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MIDDLE CLASS CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILY LIVES IN NINETEENTH CENTURY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously written or published by any other person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

signed .....

Y.L.ROUTLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the most important and enduring human institutions, yet, until recent years, it has been comparatively neglected by historians. Elitist history or the story of the top ten per cent has tended to focus on great men and their actions, with little reference to their childhood, their mothers or their own family lives with wives and children. We learn very little about the family environment and childhood experiences which were so important in forming the characters and personalities of such men. The family life of the ninety per cent, like other aspects of their existence, has remained a closed book to historians until recent decades. Whilst accepting that family history has been comparatively neglected in the past, the question is posed: why should historians study the family life and child rearing practices of ordinary people?

In attempting to answer this question it should be stated that a study of families, childhood and child rearing in past times is much more than just a pleasant meander into a nostalgic past. Such a study tells us much about the society in which the family functions. The family is the basic unit of society, and a study of the family gives us valuable insight into the structure and workings of the

broader social network around it. The way that children are reared, particularly the values and attitudes that parents seek to pass to their children tells us much about what was important to that society at that time.

The study of child rearing can also help to pinpoint changes and turning points in the development of any society. A change from an authoritarian to a more permissive approach to child rearing or vice versa can be part of a broader shift in society. The move towards more liberal attitudes in the 1960's, in western society, was accompanied by more permissive child rearing and the reaction of the late 1970's and 1980's has included a call for more discipline for children and a return to "old" values. The study of how children were reared in past times has therefore, greater importance and implications than simple nostalgia.

This particular study of family life will focus upon the South Australian middle class family, its children and child rearing in the mid and later decades of the nineteenth century. This family possessed a number of characteristics, all worthy of some discussion, but the most difficult to define clearly is its class status. The South Australian middle classes in the nineteenth century consisted of a variety of families with as many differences as similarities. Some like the Gilberts and

the Stirlings were very wealthy with large estates, a number of servants and a lifestyle that was not dissimilar to that enjoyed by the landed gentry of Victorian England. Others such as the Coneybeers and the Duncans lived in comfortable rather than grand villas in Adelaide, and tended to employ only one or two servants. Their lifestyle was more similar to that of the lower middle classes of surburban Victorian England.

Some historians have argued that the middle classes are too broad to be studied as a single class. R.S. Neale, for example, discusses this problem in his book Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century. He dealt with it, in part, by dividing the middle classes into two groups, one being the "middle class" consisting of the wealthy property owners, and senior military and professional men, and second the "middling classes" consisting of the petty bourgeoisie, aspiring professional men, literates and artisans. Neale identifies these two groups as having very different interests and aspirations. Models such as Neale's can help order the study of one broad and diversified class by dividing it into groups, but as Neale acknowledges they are at best inadequate to fully describe the strata that existed within the Victorian middle classes. (1)

I have rejected the temptation to divide families such as the Gilberts and Stirlings off into a colonial upper

class. Although their family lives may have differed considerably from those of modest middle class families they also shared many aspects of child rearing. For example, wealth and material comfort did not protect families from the loss of children in childbirth or infancy or from epidemic diseases. Also in the early decades of settlement, colonial society had a definite egalitarian quality. Pioneering conditions, shortages of all types of goods and labour limited the choice of lifestyle available even if families had extensive financial resources. Overall, South Australian middle class colonial families appear to have had many similarities as well as differences. Whilst I will acknowledge and discuss the differences that appear between wealthy and modest middle class families in the area of child rearing, I do not see them as two distinct classes. The evidence on qualitative aspects of family life is already limited so to reject evidence from one group of families because they do not entirely fit a particular class model seems both irrelevant and unnecessary.

Another characteristic of this family type is its nationality. To be South Australian in the nineteenth century was very different from being South Australian

today. One of the most important aspects of colonial South Australia was its predominantly British influence and background. South Australian census material in 1861, 1871 and 1881 showed that over ninety per cent of the colony's population were born either in Britain or a British possession.(2) This suggests that some exposure to British life, society and culture was the experience of the majority of South Australians. South Australia was also a British colony and therefore influenced by British institutions. The Victorian period was a time when Britain was at the height of her power and influence throughout the world. To be British or part of her empire was to be "naturally superior" to those unfortunate enough to have been born in "foreign" lands.

Although the British influence was very strong nineteenth century South Australians were also colonial. The unique physical and social environment, isolation from both the motherland and close relatives and the pioneering lifestyle added an aspect to South Australian nationality that was distinctly colonial. It gave South Australians a dual nationality which included an allegiance to Britain and a desire to recreate British life in Australia combined with a growing and undeniable colonial identity.

