with prominent advocates citing the child's non-negotiable freedom to live unencumbered by restrictions and discipline (Baumrind, 1996).

The Present Study

As shown by the introduction, previous literature illustrated that the influences of the Second World War on childcare advice can be seen in three significant trends. However, further research must be done to explore the longitudinal impact of these on actual child discipline advice from the 1940s onwards. There is a wealth of manuals available in the modern day which, unfortunately, frequently contain inconsistent or even contradictory recommendations. Many of them could still potentially be related to the war's influence on society. It is, therefore, imperative for both parents and researchers to understand why and how the discipline advice they read has originated. This could help ensure that childrearing views and approaches are well-informed rather than based on fear or guilt. The present study will, therefore, strive the answer the following research question:

RQ_1: How did the influence of and reasoning behind permissiveness, attachment and politicisation advice change in actual child-discipline literature between the 1940s and 2010?

Methods

To gain a holistic view of the historically influential childrearing manuals, the study initially aimed to find relevant secondary sources. A search of available texts was conducted across scientific and popular platforms (i.e. Scopus, Google Scholar, Google Books and Archive) using the key terms outlined below.

a) parent* OR mother* OR father* OR child* OR childrearing AND
b) advice OR expert* OR recommendation* AND
c) history OR year*

The identified publications were compared against the criteria of being thematically related to the history of modern parenting advice (specifically covering years 1945 to 2010), presenting an overview of recommendations throughout different periods, being written in English, and focusing on Western cultures (understood as Western Europe and the USA). Six suitable sources were selected (see Table 1).

Table 1

Secondary sources included in the analysis.

Author & Year	**Publisher**	**Title**
Beekman, D. (1978)	Lawrence Hill & Company	*"The mechanical baby. a popular history of the theory and practice of child raising"*
Davis, A. (2012)	Manchester University Press	*"Modern motherhood. Women and family in England 1945-2000"*
Ehrenreich, B., & English, D. (1978)	Anchor Books	*"For her own good: 150 years of the experts' advice to women"*
Hardyment, C. (2007)	Frances Lincoln Limited	*"Dream babies: Childcare advice from John Locke to Gina Ford."*
Hendrick, H. (2016)	University of Bristol	*"Narcissistic parenting in an insecure world. A history of parenting culture 1920 to present"*
Stearns, P.N. (2003)	New York University Press	*"Anxious Parents. A history of modern childrearing in America"*

Following this, the above publications were reviewed to establish the influential primary sources they mentioned. Firstly, the study extracted the references with the original publication date occurring between 1940 and 2010. Subsequently, the texts were evaluated on whether their main purpose was providing advice to the parents and if their format had characteristics of a manual, pamphlet, or parenting magazine. After removing duplicates, 68 suitable sources were identified, and their digitized versions were obtained through Archive or Google Books. To establish whether these presented the researched trends, they were searched for key terms:

a) discipline OR punishment* OR permissive* OR Freud*
b) attachment* OR bond* OR Bowlby OR Ainsworth
c) politic* OR democra*

In the end, 46 parenting manuals were selected. The table below categorises them thematically and periodically.

Table 2

Primary sources included in the analysis.

Topic area	Period	Author & Year	Country & Publisher	Title
Permissiveness	1940s and 1950s	Baxuaum, E. (1949)	International Universities Press	*"Your child makes sense"*
		Ribble, M. (1943)	Columbia University Press	*"Rights of infants"*
		Ribble, M. (1955)	Columbia University Press	*"The personality of the young child"*
		Spock, B. (1946)	Duell, Sloan & Pearce	*"Common sense book of baby and childcare"*
	1960s and 1970s	Brazelton, T., B. (1974)	Bantam Doubleday Dell	"*Toddlers and parents"*
		Dreikus, R. (1965)	Duell, Sloan & Pearce	*"The challenge of parenthood"*
		Kagan, J. (1978)	Harvard University Press	*"Infancy, its place in human development"*
		Potts, W. (1966)	Rand McNally	*"Your wonderful baby"*
		Spitz, R. (1965)	International Universities Press	*"The first year of life"*
	1980s, 1990s and 2000s	Ford, G. (2006)	Vermilion	*"Top tips for contented babies and toddlers"*
		Fraser, L. (2007)	HarperCollins	*"Yummy mummy's ultimate family survival guide"*
		Hartley-Brewer, E. (1994)	Vermilion	*"Positive parenting"*
		Martin, H. (1989)	Blackwell	*"Discipline: a positive guide for parents*
		Mrazek, D. & Garrison, W.T. (1993)	Piccadilly Press	*"A to Z guide to your child's behaviour"*
		Murkoff, H. (2009)	Simon and Schuster	*"What to expect: the toddler years"*
		Pugh, G. (1994)	National Children's Bureau	*"Confident parents, confident children"*
		Sunderland, M. (2006)	Penguin Books	*"Science of parenting"*
Attachment	1940s and 1950s	Baxuaum, E. (1949)	International Universities Press	*"Your child makes sense"*
		Fraiberg, S. (1959)	Charles Scribners Sons	*"Magic years"*
		Goodman, D. (1959)	Hawthorn Books	"*Parent's guide to the emotional needs of children"*
	1960s and 1970s	Kaus M. H. & Kennell J. H. (1976)	Mosby	*"Maternal-infant bonding"*
		Liedloff, J. (1975)	Penguin Books	*"The continuum concept"*
		Pearce, P. (1977)	Plume	*"Magical child"*
		Winnicott, D. (1964)	Penguin Books	"*The child, the family and the outside world"*
	1980s, 1990s and 2000s	Eisenberg, E. (1996)	Workmen Publishing	*"What to expect in the first year"*
		Eyer, D. (1992)	Yale University Press	"*Mother-infant bonding: a scientific fiction"*
		Green, C. (1989)	Bantam Doubleday Dell	*"Babies!"*
		Motha, G. (2006)	HarperCollins	*"Gentle first year"*
		Sears W. & Sears M. (2001)	Little, Brown & Company	*"Attachment parenting book"*
		Stoppard, M. (2006)	Dorling Kindersley	*"First-time parents"*

Politics	1940s and 1950s	Backmeister, R. (1950)	Little, Brown & Company	*"Your child and other people"*
		Baruch, D. (1942)	Appleton-Century	*"You, your children and war"*
		Baruch, D. (1949)	Whittlesey House McGraw–Hill	*"New ways in discipline"*
		Beasley, C. (1954)	Association Press	*"Democracy in the home"*
		Bauer, W. B. (1947)	Bobbs-Merrill	*"Stop annoying your children"*
		Dixon, M. (1943)	John Day Company	*"Keep them human"*
		Glemser, L. (1943)	A.S. Barnes	*"Your first baby!"*
		Whilpple, D. (1944)	M. Barrows Incorporated	*"Our American babies: the art of baby care"*
	1960s and 1970s	Dobson, J. (1972)	Tyndale House Publishers	*"Dare to discipline"*
		Ellis, E. (1971)	Carol Publishing Corporation	*"Raising a responsible child"*
		Gordon, T. (1975)	Plume	*"Parent effectiveness training"*
		Sackett, W. W. (1962)	Harper & Row	"*Bringing up babies: a family doctor's practical approach to childcare"*
		Spock, B. (1968)	Hawthorn Books	*"Baby and child care"*
	1980s, 1990s and 2000s	Green, C. (1987)	Simon and Schuster	*"Toddler taming"*
		Pantley, E. (1996)	New Harbinger Publications	*"Kid cooperation"*
		Schaefer C. & Millman H. L., (1994)	Jason Aronson Incorporated	*"How to help children with common problems"*

Results

This section presents an overview of how the influence of and reasoning behind permissiveness, attachment and politicisation advice has changed in actual child-discipline literature between the 1940s and 2010. The information is categorised periodically into three main sections: 1940s & 1950s, 1960s & 1970s and 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. This reflects the shifts in recommendations which were associated with the evolving geo-political situation and events such as the rise of the Pacifist movement, the Cold War or technological advancements in the late 20th century. In addition, the presented sources are categorised by the three discussed trends.