The third and final characteristic that needs defining is the meaning of childhood as it relates to this study. The aim of this work is to study children of South Australian

middle class families, aspects of their lives, their relationships with other members of their family as well as attitudes towards their rearing. It will focus exclusively upon children in their family setting. Other studies have examined children in schools and institutions but it seems that the family was the most important environment in children's socialization. The scope of childhood, for the purposes of this work, will be the end of infancy at about four or five years to the beginning of independence at about fifteen years. Such definitions of the phases of childhood are certainly arbitrary and open to debate. However, infancy seems to be a separate and unique phase of childhood with its own special characteristics, a phase which could warrant a study of its own. Adolescence, a relatively modern concept, could also warrant separate consideration. Also, adolescence was not the distinctive phase of childhood in the nineteenth century that it is today. The 1891 South Australian census classified 15 years as the age marking the end of dependency (3), but for some middle class children, girls in particular, child like dependency continued until marriage. This study will deal with the phases between the end of infancy and the beginning of independence, the period of childhood when children walked, talked, related and played an active role in family life but still remained economically, socially and emotionally dependent upon their parents.

The sources used for this work fall into two main categories. Firstly, the letters, diaries and reminiscences written by members of nineteenth century middle class families; secondly, the articles and advice literature on child rearing which were directed towards these families. Quantitative sources such as census material have not been ignored and will be cited where relevant, but this study deals primarily with relationships and quantitative sources can tell us little about how people treated one another or felt about each other.

There has been criticism of literary and qualitative source material, particularly from historians who favour quantitative analysis, and some valid points have been made. One criticism deals with the problem of drawing broad conclusions from what can be very limited source material. The source material for this work comes from a small number of middle class families who happened to leave written records of their family lives. They were a fairly broad range of families ranging from modest to wealthy and may have been representative of the class as a whole. Conclusions, however, are drawn cautiously with the aim of leaving an impression rather than a detailed description of middle class childhood and family life.

Another criticism deals with the differences in the quality of literary sources. Advice literature, for example, should be treated with some caution. Although people may have read advice on how to rear their children it cannot be presumed that they always followed it. The main value of contemporary child care advice is that it gives insight into prevailing attitudes and sometimes indicates the beginning of changes in approaches towards child rearing. There is also a clear difference between contemporary accounts of childhood and reminiscences. A greater value is placed, in this study, upon letters, diaries, articles and observations that were recorded at the time of the events. Contemporary recordings can be more reliable than reminiscences which are inevitably clouded by time and memory.

These points represent an awareness of the limitations of qualitative sources rather than an apology for their use. Literary sources are used extensively throughout this work and my own view on this subject is best summarized in the following statement made by the social historian Anthony Wohl:

"Unfortunate as it may be, not all aspects of family life are subject to quantification and it would be a sad loss if social historians, intimidated by the new emphasis upon statistical analysis and paradigms, turned away from the study of such intangibles and immeasurables as love,

happiness, respect, leisure, personal relationships or sexual practices and attitudes or many other aspects of family life that do not lend themselves readily to measurement" (4)

There are three major themes which will be explored throughout this study of middle class childhood. One of these themes is an investigation of stereotypes. Stereotypes can be defined as popular assumptions that may or may not be valid. In both historical and popular writings there has been a tendency for such assumptions to be repeated without being properly investigated. Some aspect of past life is referred to as "a fact" that needs no examination and in doing so the assumption is perpetuated. One of the most well known examples in family history was Le Play's theory on the size of the traditional family. Le Play's conclusion that the traditional family was an extended one was widely accepted and repeated but it was based upon qualitative evidence from a small minority of households. The demographic work done on parish registers by Peter Laslett and his Cambridge group has now challenged the validity of Le Play's theory. Laslett concluded that the majority of western, traditional families were nuclear with only two generations occupying the same dwelling. Laslett's findings have opened but not ended the debate since his conclusions are now open to question and criticism.

The example of Le Plays' theory suggests both the negative aspects of stereotypes. The negative aspect is that they can confine and limit thinking which can lead to the perpetuation of misguided theories. The ideal view is that historians should come to their work with open and uncluttered minds free from the popular assumptions accepted by the general public. This picture appears to be a utopian dream. Every historian brings his or her own biases and assumptions to their work as part of their equipment. Many are so subtle they may not even be perceived. Purists, or rather optimists have always suggested that historians, being presumably well educated and intelligent, will recognize and set aside bias. This view is not only optimistic but also historically questionable, the road of historical writing is littered with authors who made their evidence fit their theories.

If popular assumptions or stereotypes cannot be ignored, they can play a positive role in historical studies. They can help define and order areas of study in broad and overwhelming fields. An examination of popular assumptions, for example, can help identify areas of children's family life that warrant deeper study. They can also broaden rather than confine lines of questioning. If, for example, South Australian evidence does not support the "Victorian stern, authoritarian father" stereotype, it

raises a number of new issues. Firstly, it adds to an increasing body of evidence that questions the universal validity of this assumption. Secondly, it directs attention to the influence of the colonial environment and questions its effect upon parents' relationships with their children. This second aspect raises numerous new areas for comparison and investigation.

This study will use popular assumptions in a very positive sense. They will be used to illuminate significant areas of investigation. Although there will be no attempt to do a direct comparison of the English and South Australian middle class families, such a comparison would be impossible without reference to English primary evidence, there will be frequent references to popular assumptions about the English Victorian middle class family and an investigation of how applicable they were to the colonial experience. There will also be some investigation of popular assumptions about colonial children of the period. The aim of this approach is to discover how many of the popular myths about Victorian families were rooted in fantasy and how many in reality.

A second theme that is both interwoven through this study as well as having a chapter of its own, is the influence of the colonial environment. Popular assumptions about colonial children will be examined and one example of such

assumptions is the theory that colonial children were wilder and less disciplined than their English counterparts. As well as popular assumptions, each aspect of childhood and family life will be examined in the light of the South Australian colonial environment. Questions such as, how did the colonial environment affect this aspect of children's lives? and did it create some unique aspect of family life? will be constantly asked of the evidence. The aim is to discern the duality in family life, to discover what part was a recreation of British family life and what part was distinctively South Australian.

A third and final theme will be that of continuity and change. This study covers the "Victorian" period in South Australian history. The term "Victorian" has been popularly associated with a rather static and unchanging period of time. This is, of course, a very simplistic assumption that has been challenged by some strong pieces of evidence. The later decades of the nineteenth century, for example, have been identified as the beginning of significant changes in family life. Women were beginning to question and challenge their exclusively domestic role and seek a broader political and social identity. Attitudes towards child rearing were changing and child care was becoming a legitimate field of study for "male experts". In South Australia, the early decades of

settlement differed considerably from the later period up to Federation in 1901. Throughout this study there will be an attempt to consider evidence from the mid and later decades of the century as separate entities, so that the elements of continuity and change may be discovered and investigated.

A final but important point is that this work is a study of a single class. I am aware of critics who state that classes cannot be studied in isolation but only through their interconnections and interelationships with other classes in society. Although I accept that this is essential to a complete overview of any society, it cannot be achieved in a study of this length. However, a study of one group or class of families within a society can contribute to such an overview. It can be compared and contrasted with other studies of family types in order to achieve a broader picture of the whole. Working class children and their families are not totally ignored in this study. References will be made to the differing experiences of working class children wherever they are relevant and apparent and a complete chapter will be devoted to middle class attitudes towards working class children and their families. This chapter will, hopefully, illuminate something of the different familial experiences of children in colonial South Australia.

(1) Neale R.S.: Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century. London & Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972 Chap 1

(2) South Australian Census 1861, 1871 & 1881

(3) South Austalian Census 1891

(4) Wohl A.S.: The Victorian Family Structure and Stresses. London, Croom Helm, 1978, p197

FAMILIES

By the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution had already caused a dramatic redefinition of parental roles in middle class families. In traditional, agricultural society, the family was an economic as well as a social unit. Father was the patriarch of the family with undisputed social and legal power over the household and its members. His work was usually closely associated with the household which made him both a dominant and omnipresent figure. Mother also had a significant economic role. She helped grow and produce food, made clothing and household goods and dispensed healing remedies and knowledge when necessary. Childhood, as we know it was short, if children survived infancy they were soon slotted into some role in the family's economic unit. Child care was not a major function for either parent, infants were given the basic necessary care either by parents or older siblings. Older children were little adults fulfilling a useful function.

For middle class families, the Industrial Revolution separated the economic sphere from the domestic household. Middle class fathers became the sole breadwinners, who could provide quite comfortably for the economic needs of the family. The Victorian stereotypical father was still the stern and undisputed head of the household, but also remote, with work taking him away from the home for long

periods and removing him from regular family duties and interactions. The middle class mother, through the growth of affluence, lost her traditional economic role. She no longer needed to contribute to the family's economic survival, servants could relieve her of many domestic chores, and she could afford and was able to buy many of the household goods which she had once made. At the same time, childhood and children became more important. Child mortality rates fell steadily during the second half of the nineteenth century. Middle class children no longer needed to contribute to the family economy, instead childhood became a more distinct and carefree phase of life, a time of play and social preparation. These factors provided middle class mothers with a new role, as manager of the domestic sphere and prime rearer of her offspring. The stereotypical Victorian middle class mother was a woman removed both physically and psychologically from the economic world. Her values were different, more passive, submissive and fragile than her husband's and devoted to her primary function of child rearing.

This pattern and these stereotypes applied to middle class families in the mid nineteenth century. During the twentieth century these features have filtered upwards to the wealthy and down to the lower classes, making it the accepted, although idealized view of parenting patterns. However, in upper class Victorian families, both parents

occupied social and political positions of power and influence. They were often remote from their children and child rearing was left to servants. In poorer Victorian families, both parents were involved in the economic survival of the family. There was no room for either parent to specialize in child care. Child rearing was haphazard and precarious for poorer children. Childhood was still a short and vulnerable stage of life, ending either in early death or early entry into the work force.

The most outstanding feature of these changes in middle class parental roles was the identification of the mother as prime child rearer and the growth of a cult of motherhood. The cult of motherhood was a belief that mothers were the "natural" child rearers possessing an almost mystical instinct that resulted in a spontaneous love for all of their children. This was combined with an atmosphere of obligation. Middle class women were directed to be mothers first and foremost and advice on child rearing began to be directed solely towards mothers. There are a number of reasons for the growth of a cult of motherhood and why it developed first of all in the middle class family. Firstly, the middle classes were closely identified with the aims and direction of the Industrial Revolution. Population size and future generations became increasingly important. The industrial state needed future citizens who were healthy, productive and adaptable to its

needs. Children began to be a long term productive force and a profitable investment rather than a short term liability. They also represented an investment in the future of individual families. Middle class children had to be prepared for their inheritance and if possible progress and improve upon their parents' lot. In order to do this, children needed to be well cared for and properly educated. The socialization and education of children, therefore, became a primary function of the family. It became so important it required one parent, the mother, to treat it as her major purpose in life. By doing this, middle class mothers served both the interests of their family and the interests of the state.