The 1940s and 1950s

The literature suggests that the discipline advice in the 1930s, thus directly preceding World War II was dominated by the behaviourist notions of conditioning. Notable authors such as John B. Watson or Frederick Truby King highlighted the importance of obedience, nevertheless, largely foregoing corporal punishment as a method of inducing compliance. Shortly before the war's outbreak, mainstream childcare recommendations began changing, notably in response to the widely popular "*Babies are human beings"* by Aldrich & Aldrich published in 1938. The text denoted intuitive approaches to raising and correcting children and encouraged adjusting behavioural expectations to the child's developmental stage– "*To give the baby all the warmth, comfort, cuddling that he seems to need* (…) *these are the beginnings of a forward-looking programme in mental hygiene"* (Hardyment, 2007, p. 206).

Permissiveness and the Freudian Influences

The rejection of behaviourism partially elicited by the events of the Second World War paved the way for the childrearing philosophy proposed by Sigmund Freud which entered the mainstream in the early 1940s. Freudian manuals showcased intense concern about the impact of specific early experiences on the associated onset of mental illness. The experts brought permissiveness to a new dimension by framing most restrictions as precursors for "repression". Edith Buxbaum's *"Your child makes sense"* (1949) strongly advocated for indulgent and gentle guidance of the child, described by Anna Freud as an *"unrestrained, greedy and cruel little savage"* (Buxbaum, 1949, p.7) on their path to becoming a civilized member of society. Dinner table manners and hygiene considerations were to be forgone to allow the child to fulfil oral and anal expression. This aimed to encourage a trusting relationship with the parent. Children were not to be disciplined for creating disarray with their food, exploring objects with their mouths or even eliminating where they saw fit. Correcting or discouraging such behaviours was thought to facilitate psychopathology by evoking severe lasting anxieties – *"He may refuse to eat at all after he was punished for using his hands"* (Buxbaum, 1949, p. 99).

Another publication sternly rooted in Freudian rhetoric was Margaret Ribble's *"Rights of infants"* (1943). It insisted that the child's "natural impulses" should not be altered or penalised depending on parental convenience as they served healthy development – *"Parents have to remind themselves that (...) healthy emotions, as well as a free creative intelligence, are rooted in the early infant experience"* (Hardyment, 2007, p. 224). In a later work entitled *"The personality of the young child"* (1955), Ribble proposed that children afforded compassionate and permissive caregiving would adhere to the noble and empathetic ideals of modern society by the time they reach preschool age – *"A child who has reached the age of four or five and has had a consistent and understanding parental guidance (...) is ready to accept such basic principles as honesty, love of truth (...) and regard for the rights of family members and playmates* (Ribble, 1955, p.106). In Ribble's view, ensuring relationship quality especially regarding discipline in the early years would build the children's trust in parental guidance once they *"naturally outgrew most of* [their] *infantile ways".* Although her thoughts remained focused on allowing the child to develop unincumbered, the appeals to the tenets of morality suggested a hint of politicisation within her advice.

Around the same time, Dr Benjamin Spock published what would become one of the most popular childrearing manuals influenced by Freudian ideas. The first of six editions of the coveted *"Common sense book of baby and childcare"* (1946) was quickly termed the "Bible" for mothers. It has been both largely credited and criticised for popularising permissiveness in the US. Above all, the text emphasised the value of maternal instinct, famously opening with the words *"You know more than you think you do".* Somewhat similarly to Margaret Ribble, Spock's parenting guidance encouraged sensitivity in childrearing and argued that stern discipline could be replaced with relational warmth – *"If the relationships are good* [children] *don't have to be forced to eat, forced to learn to use the toilet"* (Spock, 1955, p. 237). Although the first edition of the book encouraged catering to the child's every whim – *"Don't be afraid to love* [your child] *and respond to his needs";* the re-print from 1957 was far less permissive. Largely accepting the responsibility for espousing unrealistic discipline ideals, Spock concluded – *"Childcare experts have imposed unnatural patience and submissiveness* [on the mother]" (Hulbert, 2004, p. 251).

Attachment and Deprivation

In tandem with the heightened popularity of Freudian philosophies went Dr Bowlby's findings concerning wartime child and family evacuations. These had a profound impact on the field of childrearing in the 1940s and 1950s. Preventing deprivation became a focal point of parenting, quickly translating into notably exigent expert recommendations. Insights from clinical settings became extrapolated and applied to typical home life. For example, authors such as Dr David Goodman argued

for the inconceivably strong effects of maternal love. His "*Parent's guide to the emotional needs of children"* reads– *"In a foundling hospital, babies have been known to wither away and die (...) because there were not enough loving arms to cuddle and comfort them"* (Goodman, 1959, p. 25).

In consequence, the unforgiving methods of training or disciplining babies to break habits of crying became unacceptable and led to fears of causing deprivation. As framed by Dr Florence Swanson in *"Your child makes sense"* (1949) issues with sleep *"may be related to* [the child's] *fear that his parents are going to leave him or that he will not wake up"* (Buxbaum, 1949, p.27). The resulting discipline advice was related to separation anxiety and improving the mother-child bond– *"This frightening feeling is not remedied by spanking the child and putting him back to bed, but rather by additional attempts at (...) a secure relationship between the child and his parents"* (Buxbaum, 1949, p.28). Furthermore, attachment quality was treated as critical for effectively correcting the child's misbehaviour through self-imposed emotional coercion. Namely, as argued by Selma Fraiberg in the *"Magic years"* (1959) – *"It is fear of disapproval from loved persons as well as the desire to be loved which brings about conscience in the child"* (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 11). Consequently, failing to discipline the child with only the implied withdrawal of love could undermine the parent-child relationship. Overall, the emphasis on the mother-child bond turned childrearing into an incredibly demanding task.

The authors who embraced the lax rhetoric such as Dr Spock or Margaret Ribble conclusively dismissed the behaviourists' warnings about the dangers of 'spoiling' a baby. As the child grew older, the parents were to be steadily tolerant, understanding, and weary of potentially misusing cues of guilt to modify or coerce behaviour. To illustrate, as explained by Selma Fraiberg – *"We must never abuse the power of the child's love for* [the parent] *to create guilt of such strength that the child fears his normal impulses"* (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 248). In line with the new premium placed on building healthy attachments, the "advice favoured catering to the needs of the baby, entitled to all the indulgence it desired. As summarized by the *"Infant care"* bulletin – *"A baby sometimes cries because he wants a little more attention"* (Children's Bureau, 1945, p. 52).

The Politics of Parenting

In addition to the burdens brought on by the permissive and attachment-oriented approaches, parents of the 1940s and 1950s also faced scrutiny regarding their political approach to childrearing. The decline in the appeal of behaviourist methods was linked to the societal fear of Nazi and Fascist ideologies which championed uniformity and unconditional obedience. This meant that espousing the ideals of democracy became an indispensable component of household management. A notable text by Dorothy W. Baruch entitled *"You, your children and war"* (1942) emphasised the importance of allowing children to choose cooperation. It warned against repressed hostility and fear, implicated as

precursors to conflict – "*Hostility well off the chest does not make children more warlike. It makes for peace"* (Baruch, 1942, p. 88). Put simply, the governmentally mandated military service or purchase quotas for several products did not let children experience certain freedoms in everyday life. It was, therefore, seen as critical for the parents to instil a fondness for democracy in their offspring through carefully curated childrearing and discipline practices (Baruch, 1942).

To elaborate, the childcare manuals of the early and mid-1940s typically expressed a strong disdain towards the authoritarian models of parenting. They encouraged more permissiveness than ever before warning against the political dangers of raising children in the spirit of conformity. Madeleine Dixon's *"Keep them human"* (1942) suggested foregoing rules and punishment entirely and urged the parents to see behavioural issues simply as something to be discussed and resolved. Rather than being disciplined, misbehaving children were to be ignored or distracted. Both Louise Glemser's *"Your first baby!"* (1943) and Dorothy Whipple's *"Our American babies"* (1944) advised to never seek fear-motivated compliance from a child and to manage undesirable behaviours through re-direction to enticing alternatives. Correspondingly, intense disapproval was expressed towards any type of corporal punishment. Glemser's chief concern was the motivation driving the parents to use discipline as she asked rhetorically– *"Are you going to make your child do what you think he should do, just because he is afraid of you?* (Beekman, 1977, p.184). Notably, children were to be showered with love, affection and support and allowed to explore and play as they pleased - *"From birth to maturity, we wish to give the right to his own individuality in so far as we can" (*Whipple, 1944, p. 242). It was argued that only such an approach would appropriately support development, ultimately leading children to rebuild a better world following the war which was considered the end goal of the parental effort – *"On the shoulders of today's children lies the hope of America's future"* (Baruch, 1942, p.7).

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the manuals were slowly departing from recommending absolute permissiveness. More attention was given to the role and emotional responsibility of being a parent. For instance, William W. Bauer's *"Stop annoying your children"* (1947) argued that adequate parenthood required considerable competence and dedication as well as maintaining a mindful balance between career, social and family obligations. Similarly, the *"New ways in discipline"* written in 1949 by Dorothy Baruch urged parents to keep themselves accountable for their management of conflict in the household and advised them to assume a mediatory role. Akin to Bauer, Baruch's 1949 publication held that the understanding of the parent's and child's emotionality was the key to resolving discipline issues – *"Children are acutely aware of our feelings towards them. (...) If a child misbehaves, we'll recognise that he must have unsatisfied emotional needs* (Baruch, 1949, p.15, 25). This approach allowed the parents to not give into the child's every whim but, on the other hand, prioritised remaining attuned to their deeper needs and feelings.

Additionally, according to the experts, all attempts were to be made to understand the child's position when a conflict or misbehaviour occurred. Teaching children self-reflection and introspection was strongly encouraged. For example, Rhoda Bacmeister's *"Your child and other people"* (1950) suggested educating the child to be self-disciplined, rather than exercising constant control – *"There is [a] difference between helping children to behave properly and making them behave properly (...). One feels good and builds character (...). The other feels terrible and usually builds resentment* (Backmeister, 1950, p. 259). For this reason, arbitrary punishment was considered to normalise retaliation and the purposeful harming of others. Importantly, setting boundaries did not entitle parents to expect complete obedience - *"In a democracy, we do not assume those in authority to be our betters (...), we keep our right to ask their reasons and argue"* (Backmeister, 1950, p. 264).

In tandem with democracy, family harmony was treated as a paramount value. Both could be threatened by children experiencing punishment. As illustrated by Christine Beasley's *"Democracy in the home"* (1954) togetherness found in shared activities or cooperative decision-making was necessary to rebuild the institution of the family post-war. Her approach allowed for respite from the 1940s' child-centredness as homes became more egalitarian – *"Neither the child nor the adult has the greater rights, no individual is more important than another in the family"* (Beekman, 1977, p. 206). Beasley's insistence on fabricating intimacy seemed rooted in the fading popularity of the traditional family model and women's increasing involvement in the workforce.

The 1960s and 1970s

Nonetheless, the post-war discipline ideals quickly became tested by the unforgiving reality. Freudian concepts fell into disrepute as their accuracy was considered to lack empirical verifiability and their tenets were thought to place unfair blame on parents. Attachment theory rose to popularity, however, advice regarding separation and responsiveness was often "paired down" to reflect the strengthening of feminist ideas. The threat brought by the Cold War encouraged less permissive discipline recommendations.

The Dusk of Freudianism

Despite their rampant popularity in the previous decades, by the late 1960s Freud's ideas were seen as discredited. This was notably due to a lack of a research-based confirmation of their accuracy. Even so, many variations of the olden theories continued to emerge and hold their own in the growing body of childrearing advice. In particular, psychoanalysts began to investigate maternal instincts which, if defective, were seen as the root of childhood psychopathology. For example, certain specialists endeavoured to establish links between maternal attitudes or methods and the resulting maladaptation

in children. *"The first year of life"* written by René Spitz (1965) made bold and somewhat accusatory assertions about the child's behavioural issues resulting from specific "toxins" in the rearing and discipline. For instance, he proposed, that maternal experience of *"cyclical mood swings"* was supposedly likely to lead to the child's interest in faecal play while *"anxious over-permissiveness"* was related to the three-month colic (Spitz, 1965, p. 206). Consequently, to raise well-behaved and adjusted children, the mother seemed obligated to control her conscious behaviour as well as unconscious emotional expressions such as anxiety or unstable mood.

This aside, more authors turned their attention to the downfalls of Freudian child-rearing. Jerome Kagan in his 1978 publication entitled *"Infancy, its place in human development"* considered how the mandatory avoidance of distressing a child rendered any disciplinarian effort a confusing and anxiety-inducing affair – *"Each child was a potential phobic, obsessive, depressive (...) and parents were warned against the potential dangers of practices they had regarded as innocuous"* (Kagan et al., 1978, p. 60). Hence, the concern about the fragility of the child's ego became slowly replaced by worry about parental mental health. As explained by Thomas Berry Brazelton in *"Toddlers and parents"* (1974), boundaries were indispensable for everyone's sake. He believed that the exhaustion or stress of catering only to the needs of their children would render parents unable to effectively raise them – *"No mother can tolerate night demands over a long period, especially with other children who need her. (...) Children, in some way, understand and appreciate our need for independence"* (Brazelton, 1974, p. 163).

However, the emotional cost borne by parents who followed the Freudian childrearing philosophy was not the only issue. Concerns began arising that excessive protectiveness and desperate attempts at avoiding trauma impeded children's social development. As follows, Rudolf Dreikurs' *"The challenge of parenthood"* (1965) argued that shielding children from negative experiences, consequences and responsibility presented them with an inadequate view of the world, potentially resulting in future maladjustment - *"*[Overly pampered children] *never feel they are quite a match for life, and their lack of self-reliance often causes them to break down under the slightest (...) hardship"*(Dreikurs, 1962, p. 101). Although such claims appear somewhat recondite, many of Dreikurs' contemporaries agreed with his discrediting of psychoanalytic childcare advice. Namely, Willis Potts' "*Your wonderful baby"* (1966) held that the warnings against causing frustration to children came from *"misguided psychiatrists"* who failed to adequately understand typical development – *"Babies like routine. In fact, they are much like old folks who want to eat on time, then relax and take a snooze"* (Hardyment, 2007, p. 238).