A second reason lies in the changing view of the family and familial values in middle class society. When the family and the domestic sphere were separated from the economic sphere, they acquired new values. The new values were not based upon the old values of tradition and patriarchy or the new economic values of competition and enterprise. The family became an institution ideally based upon love, sentiment and individual happiness, a haven from the harsh industrial world. Motherhood and the relationship between mother and child was seen as a natural expression of these values. It was based upon spontaneous and natural love, self sacrifice and sentiment.

Thirdly, and most practically, motherhood provided an important function and position of responsibility for middle class women. Their traditional role had been destroyed by the Industrial Revolution and they were not allowed entry into the new male dominated economic sphere. Unlike upper class women they held no personal position of influence, their status was expressed solely through their husband's position. Motherhood, therefore, provided the only acceptable and significant alternative function.

The cult of motherhood and the stereotype image this involved is of course inevitably based upon both myth and reality. It raises a number of areas that need to be examined when studying mothers and mothering in nineteenth century South Australian middle class families. Firstly, the strength of the cult of motherhood, how much was myth and how much reality? We need to ask if South Australian mothers were primarily concerned with child rearing and how far they fitted the image of the devoted, self sacrificing, perfect mother. Secondly, we should examine the effects of colonial conditions and changing times on motherhood and mothering. Finally, we should analyse the effects of the new role, was professional motherhood a liberating or restricting experience for middle class women?

In examining the strength of the cult of motherhood two types of evidence need to be considered; firstly, the advice being directed towards middle class women concerning their maternal role and secondly the material from private papers depicting the reality of mothering in individual families. In 1846, Mrs Ellis in her advice to the Mothers of England referred to "an instinct in the maternal bosom that is stronger than any other which equips the mother to be the natural and best child rearer".(1) This theme is added to and strengthened in the late nineteenth century with the question of responsibility and potential guilt. An article published in the The Adelaide Observer in 1885 stated that any child who turned out badly could be traced to parental neglect and warned that a child's future state both in this world and the next depended wholly on the mother.(2) Such themes persisted to the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. Isabel Noar writing for girl readers in 1903 said that the mother instinct lay in the heart of every true woman. She stated that any girl or woman who could say "I hate children" had a serious defect in her nature.(3)

A major change in the cult of motherhood occurred in the late nineteenth century with the entry into the field of the male child care experts. It seems that by this stage, males recognized that motherhood was a significant area of power and influence that had inadvertently been left in

the hands of women. Advice from such experts seems to have increased the pressure upon women to be perfect mothers and at the same time undermined their role as the natural and best child rearers. Jan Kociumbas in her study of children and society in New South Wales and Victoria comments that by the late nineteenth century it was believed that the mother needed the help of experts to raise her child and that mothers were increasingly seen as responsible for faults in their children and for the ills of society.(4) An article published in the The Adelaide Observer of 1895 stated that mothers and mothers alone mould the men and women of the next generation, a task it remarked that is scarcely attempted or utterly neglected.(5) Dr. N. de Sisca, an M.D. writing in 1892 alleged that the mismanagement of children was a factor in the high rate of infant mortality.(6) Although de Sisca may have a valid point, responsibility for child care or the lack of proper care appeared to rest solely with the mother. Philip Muskett, a child care expert, writing in 1889, certainly pursued this line, His preface to The Feeding and Management of Australian Infants. includes the following statement: "In nearly every instance the cause of failure in the rearing of infants, apart from inherent or acquired disease, lies not so much in a want of will on the mother's part as it is her want of knowledge in the matter. The purpose of the present production is to lay down clear and definite directions

for her guidance."(7) Whilst such comments undoubtedly held some truth, they no doubt increased the level of guilt and anxiety in all mothers however caring or responsible they were.

The male child care experts performed another function which will be discussed in a later chapter. They were part of a middle class movement whose aims were to transmit bourgeois familial values and standards to the lower classes.

These examples of advice literature directed at women increased and strengthened the cult of motherhood in middle class society. It suggested that the role of perfect devoted mother was the only acceptable one for middle class colonial women and increased the pressure on them to fulfil such a role. It associated the themes of blame and guilt with any lapses from such perfection. Whilst such material illustrates the strength of the cult of motherhood in ideological terms, it tells us little about the reality of mothering in individual families. To do this we should examine both the circumstances and experiences of individual colonial women.