The Question of Attachment

When it came to parent-child attachment, the 1960s and 70s saw, in a sense, both a disintegration and an evolution of the tenets of Attachment Theory within the espoused parenting advice. Admittedly, permanently tethering the mother to the child under the threat of attachment insecurity quickly proved to be an unsustainable and potentially damaging solution. Coupled with the social climate of the 1970s and the rise of feminism it led to less exigent recommendations for mothers, especially regarding their professional careers (Martin, 1971). Consequently, several authors began depicting attachment as an underlying mechanism explaining child behaviour rather than wielding it as a weapon against women who searched for self-fulfilment. For example, Donald Winnicott's "*The child, the family and the outside world"* (1964) maintained that tantrums exhibited by toddlers stemmed from tension within the attachment bond related to psychosexual development – *"Temper attacks and the common nightmares that occur normally in the three-year-old cannot be understood except in terms of firm attachment to persons with periodically rising instinctual tension"* (Winnicott, 1964, p. 149). He also believed that the anger demonstrated by children deprived of their favourite toy had its roots in attachment. He viewed it as an important object of comfort (or Transitional Comfort Object, TCO) which approximated the safety provided by the mother – *"For the infant* [the object] *is almost part of the self and if it is taken away or washed the result is a disaster* (Winnicott, 1964, p. 73).

In contrast, some writers departed from the tenets of attachment theory and saw the ideals of bonding within tribal childrearing practices. In particular, *"The continuum concept"* (1975) by Jean Liedloff introduced new reasoning for maintaining mother-child contact. Her experience of living with the Yequana People in Venezuela led her to develop theories on the optimal way of combining consistent closeness with discipline. She considered the mainstream advice of the 1970s to create an unnecessary struggle for dominance - *"Babies have, indeed, become a sort of enemy to be vanquished by the mother. (...) A basic premise in the relationship is that every effort should be made to force the baby to conform to the mother's wishes"* (Liedloff, 1975, p. 32). Instead, she proposed to avoid such a conflict and react neutrally to undesirable conduct - *"*[A mother] *does not set her will against the infant's (...),* [show] *any sign of judgement of his behaviour or displeasure at being inconvenienced*" (Liedloff, 1975, p. 45). It could be argued that this pushes the previous decades' permissiveness coda further as parents were effectively precluded from reacting to misbehaviour.

Evidently, the beliefs about the capacity of the attachment bond to replace structured discipline could be compared with the thoughts expressed over a decade earlier by Selma Freiberg (*"Magic Years",* 1959). However, many of Liedloff's contemporaries were prone to making similar assertions about the crucial role of early attachment. Klaus and Kennell's "*Maternal-infant bonding"* (1976)

argued that a lack of sufficient contact and closeness at birth could have grave ramifications on the mother's approach to the baby – *"*[Adverse] *interaction with this baby might have easily produced the syndrome of failure to thrive or even child abuse"* (Klaus & Kennell, 1976, p. 10). Correspondingly, Joseph Chilton Pearce's *"Magical child"* (1977) resigned from providing guidance about discipline altogether and instead posited that many issues including crying could be avoided with a proper mother-child bond– *"In those societies where bonding is practised crying is, indeed, quite rare"* (Pearce, 1977, p. 53). His writing also included some extreme hypotheses which proposed that insufficient early attachment was to blame for the *"collapsing social order"*, growing consumerism and even the occurrence of criminal acts such as rape.

Permissiveness: The Political Consequences

Just as with Freudianism and attachment ideals, the appeal of overly democratised childrearing started fading. Therefore, the acclaim enjoyed by Dr Spock for his endorsement of permissive childrearing was no longer ubiquitous. One of his notable critics was Walter W. Sackett who authored "*Bringing up babies: A family doctor's practical approach to childcare"* (1962). Importantly, he insisted that maternal indulgence and an overall lack of routine led to children growing up expecting others to cater to their whim. Alluding to the challenging social climate of the Cold War he threatened that following Spock's approach would facilitate communist tendencies in the offspring, robbing America of its critical military resource. This once again brought a strong politicisation to parenting practice – *"If we teach our offspring to expect everything to be provided on demand, we must admit the possibility of sowing the seeds of socialism"* (Sackett, 1962, xvii). He also strongly discouraged child-centeredness emphasizing maternal desires in the interactions with her baby – "*Rocking or fondling the baby should be done primarily for the mother's pleasure"* (Sackett, 1962, p. 5).

Not long after Sackett's publication, in 1968, Dr Spock released the third edition of his *"Baby and child care"* which addressed some of the arguments put forth against his advice. The tone of his writing began shifting in the late 1950s hinting more strongly at his overall disapproval of child-centeredness and permissiveness which he used to espouse. He started bringing attention to the sudden lack of a moral philosophy providing deeper meaning to the disciplining efforts of the parents. For the most part, religion-driven arguments were discarded post-World War II which created a sense of aimlessness - *"We've lost a lot of our old-fashioned convictions about what kinds of morals (...) we want [children] to have"*. With this in mind, Spock's updated and politicised advice featured calls for raising children *"primarily to serve others"* and seemingly contained nostalgia for the aspects of national unity brought on by war – *"Human beings behave better* [and] *feel more purposeful (...) during wartime when they have a common purpose"* (Hardyment, 2007, p. 218).

By the 1970s, the Western panic about the imminent threat of communism was in full swing. Consequently, several experts deemed the entire philosophy of permissiveness to be a resounding failure and posited a return towards a structure. To illustrate, while James Dobson's *"Dare to discipline"* (1972) acknowledged the inadequacy of physical punishment methods, it doubted its validity as an argument against any rules being upheld at all – *"The consequences of excessive punishment have been cited as justification for the elimination of discipline. That is foolish"* (Dobson, 1972, xvii). Whilst announcing the *"death of morality"* amongst the youth of his day, he argued that permissive democracy did not impose an adequate obligation on parents to control their children. Therefore, he saw it as essential that a child is taught to respect their mother and father as it would be a precursor to his life as a law-abiding citizen – *"*[Child's] *view of parental authority becomes the cornerstone of his later outlook on school authority, police, and law* (…) *and society in general* (Dobson, 1972, p.11). Dobson's ideas were supported by many childcare authors of his time. Elizabeth Ellis' *"Raising a responsible child"* (1971) posited a strong correlation between parental overindulgence and children's irresponsibility.

In other words, balancing between remaining reasonably permissive, upholding limits and safeguarding children against delinquency became the cornerstone of childrearing. However, many authors began recognising that parents were not provided with appropriate tools to navigate the challenge. This mismatch between societal expectations and available support was considered in Thomas Gordon's *"Parent effectiveness training"* (1975) - *"How much effort is being made to assist parents to become more effective in raising children?* (Gordon, 1975, p.1). With this in mind, his advice focused on championing parent-child communication as a means of effective discipline and discouraged parents from harsh self-judgement.

The 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s

In contrast to the previous decades, the late 20th and 21st century experts began drawing their inspiration from pre-war behaviourist ideas, so resoundingly rejected in the post-war era. Yet again, children were to be moulded and shaped following parental desire. Their behaviour could be corrected using several methods, including punishment. Quite predictably, the outlooks on attachment and bonding became increasingly polarised with tribal and bond-oriented rhetoric returning to its former popularity in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, at last, the parent was no longer required to be a beacon of democracy in their child's life and was entitled to demand obedience from their offspring.