One of the inescapable problems for nineteenth century women was the difficulties of continual pregnancies and the risks of childbirth. These factors affected middle

class colonial women as much as their lower class sisters. In fact, middle class women ran a higher risk of puerperal fever which was a septic poisoning transmitted by medical practitioners who did not wash their hands and change their clothing after each delivery. During childbirth lower class women usually only had a female attendant who was unlikely to intervene in the process medically; middle class women were far more likely to have a doctor in attendance who was eager to practice the "heroic" medical methods of the period. Women's yearly or bi-yearly pregnancies, as well as childbirth, had some impact upon time spent with their children and their capacity to continually fulfil the role of "perfect" mother. Dorothy Gilbert mentioned that her mother's non-stop procession of babies meant that she was frequently "hors de combat".(8) The Gilberts were a wealthy middle class family who could afford servants to take over child rearing duties during these times. In poorer middle class families, mothers may have been forced to continue their child rearing duties throughout their pregnancies with a corresponding reduction in patience and tolerance. Such circumstances are not mentioned in the idealized versions of mothering in the advice literature. Also, the loss of a mother in childbirth meant in some cases that child rearing was left to father or another relative. Annie Duncan was born in 1858 and lost her mother three years later through puerperal fever. Annie's father, with the assistance of a

servant, took over the task of rearing his children until he remarried some years later. Annie was by no means delighted with this development, she remarked that after his marriage she did not have the same free access to her father until she grew older.(9)

Colonial conditions also limited the time that middle class women could devote exclusively to child care. Patricia Grimshaw in a counter argument to Miriam Dixson's views in The Real Matilda states that the nineteenth century colonial family was an interdependent economic unit and men, women and children were all integral parts of the enterprise. Grimshaw says that the patriarchal subordination of wife to husband was not a general characteristic of nineteenth century pioneering society and that middle class women led a busy, purposeful and stimulating life.(10) There were of course regional and class differences affecting family relationships. Poor and working class women in the eastern penal colonies, from which Dixson draws her evidence, were likely to have suffered from oppression, but Grimshaw's comments appear to have particular relevance to the South Australian middle classes. In South Australia, middle class women had to occupy an active, pioneering role beside their husbands in order to establish their homes and property in a new environment. They were not the stereotypical Victorian middle class women whose main role was decorative and

passive rather than useful and active. This broader role would have inevitably limited time available for child rearing and made it likely that parenting duties were more of a shared experience. It also seems to have enhanced women's status in the colony, leading to some pioneering reforms such as female suffrage.

Although many South Australian private papers suggest that colonial middle class women were trying to live up to the role of perfect mother, there were some exceptions. Charles Field, in his reminiscences of childhood, referred to his mother as the stern disciplinarian of the family who punished him for the least peccadillo.(11) Emily Reynell complained in a letter to her sister-in-law Lydia that she had had to nurse her children herself for five consecutive Mondays because her nursegirl had to perform other tasks. She said that she hoped her nursegirl would soon return and complained that one could have too much of a good thing. One of her children she described in less than an adoring manner as a lump of lead with a hasty temper.(12) Although Emily Reynell may have been an exception, it is relevant that when families in South Australia became established and wealthy they usually employed a nursegirl of some type, if one was available.

It is impossible to assess how common or how rare it was for a middle class mother to find her maternal role irksome or seek to pass child rearing duties on to others.

Certainly, any women who openly rejected the maternal instinct ran a high risk of being labelled unfeminine or unnatural. However, evidence in the late nineteenth century suggests that some women were becoming dissatisfied with the narrow definitions of their domestic role. The growth of the feminist movement and the entry of women into social welfare work are indications of this. Also, the "women's disease" where women went into complete mental and physical decline is also mentioned in late nineteenth century writings. It has been suggested that this could have been post natal depression, a complaint unacknowledged by the cult of motherhood, or simply a general discontent with their lot. Such evidence does, however, call into question the all pervading image of the serene, contented and passive Victorian wife and mother.

Two major conclusions can be drawn about the role of mothers in nineteenth century South Australian middle class families. Firstly, women were subjected to pressure from a growing cult of motherhood which identified in them a "natural" maternal instinct and expected them to make child rearing one of their major roles in life. Secondly, as in most other cases, a gap existed between the idealized image portrayed by the cult of motherhood and the reality of mothering in individual families. Some women were prevented by circumstances from fully living up to the idealized maternal image whilst others simply did not choose to do so.

Before leaving this discussion of middle class motherhood, it is valid to consider whether the increasing prominence of the maternal role was a liberating or restricting development for women. The rise of a cult of motherhood was only part of the changes to middle class women's role in the nineteenth century. During this period women became exclusively identified with the domestic sphere and characteristics such as passivity, submission, moral superiority and self sacrifice came to be regarded as distinctly feminine traits. Women became increasingly separated from the economic world which was dominated by men and founded upon very different values.

One view of these developments is based upon the role of women in traditional society. It emphasized women's integral and important economic role in traditional and agricultural society that was destroyed by the Industrial Revolution and replaced with a domestic role that was often more decorative than purposeful. This argument has some flaws. Firstly, it is based upon a somewhat idealized view of women's traditional role. Women in traditional society were not free, economic agents. They were subject totally to the patriarchal authority of their husbands and fathers who were free to overwork or ill treat them without interference. Furthermore, women's work in traditional times often consisted of endless drudgery and a continual battle for survival. Secondly, it ignores the

fact that many women welcomed their move to the domestic sphere. It gave middle class women a new area of power and influence of their own, often with servants to perform the least attractive domestic tasks. Many welcomed the opportunity to spend more time with their children and the separation from an industrial world which was by no means attractive. Few envied their working class sisters who were forced to leave their children shortly after birth in order to return to the working world.

The opposing view to this is that these developments were a liberating experience for middle class women. It states that women's status and influence increased during this period. Legislation began to restrict the autocratic power of husbands and fathers, and motherhood became an esteemed occupation adding prominence to the female role. Feminine values began to be esteemed, women became for the first time the moral superiors of men. The home became a haven of peace, tranquillity and morality ruled almost solely by women. One important problem with these views is that women were still essentially powerless. The male was still head of the household and free to dictate to his wife and children whenever he chose. Women were still dependent upon the benevolence of their menfolk. Even when the State eroded some of the powers of individual males they were transferred to a male dominated impersonal government and bureaucracy. Also, women's individuality and purpose

became restricted and confined by such developments. Women's work in the home became increasingly devalued in a society which only acknowledged the significance of paid employment. The values associated with the new definition of femininity denied women's ambition, drive, sexuality and strength, confining them to a male perception of women as perpetually weak, defenceless and dependent. This is a legacy which has haunted women until the present day.

A more balanced interpretation of the changes in nineteenth century middle class women's role seems to be that it was not designed to either liberate or restrict. It appears rather to have been part of a long historical process of manipulating and exploiting women to suit the demands of male dominated society. It provided a satisfactory alternative role for middle class women who had lost much of their traditional function but were not allowed to become equal participants in the new areas of male middle class power. The only solution for male middle class society was to see women as filling a service function, providing a haven for her husband and lavishing attention upon his increasingly important offspring,

Discussions on the rising prominence of mothers in nineteenth century middle class families usually point to a corresponding decline in the direct parenting role of fathers. The Victorian father is typically depicted as the

supreme ultimate authority in the household but also as a stern and remote presence removed from the normal tasks of child rearing and far less intimate with his children than their mother.

Certain conditions during the mid and later decades of the nineteenth century support the view that father's role was declining. Up until the late nineteenth century, fathers had the power to dictate the custody of their children in their will, and exclude the children's mother. Custody of children could be left to another relative or a stranger if the father desired. However, fathers lost some of their sole custodial rights in 1887 when the Guardianship and Custody of Infants Act was passed. The act made the mother the sole guardian of her child on the death of the father. She also had the power to appoint a guardian to act jointly with the father after her own death.(13)

insert > if he had appointed no guardian

The child rearing advice during the mid and later decades also emphasized the dominant role of the mother in child rearing. There appeared a somewhat critical note when referring to fathers, particularly any active involvement by fathers in child rearing. Mrs Ellis in 1846 stated that fathers were regrettably occupied with other concerns leaving mothers with the responsibility of ensuring the future good of their children. Her tone is moralistic, suggesting that fathers were somewhat sullied by the

values of the marketplace whilst mothers remained pure and morally fitted to direct the development of their children.(14) An article published in The Adelaide Observer in 1891 suggested that fathers were more intolerant than mothers and less aware of children's nature and needs. It criticized fathers who intervened in child rearing when they got home and demanded unrealistic standards of quiet and order from their children.(15) The message to fathers from this type of advice is quite clear. They should leave the active role of child rearing to the mothers who were better fitted for the task.

Private papers, however, suggest that South Australian middle class fathers were closer to their children and played a more active role in their rearing than that depicted in either the advice literature or the stereotypical image of a Victorian father. Annie Duncan's father, for example, took over the rearing of his children when their mother died of puerperal fever. This may have been due to the shortage of servants in the colony or a lack of any extended family. However, Annie's relationship with her father was close, warm and had a major impact on her early life. She stated that the most outstanding fact of her life was her love for her father, his loving ways and his gentleness.(16) Sarah Conigrave's relationship with her father comes across more strongly than that with her mother. She referred to her father as a tower of

strength and felt she need not fear anything when he was near.(17) Sir Edward Stirling was another father who felt it important to take an active role in rearing his children. Even when away travelling he wrote to his daughters in French in order to improve their education.(18) Robert Barr Smith was a father who certainly did not fit the stern Victorian father image. He amused his wife Joanna with his weak efforts to be firm with his children because she says, "there's not a softer kinder hearted old Daddy long legs in the world."(19) Charles Sturt gained a lot of satisfaction from his close relationship with his children. He stated that his only enjoyment was wandering in the garden with his two boys and felt that he could find no fault with any of his children.(20)

One of the most outstanding examples of an actively involved and caring father was F.W. Coneybeer. His diaries written in the late nineteenth century include many details of his active involvement with his children. He frequently took his children on walks and outings and often helped his wife Maggie with child care, particularly when the workload was heavy or the children were ill. His detailed descriptions of the care of his children when sick and his devastating grief at the deaths of two of them, indicate the very deep and close relationship that existed between father and children.(21)

It would be premature, with such a small sample of primary evidence to suggest that South Australian middle class fathers were not stern or remote but caring, close and intimate with their children. The examples quoted, however, are drawn from differing types of middle class families. The Stirlings, Sturts and Barr Smiths represent the wealthy established middle class in the colony. They may arguably have had more time to allot to their children or have held more enlightened views on child rearing. The Coneybeers, Duncans and Conigraves represent modest middle class families suggesting that involved, caring and loving fathers were to be found throughout South Australian middle class society.