Permissiveness Gives Way to New Behaviourism

Simply put, by the 1980s, permissive parenting no longer appeared feasible. As a result, childrearing experts turned towards the "positive parenting" concept which denoted a combination of affectionate behaviours, proactive involvement and cooperative play (Wahler & Meginnis, 1997).

Parenting manuals became, hence, filled with guidance on creating discipline systems and proposing techniques for modifying undesirable behaviour. Many appeared to be based on the tenets of the social learning theory presented by Albert Bandura (1977) and the emerging forms of behavioural psychology (Tharp & Wetzel, 1969).

On the whole, teaching desirable behaviours through demonstration became an important aspect of parenting. As emphasised in Gillian Pugh's *"Confident parents, confident children"* (1994) modelling appropriate social conduct was of imperative value. In line with this, the manual proposed that children required *"guidance and control"* from their parents to learn prosocial practices such as *"honesty, concern and kindness for others"* (Pugh, 1994, p. 50). Similarly, according to Martin Herbert's *"Discipline: A positive guide for parents"* (1989) such traits were vital for children's fulfilment in adulthood and could only be accomplished through a structured disciplined approach – "*A firm but loving framework of discipline helps children develop their own guidelines and controls (...) and discipline themselves"* (Martin, 1989, xi). The text, thus, provided concrete tools for building a discipline strategy often standing in stark contrast to intuitive permissive parenting ideals - *"Happiness and love (alone) are not enough; detailed training is essential"* (Martin, 1989, p.18).

Just as Martin's or Pugh's publications, Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer's *"Positive parenting"* (1994) spoke about creating a *"firm foundation"* and argued a child raised permissively experiences *"no clear boundaries, (...) is indulged and calls the shots. The parent has neither power nor authority"* (Hartley-Brewer, 1994, p.160). She insisted that parents were to assume a leadership role by developing robust self-esteem and resilience. This would allow them to implement discipline without becoming authoritarian or resorting to coercive practices such as bribery or physical violence. Nevertheless, she condoned the use of punishment to "*make children take responsibility for their behaviour"* and *"show that* [the parents] *mean business"* (Hartley-Brewer, 1994, p.167). Examples included the removal of privileges, and toys or sending the child to *"cool off"*. Not all authors, however, recommended these punishments. Mrazek & Garrison's *"A to Z guide to your child's behaviour"* (1993) explained that it was best for children to experience logical consequences of their actions rather than an *"unrelated punishment"*. This was because the purpose of discipline was considered primarily didactic. The parents were also frequently recommended to implement behavioural techniques which were "*based on teaching children to act in socially acceptable ways"* (Mrazek & Garrison, 1993, p.19).

The beginning of the twenty-first century saw recommendations leaning toward the behavioural methodology of "shaping", "modifying" and "moulding" children into upstanding citizens. This is perhaps best exemplified by the popularity of Gina Ford, a notable parenting expert who strongly favoured routines and order. Her publication *"Top tips for contented babies and toddlers"* (2006)

provided multiple options for addressing undesirable behaviour. Although the recommended parental reactions included distraction – the main tool of the permissive era, most of the advice was based on behaviour modification techniques such as a "time out" or withdrawal of privilege. Since disobedience was seen as the outcome of inconsistent discipline, parents were strongly encouraged to uphold their method regardless of the setting – *"No matter how embarrassed you feel (...) it is better to deal with disobedience in public the same way as you would at home"* (Ford, 2006, p.143).

However, despite certain similarities, it cannot be argued that the early 2000s behaviourism mirrored the robotic and disconnected approach of the Watsonian era. Contrarily to pre-war philosophies, there was a strong emphasis on the emotional aspects of development and tailoring expectations to the child's age or capabilities. For example, Heidi Murkoff's *"What to expect: The toddler years"* (2009) implored to never demand perfection from children or use love withdrawal as a discipline technique. Much of the advice focused on parental attitudes and outlook on childrearing and included tips such as *"Don't lose your cool"* or *"Be willing to lose occasionally".* In addition, consideration was given to gaining an understanding of the child's innate temperament and its behavioural consequences – *" It's as unfair to punish or criticize* [a child] *for* [temperamental] *behaviour that's not within her control"* (Murkoff et al., 2009, p. 390). As in Mrazek & Garrison's view (1993), punishments were to always *"fit the crime"* and, preferably, stem logically from its consequences. Overall, boundaries ensured a child's well-being – *"Limits do not make a child feel unloved, they can actually make her feel more loved"* (Murkoff et al., 2009, p.124). Comparable merit given to respecting the children's individuality can also be found in Liz Fraser's *"Yummy mummy's ultimate family survival guide"* (2007). No explicit punishment suggestions were provided as the text emphasised tailoring the approach to the child's needs and personality – *"I'm not going to tell you how to do it, or to recommend a 'naughty corner' or a carefully calculated scale of punishment"* (Fraser, 2007, p. 241). Additionally, Fraser offered general recommendations for parents faced with disobedience by discouraging shouting and all forms of physical punishment. Misbehaving children were to always receive a fair warning and consequences were to be doled out on to the *"three strikes and you're out"* basis.

Despite their undeniable popularity, it is important to note that not all parenting advice during the early 2000s was built on forms of behaviourism. For instance, the reasoning presented in Margot Sunderland's *"Science of parenting"* (2006) was largely reminiscent of Freudian theorising. The conceptualisation of the child's brain as divided into reptilian, mammalian and rational was distinctly akin to the psychoanalytic notion of id, ego, and superego. Sunderland's argument held that the parenting and discipline approach determined the sub-brain that would dominate the child's perceptions, exerting a *"dramatic impact on* [the] *quality of life"* (Sunderland, 2006, p. 28). For example, the manner

of addressing the child was argued to influence the selection of primitive or evolutionarily advanced responses– *"If you shout and issue endless commands you could be unwittingly activating (...) in the mammalian and reptilian parts of* [the child's] *brain* (Sunderland, 2006, p. 119). Consequently, the techniques of time-out or cool-off were discouraged in favour of a fully permissive approach featuring distracting the children, helping them process negative feelings and providing a stimulating environment for play.

Attachment Parenting

Admittedly, many notions of bonding and attachment-driven upbringing underwent a re-evaluation during the 1980s and 1990s. Childrearing experts began voicing overt scepticism concerning the factual importance of mother-child closeness immediately following birth and often refrained from criticising discipline approaches as detrimental to attachment security. In particular, Christopher Green's *"Babies!"* (1989) asserted that although mothers could begin feeling the bond quickly, the baby would only be capable of reciprocating the attachment at around 7 months of age. The text also strongly dismissed the idea of critical periods and essential early contact asserting that if these were true *"all adoptions would fail"* (Green, 1989, p. 57). Green distinctly doubted that a specific mistake in interacting with or disciplining the child could bring lifelong consequences associated with an insecure attachment style – "*Turn a deaf ear to those out-of-touch teachers who believe that one slip at the start leads to a lifetime of emotional problems. This simply is not so"* (Green, 1989, p. 61).

A similar disbelief about the factual gravity of bonding at birth was expressed in Arlene Eisenberg's *"What to expect in the first year"* (1996). Although beneficial, it was seen exclusively as the beginning of a longer and more complex process – *"The kind of love that lasts a lifetime can't magically evolve in a few hours (...).* [Early bonding does not] *indelibly colour the character and quality of the future relationship"* (Eisenberg et al., 1996, p. 62). Consequently, laying the foundation for discipline was recommended for a child as young as 10 months. It was essential to teach even babies to make rudimentary judgements about morality, begin understanding the concept of self-control and instil a sense of respect for others. However, aspects of attachment-driven advice were still prominently featured – *"Withdrawal of parental love threatens a child's self-esteem"* or *"Repeatedly telling a child that he or she is bad can damage their ego"* (Eisenberg et al., 1996, p. 335, 337). Despite their distinct rejection of many of its tenets, both Green's and Eisenberg's views on the concept of bonding could be considered a gentle critique compared with Diana Eyer's "*Mother-infant bonding: A scientific fiction"* (1992). As indicated by the title, the text questioned and dismissed the research findings supposedly illustrating the unmatched value of the early mother-child relationship. Moreover, Eyer argued that promoting such ideas was of sole benefit to the medical industry which could use them to maintain

authority over mothers – *"The concept of bonding ultimately enhanced the power of medicine to control women"* (Eyer, 1992, p.11).

Notwithstanding, these negative appraisals did not halt the further development of attachment-oriented philosophies and manuals. The continued fascination with tribal practices and novel findings regarding the development of neural networks propelled the Attachment Parenting movement which enjoyed its heyday well into the 2000s. A publication that perhaps most adequately exemplifies this trend is Bill & Martha Sears' *"Attachment parenting book"* (2001). The text proposed that the ideas of close parent-child attachment and effective boundaries were logically intertwined. This implied that implementing discipline was another manner of meeting the child's needs and sustaining a balanced parenting approach. Closeness and connection were to act as natural facilitators of household order – "*Setting limits should be easier for Attachment Parenting families (...). Because your child trusts you, he is more likely to accept them".* Although the text acknowledges that close attachment can lead a parent to bend the boundaries, especially in cases of children *"blessed with a high need level",* it still emphasises the value of the bond, warning that its insufficient strength has lifelong consequences – *"Not being attached enough (...) can take years to fix and you'll feel like you're playing catch-up all the time your child is growing up"* (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 106).

A strikingly similar image of parent-child attachment was presented in Miriam Stoppard's *"First-Time Parents"* (2006). The manual propagated the idea of early bonding, setting high expectations for how instantaneously the connection would be built – *"You will be hypersensitive to your baby in the minutes after birth. You can bond with your baby for life almost instantly"* (Stoppard, 2006, p. 42). The text, however, did not put forth the idea of "all-or-nothing' bonding within a critical period, mentioning that the time following delivery could be marked with a strain too big for love and connection to form quickly. Nevertheless, in line with the attachment-oriented philosophy, Stoppard suggested using a positive approach involving *"love, praise and encouragement"* and avoiding anger or physical punishments. With regards to older children, the parents were recommended to view discipline as encouraging the child to behave reasonably and model this consistently. It was argued that since children *"*[were] *born with an overwhelming desire to please",* the responsibility for their misbehaviour laid on the parents and their choices (Stoppard, 2006, p. 181). If done right, the parent-child relationship should have sufficed to inspire a want to behave well.

Finally, although all of the above-discussed publications addressed the evolution of attachment throughout infancy and childhood, certain texts focused on the first months only. An example would be Gowri Motha's *"Gentle first year"* (2006). It contained a myriad of ideas for bonding with a child including "sleep bonding", "water bonding" or "play bonding". The importance of such activities was

readily emphasised as the text threatened with potential consequences of inadequate attachment and "touch deprivation". It pointed out that poor behavioural outcomes and social maladjustment were supposedly characteristic of children who were not provided with adequate care and attention – *"There is mounting evidence that deprivation of touch in childhood can actually reprogramme the brain and contribute to antisocial behaviour in later life"* (Motha, 2006, p. 24).

Reconciling the Behavioural Approach with Liberal Individualism

As illustrated above, the childrearing literature of the time was marked by conflicting interpretations of attachment theory. However, this was not necessarily the case when it came to the political contextualisation of parenting. The overall emerging consensus amongst the experts was that nurturing democracy in the home was simply too tiresome. For example, Christopher Green's *"Toddler taming"* (1987) asserted that democratic discipline was laborious and difficult to uphold long term. In addition, it could at times encourage attention-seeking behaviour from children asking about the reasoning behind each request– *"I am constantly amazed by how much parental energy is consumed in arguing, debating and being democratic with little children (...) Toddlers crave attention, and one of the main ploys of guaranteeing a constant flow of this commodity is asking endless questions"* (Green, 1987, p. 52). Nevertheless, the manual still argued that using methods such as shouting, empty threats or delayed punishment would have poor efficacy and instead, urged the parents to consider behaviour modification. This encompassed mainly rewarding the desired aspects of children's conduct and ignoring missteps wherever possible. Green was also a big proponent of the time-out technique for controlling heated situations– *"Time-out is the most effective form of discipline for all children"* (Green, 1987, p. 56).

Regardless of its scepticism towards such household management philosophies, the text did recognise that many homes still featured a degree of democratic spirit. This could be illustrated by the advice on eliminating bad language – *"If a household is run on democratic lines, it is only fair that if parents are allowed to use excessive bad language, then the toddler has the same right"* (Green, 1987, p.80). Interestingly, many other authors referenced endorsing democracy, but only selectively. Certain publications appeared to indicate that correcting isolated behaviours rather than following fully democratised parenting agendas would suffice to instil the desired morals. Schaefer and Millman's *"How to help children with common problems"* (1994) discussed shaping children to exhibit tolerance - *"You can help implant democratic values in children by disapproving of expressions of prejudice"* (Schaefer & Millman, 1994, p. 339).

Nonetheless, as exemplified by Elizabeth Pantley's *"Kid cooperation"* (1996) permissive and democratic parenting styles were believed to be ineffective and lacking control. The parenting quiz posted on the first pages of the book ranked "*The Democratic Parent"* very low. The advice explained that too much worry over granting children equality and offering extensive reasoning about morality led to poor communicational outcomes– *"You are trying too hard (...) to always be fair and reasonable. (...) The democratic parent* [has] *a tendency to lecture, teach, and moralize to the point of forcing your child to tune you out"* (Pantley, 1996, p. 12). Conversely, *"The Autocratic Parent"* maintained discipline so effectively that they were putting their child at risk of increased susceptibility to malicious influence from others – "[Children] *may also become dependent on having someone else tell them what to do – a dangerous trait that leads children to follow the wrong crowd or join a gang"* (Pantley, 1996, p. 13). This warning certainly can be seen as echoing the concerns about maintaining children's individuality characteristic of the post-war period. As a result, Pantley advocated for *"The Balanced Parent"*.

Discussion

This study has added to the present literature by exploring the influence of the Second World War on parenting advice concerning discipline. Specifically, it investigated how the influence of and reasoning behind permissiveness, attachment and politicisation advice changed in actual child-discipline literature between the 1940s and 2010. According to the obtained results, these largely informed the lax discipline recommendations of the 1940s. However, they underwent a tumultuous evolution throughout the second half of the 20th century, largely informing the content of modern childcare manuals. Further details and implications of the findings are discussed below.