One reason for these findings could lie in colonial conditions. Writers such as Gandevia in Tears Often Shed. Child Health and Welfare in Australia from 1788 and Elkins in Marriage and the Family in Australia suggested that the Australian father was never as dominant in colonial society as his English counterpart. It has already been stated that women in colonial middle class society had broader and more varied roles and this combined with less dominant father figures may have led to some demands concerning the sharing of parenting duties. The colonial environment also encouraged closer relationships between fathers and children. Nineteenth century South Australia was primarily a pioneering and agricultural society. Families lived in geographical and familial isolation separated from close

relatives and often from close neighbours as well. Father's work was more likely to be centred around home and property rather than away at the factory and office. The shortage of servants and hired labour meant that in many families father, mother and children worked together in the home or on the farm. Such circumstances inevitably led to some blurring of parental roles and closer connections between all family members.

Such evidence also illustrates the weakness of stereotypes and their restrictive effect upon analysis. It is often presumed that the stern Victorian father was universal and that Victorian men welcomed their exclusion from child rearing and the domestic sphere. Although there is much discussion about the effects on women of their confinement to a domestic role there is little discussion of the effects of men's confinement to an economic one. The South Australian evidence shows that some Victorian men welcomed the opportunity for close relationships with their children and a more active role in child rearing. This raises the broader question of how men felt about the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and if they felt uncomfortable or restricted by the Victorian male image. These questions cannot be answered here but they do open up an area of study that appears to have been neglected.

Another relevant area for discussion in this chapter is how children related to their parents. Stephen Mintz has dealt with this aspect of Victorian life in his book A Prison of Expectations - The Family in Victorian Culture. and has raised some interesting points. Mintz states that although the Victorian middle class family was a private institution, a bastion of feelings and emotions, it also had a public function to prepare children for adult roles by instilling self discipline, an acute sense of responsibility and a sensitivity to the needs and expectations of other people. This situation created something of a paradox because although the home was child centred it also placed enormous expectations upon children which sometimes resulted in tension and conflict. Mintz identified major tensions existing between child and father who was the embodiment of intellectual and moral authority in the home. (22)

The stereotypical image of Victorian family relationships is that they were clear and ordered. Parents cared for and educated their children making their childhood relatively contented and carefree. In return children accepted the authority of their parents and dutifully obeyed and loved them. We get the impression that there was nothing of the "generation gap" problems of teenage rebellion in the Victorian middle class household. Mintz's theories however and his study of a few well known Victorian middle class

families suggest that children's relationships with their parents, particularly their father, were not always relaxed. The pressures to fulfil parental expectations could create conditions of guilt, intense feelings of personal responsibility and inadequacy and, in some cases, conflict and rebellion.

It is extremely difficult to find evidence of conflict and tension in family relationships in South Australian private family papers. Diaries and letters written by both parents and children suggest that relationships were close, intimate and relaxed. There are very few references to conflict, disobedience or strain on children in complying with their parents' wishes. It cannot be presumed, however, that therefore such pressures did not exist. During the Victorian period the family became an almost holy and sacrosanct institution. Peace and harmony, or at least the appearance of it, within the household was considered very important. Family affairs were private and any public discussion of conflict or dissension would have breached middle class standards of respectability. It is not surprising in such a climate that there is little direct evidence of family tensions.

A few private papers give some indication of the sorts of pressures and expectations placed upon nineteenth century South Australian middle class children. Thea Davenport's

letters to her sons Ernest and Noel at school in England include numerous references to her expectations of them. These include regular requests for full details of their expenditure, what they ate, what their daily activities were and moral lectures on cleanliness, religious duty and appropriate companions.(23) The number of times she repeated the directions and the constant underlinings suggest that the boys did not immediately follow these instructions. NP. William Gilbert's letters to his parents also indicate some differences in his relationships with his parents. William seemed very keen to impress his father, telling him particularly of his academic success. William's style in writing to his mother is somewhat more relaxed and less eager to impress. In his letters to her he often included details of pranks and misdemeanours. They seem more intimate and protective with enquiries about her health and advice to her to take care of herself. When William had bad news about his school progress, he seemed apprehensive about his father's reactions and he asked his mother to intervene and explain his feelings to his father.(24) Possibly William was apprehensive about not meeting his father's expectations. It is likely that these isolated references only represent a minority of the tensions that existed between parents and children. Probably conflict and tension was both more subtle and hidden than the bulk of primary evidence suggests.

In conclusion, it appears clear that parents and parental relationships in South Australian middle class families were far more complex than stereotyped images would suggest. Certainly, intense pressure was exerted on women to completely fulfil the expectations of the maternal role. We cannot fully assess the effects of such pressure on individual mothers but we can postulate that some women through either desire or circumstances did not live up to the idealized image. In fathers too, we find a variety of individual responses and the South Australian evidence adds to a growing body of evidence which challenges the stern Victorian father image. Finally, the evidence on relationships between parents and children, particularly that on tension and conflict illustrates the frustrations of attempting to study the way people in the past related to each other. We can, at best, view only the very tip of the iceberg.