The Rise & Fall of Permissiveness

The outbreak of the Second World War can be seen as having perpetuated a drastic shift in the childrearing views of Western societies. While the manuals of the 1920s and the early 1930s were dominated by behaviourism, by the 1940s its assumptions of "training" the child and keeping rigid routines were no longer espoused. Instead, expert recommendations were focused on promoting permissive discipline practices. As the polar opposite of the behaviourist ideal of obedience, it was believed to protect children from adverse mental health outcomes and promote healthy development. This was supported by the prevailing conceptualisation of the child as fragile and, therefore, easy to traumatise with restrictions or disapproval (Vernon, 1981). The worry about creating a non-constraining childrearing environment translated to intensely lax discipline advice. A great degree of parental carefulness was warranted and close to all forms of punishment were no longer acceptable. Such an outlook facilitated the widespread acceptance of Freudian theories. The role of the parent was illustrated in terms of a protector against harm, rather than an educator. Consequently, expert advice revolved around preventing repression and trauma which, in many cases, translated to giving children nearly entirely free reign over their upbringing (Baxbaum, 1949). Discipline or restrictions were deemed damaging and unnecessary since gentle parental guidance was the only crucial aspect of raising a kind and at least somewhat compliant child (Ribble, 1955; Spock, 1955). An integral component of this reasoning was the desire to prevent any inclination towards violence or aggression within the new generation through utilising non-coercive and consistently sensitive childrearing approaches (Hulbert, 2004).

Interestingly, the war-driven concerns about children's fragility faded quickly. In the 1960s Freud's theories were discredited and the fully permissive recommendations were deemed damaging. Treating children too delicately was thought to lead to social maladjustment since they will have encountered rules and limits at many stages of their later life (Dreikus, 1962; Hardyment, 2007). Instead, the expert's attention turned to the challenges faced by parents because of unattainable permissive ideals. It was argued that the preoccupation with not causing trauma was very likely to lead to parental

anxiety (Kagan et al., 1978). As a result, parents were, albeit timidly, encouraged to set certain limits for both their and their children's sake (Brazelton, 1974). The underlying reasoning, therefore, changed somewhat, departing from child-centeredness towards including and considering the cost of upholding lax discipline on the mental health of parents. With time, the mainstream advice continued to move away from absolute permissiveness. By the 1980s the recommendations were incorporating ideas of modifying and correcting the child's behaviour according to parental desire which was termed the "new behaviourism". It was built on the ideas of positive parenting, social learning, and behavioural psychology (Wahler & Meginnis, 1997; Bandura, 1977; Tharp & Wetzel, 1969). Although much gentler and more sensitive than its original version, it readily embraced punishment either in the form of unrelated removal of privileges or as a logical consequence of undesirable behaviour (Hartley-Brewer, 1994; Mrazek & Garrison, 1993). Following from the previous decade, the expert's reasoning was oriented by the belief that a lack of guidance and discipline was harming the children's chances of succeeding in adulthood (Pugh, 1994; Herbert, 1989). Therefore, parenting became an exercise in modelling desirable behaviour, correcting and leading by example (Pugh, 1994) rather than surrendering to the child's whim.

These ideas persisted into the 21st century with increased emphasis placed on consistency, emotional sensitivity, and respectfulness as important components of negotiating a suitable discipline approach (Fraser, 2007). Modern-day recommendations typically draw on both permissive and new behaviourist approaches within their discipline advice, leaning more towards one of them. Some embrace the notions of predictability and routine (Ford, 2006) while others tend to lend more consideration to children's individuality and temperament when broaching the subject of discipline (Murkoff et al., 2009). Perhaps the clearest descendant from the post-war absolute permissiveness is the popular "gentle parenting" movement. It emphasises providing children with choices instead of explicit limits and exploring their emotional states rather than correcting undesirable behaviour (Ockwell-Smith, 2016). The emotional cost associated with this approach was recently found to be connected with increased parental self-criticism and burnout (Pezalla, & Davidson, 2024). Nearly mirroring the concerns raised by experts of the 1970s and 1980s, this brings attention to the aftermath of following very permissively oriented advice. It also highlights why understanding the reasoning behind and the evolution of certain discipline trends such as those presented in this paper is critical for parents to make informed choices about childrearing methods they may wish to adopt.

Attachment & Discipline

John Bowlby's theories on deprivation rose to great popularity following the forced evacuations of children in England and prolonged separation from their parents during World War II (Thomson, 2013). Although the research was conducted primarily on the clinical population, parenting experts

quickly generalised findings to normative family contexts. Many challenges characteristic of early development such as sleep problems or excessive crying were attributed to deprivation or the resulting separation anxiety (Buxbaum, 1949; Children's Bureau, 1945). The manuals of the 1940s and 1950s frequently argued that nearly all forms of discipline could be developmentally damaging and that a strong attachment would suffice to guide the child's actions against disappointing his loved ones with misbehaviour (Freiberg, 1959). Parents had to be fun, and tolerant and mothers were always to be present. The recommendations to provide children with more and more attention were facilitated by socioeconomic changes of the time. Indulgence became possible owing to the invention of multiple household appliances, improvements in the standard of living and a counter-reaction towards austerity and uncertainty of wartime (Hardyment, 2007).

Unfortunately, the expectations created based on Bowlby's and Ainsworth's findings facilitated subsequent blame-placing. The absence of a primary caregiver could be implicated in a multitude of ensuing adult issues such as unstable emotionality or even the propensity to perpetuate military destruction (Kelso & Porter, 2009; Vicedo, 2013). This disproportionate burden put on the mothers was eventually regarded as oppressive, old-fashioned, and un-feminist (Martin, 1971). Consequently, many writers of the 1960s and 1970s set out to dispel these concerns and re-frame attachment as one of many factors influencing child behaviour and development (Winnicott, 1964). Others, however, opted to further boost claims related to mother-infant bonding, using examples derived from practices observed within primitive societies (Liedloff, 1975). The resulting discipline recommendations were later termed attachment parenting. They relied solely upon the quality of the bond which, if sufficient, could prevent many behavioural issues but when lacking had the potential to drive the child towards delinquency (Pearce, 1977). Notably, the reasoning propelling these ideas was all about returning to the roots and adopting a more natural manner of connecting to the child. However, due to their anchoring in realities and conditions characteristic of tribal societies, the recommendations translated poorly to the Western context frequently causing parental anxiety or even frustration (Hardyment, 2007).

As a result, the experts of the 1980s and 1990s continued to reject such portrayals of bonding. They recommended implementing structured discipline even before the first year without the fear of exerting negative effects on the child's emotional security (Eisenberg et al., 1996). The assumptions underlying these claims were related mainly to a shift in the perception of mother-child attachment. Neither lack of early skin-to-skin contact, nor isolated missteps in applying discipline were thought to be of consequence for the lifelong relationship (Green, 1989). This reduced the pressure resting on the tumultuous period shortly following childbirth and loosened the constraints limiting mothers during the period of recovery. In other words, the naturalistic or primal ideas of bonding were discredited. In line with earlier critiques concerning the solidification of patriarchal ideas, some even viewed it as a ploy

to exert undue authority over new mothers (Eyer, 1992). The attachment parenting advice, however, regained popularity in the early 2000s. Parents were again discouraged from implementing punishment or displaying negative reactions towards misbehaviour. Discipline was to be substituted with efforts to build nurturing and loving relationships with children who would then wish to please their caregivers (Sears & Sears, 2001). However, possibly as a legacy of the previous decade, the "all-or-nothing" notions of early bonding were far less emphasised as experts attempted to manage parental expectations about the postpartum period at least to some extent (Stoppard, 2006).

The analysis of interpretations and integrations of Bowlby's and later Ainsworth's theorising throughout the years illustrates that its original assumptions have been frequently distorted and exaggerated to fit different ideological stances. Evidently, the events of World War II alerted the public to the importance of parent-child relationships and the value of consistent caregiver presence. However, much of the resulting advice was built on questionable equivalency drawn between clinical and home settings. In addition, it could be argued to have rested on fearmongering and provoking guilt in mothers who had not opted to resign from employment following the end of the war (Kelso & Porter, 2009; Hardyment, 2007). It would appear that the concepts of separation of attachment insecurity were often used as a means of preserving the pre-war patriarchal order of society whereby women were naturally predisposed to remain home with the child. Certainly, as illustrated in this paper many authors showed scepticism or outright rejection of such a rhetoric. Nevertheless, it continued to evolve within the advice of, for example, Jean Liedloff and later, Ben Sears. The reasoning always seems to have incorporated a naturalistic or almost biological imperative relating to the capacity of the attachment bond to guide a child's behaviour without explicit discipline cues (Liedloff, 1975; Sears & Sears, 2001). In summary, although attachment parenting remains relevant in certain communities (Green & Groves, 2008) it is important to highlight that the reasoning behind many of the suggested care and discipline methods was often not rooted in scientific inquiry. It was also highly susceptible to the influence of different contextual factors and agendas throughout the years.

Parenting Politics

The desperation to prevent such a widespread tragedy as World War II from ever occurring again rendered parenting the first stronghold of the future's democratic nation. Consequently, as explained by Dorothy Baruch (1942), Madeline Dixon (1942) or Rhonda Backmeister (1950), children were to participate in their own discipline to the extent they were willing, and the parents were no longer entitled to expect obedience or compliance. Overall, the role of a parent was portrayed as notably demanding given the responsibility of teaching children about democracy, free participation, and self-control without implementing any organised strategy for correcting or managing their behaviour (Lee et al., 2014). The deep fear of totalitarian regimes encouraged experts to ponder the "why?" of children's

behaviour. The manuals discussed in depth the parental responsibility for creating an environment in which children could follow or not follow rules based on their civil liberties. This led to a stern rejection of fear-based compliance which was an obstacle to building desirable character traits of open-mindedness and liberalism (Whipple, 1944; Beekman, 1977).

The permissive bliss saw its end once the threat of an impending communist revolution dawned on Western societies. The Cold War encouraged experts to "firm up" their advice, to ensure that the next generation would be capable of prevailing over the enemy (Hulbert, 2004). Child-centredness began being seen as a gateway to socialism as it supposedly encouraged children to expect that anything they desired would always be provided upon demand (Sackett, 1962). Some attributed the erosion of the once robust discipline mores to the removal of religious morality from the public discourse (Spock, 1968), others believed that the post-war aversion towards corporal punishment led to a hasty rejection of all forms of behavioural modification techniques (Dobson, 1972). In any case, the previous decades' permissive ideals were regarded as a grave mistake with far-reaching consequences. These were exemplified by the rise of juvenile delinquency and the fierce resistance of the youth pacifist movement to the US involvement in Vietnam (Valentine, 1994). These views only became intensified with the beginning of the Cold War. It gave rise to a perception of an implied academic race between the children in the Western countries and the USSR. The pacifist and hedonistic youth raised according to the lax advice of previous decades seemed no match for the brilliant, disciplined minds who launched Sputnik into space. Consequently, the focus of discipline turned towards teaching children responsibility, diligence, and respect for the law. The remnants of this Cold War educational competitiveness can also be seen within the modern realities of parenting. The adequacy of the adopted childrearing or discipline philosophy is frequently measured through the lens of a child's school readiness and academic success (Lassonde, 2017).

The final decades of the 20th century were marked by the strive to reconcile the need to continue upholding democratic and liberal values within children's upbringing with the rejection of a fully permissive approach. The authoritative parenting model proposed by Diana Baumrind introduced aspects of stability into this struggle. Authoritative parents were defined as exhibiting high degrees of demandingness - "*maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts"* and responsiveness - *"*[fostering] *individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion"* (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). Many perceived her methodology as the ultimate solution to re-building and re-incorporating liberalism into childcare and discipline, following the failure of permissiveness in the 1960s. In brief, fostering autonomy and assertiveness with a reasonable degree of conformity was seen as the recipe for raising a model citizen (Hendrick, 2016). However, in general, the political framing of parental role appeared irretrievably gone from the expert advice within the 1980s and 1990s. Deemed laborious, indulgent towards attention-

seeking or simply boring for the child, a fully democratised parenting agenda was no longer recommended or even thoroughly discussed (Green, 1987; Pantley, 1996). Following this evident phase-out, the manuals published after the year 2000 rarely referenced or based their advice on socio-political considerations. It appeared the decades that passed since the end of the Second World War have led the concerns about instilling democratic values in children to fade.

Given the radicalisation of Western societies illustrated by right-wing and nationalist politicians coming to power in countries such as the USA, or the Netherlands it may be worth considering whether the pendulum swung too far again. It could most certainly be argued that the post-war liberal ideals of childrearing were unattainable or even unreasonable. However, their rationale - driven by the desire to prevent totalitarian ideologies from leading the world into another harrowing military conflict, seems more than valid in the current societal climate. The escalating crises in, among others, Ukraine and Palestine engender widespread concern and have given rise to heated public debates (Üngör, 2024). First-hand footage of the conflicts and their aftermath is also readily available on social media to which most children have at least a degree of access (Obe et al., 2024; Durani et al. 2024). Consequently, it is certainly warranted for researchers and parents alike to re-examine the foresight offered by mid-20th-century parenting experts. Should more care be taken to raise children in a critical, individualistic, and freedom-oriented spirit? Should a fully liberal upbringing be endorsed again to prevent the younger generation from electing dictator-like leaders?

Limitations & Implications

The present study is subject to certain limitations. Due to its character of a historical review, the analysis is descriptive and qualitative in nature. Consequently, the lack of objective numerical data makes it more prone to bias. To address this, the research has drawn on several primary sources to provide a holistic perspective on the topic. In addition, in a few cases, the primary publication could not be accessed, and the assertions made were based on the material available in secondary sources. It is possible that the originally expressed thoughts were somewhat misrepresented by other authors which would introduce a degree of inaccuracy to the present findings. This risk was accounted for by comparing the claims made by at least two separate secondary sources to limit the risk of presenting a distorted outlook.

Despite the illustrated drawbacks, the findings have important implications. Nowadays, there is an insurmountable wealth of child discipline advice available in different forms with the recommendations often conflicting or directly contradicting one another. The present study illustrates the evolution of three trends in expert advice which were largely popularised by World War II – one of the most tragic, but simultaneously influential events in modern history. By illustrating how they have

changed over the decades this paper provides a roadmap of the reasoning and contextual factors that contributed towards their development. Consequently, it enhances both popular and academic understanding of many of the discipline methods recommended and researched today. Furthermore, it may assist in selecting and applying the chosen approaches in a well-informed manner in both home and educational contexts. Given the discussed geopolitical tensions and the abundance of agenda-driven media coverage available, future research could explore if and how the democratically oriented expert advice from the post-war period could be applied to today's parenting contexts. In addition, subsequent studies may seek to establish frameworks of advice aiming to better support parents who use more permissive childrearing approaches.

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