Although much has been written about relationships between parents and children in Victorian middle class families there has been comparatively little written about children's relationships with servants and siblings. This is rather surprising considering that both of these groups formed an important part of middle class families. Such families were usually large, with children sharing a home with a number of male and female siblings. In England, though less so in Australia, the employment of at least

one domestic servant was an essential part of the definition of middle class status. Servants and siblings also played an important part in the Victorian family hierarchy. Siblings provided children with the opportunity to develop relationships based upon equality and companionship rather than the more deferential relationships that were necessary with parents. The presence of servants in the household brought children into contact with individuals from a different class which helped them learn how to relate to their social inferiors.

One of the reasons for the comparative neglect of these groups and their relationships in family history writings, appears to be a lack of primary evidence. Burnett commented in a review of English oral histories of childhood during the Victorian era, that relationships between brothers and sisters receive much shorter treatment in autobiographies than relationships with parents.(25) South Australian evidence from middle class diaries, letters and reminiscences support such conclusions. There is very little material dealing with children's relationships with either their siblings or their servants. One reason for this may be that many of the records of daily family life were written by parents, most commonly mother. The major concerns of these mothers were the daily activities of individual children and the relationships with them. Father usually figures in his

position as head of the household, but relationships between children or between children and servants attract far less maternal attention. Reminiscences written by adults looking back on their childhood also appear to concentrate on relationships between children and parents. In childhood, parents are usually the most significant and prominent figures in children's lives and tend to dominate any recollections of that period of life. Relationships with siblings or peers only really begin to predominate during adolescence. The lack of evidence on relationships with servants in colonial South Australia may be explained by their comparative lack of numbers. Unlike English society, many colonial middle class families did not employ servants. Labour was in much shorter supply in the colonies and the Australian working classes both had, and often preferred the opportunity for other forms of work. They craved a different life in a new land and domestic service was too strongly identified with the rigid and restrictive class system left behind in the old country. Employment in domestic service was also more transient in the colonies, with servants moving on to better opportunities or improved prospects. Colonial middle class children were unlikely to experience the presence of an old retainer in their family throughout their childhood years.

The limited evidence that does exist however, allows two tentative conclusions to be drawn about relationships between siblings and between children and servants. The first conclusion is that such relationships gave children the opportunity for an easy, affectionate interchange that was not always possible between themselves and their parents. The Gilbert papers show some evidence of long term relationships between children and retainers. One of the most important and affectionate relationships in Dorothy Gilbert's early life existed between Dorothy and her mother's companion and children's governess Miss Molero. Dorothy called her "Ummie" and stated that her first memory was the complete identification of Ummie with the family. Dorothy stated that Ummie was there in all emergencies and supervised all the Gilbert children's early education.(26) The same closeness, during childhood at least, does not seem to have existed between Dorothy and her mother. She does not figure prominently in the recollections possibly because she was often unavailable to her children because of continual pregnancies.(27) The Gilberts were also a very wealthy middle class family, with social obligations, and they may have subscribed to the upper middle class pattern of handing a large portion of child rearing over to a governess or nanny, therefore making them more remote. The Davenport letters contain a reference to strong bonds between siblings. Thea Davenport writing to her son at school in England mentioned his

younger brothers' habit of talking and asking about him constantly and continually referring to activities he enjoyed at home.(28) Such light, affectionate references are rare in Thea Davenport's letters to her sons, which are full of rather moralistic and sanctimonious pieces of advice. William Gilbert's letters to his sisters and one to a family governess are written in a much lighter, affectionate style than those addressed to either of his parents. William used a light and chatty style to his sisters, frequently teasing them about their pets and their activities. He freely tells his sister about a boyish prank when he and a friend were caught firing pistols.(29) A similar style is evident in a letter written by William to his sister's governess. He again uses a chatty style, and relates details of an incident where he and a friend rang doorbells and ran away.(30) By contrast William's letters to his parents, particularly those to his father, are more formal and respectful in tone and concentrate mainly on details of his achievements rather than his misdemeanours. Although such evidence is not surprising, it does illustrate the ease and informality of servant and sibling relationships which contrast with the more formal parent child relationships.

The evidence on this issue is clearly sparse and limited coming mainly from wealthy South Australian families where relationships between children and parents were likely to

have been more formal and remote. In poorer middle class families, relationships between all members of the family may have been relaxed and informal. However, in some households, children were obviously able to form relationships with siblings and servants based upon an equality and informality that was difficult to achieve in relationships with parents. In the more authoritarian homes such relationships must have proved a relief from and a balance to the duty, respect and obedience demanded by parents.

The second tentative conclusion that can be drawn about sibling and servant relationships is that like many other aspects of Victorian family life, they acted as an important social function, training children for broader society outside the home. The previous paragraphs touched on this issue, the easy affectionate relationships between siblings prepared children to deal with their social peers on a basis of equality. This was just as important as relationships with parents that taught children how to relate to those above them in the hierarchy. As well as equality, contacts with siblings taught children other aspects of relating. Two articles printed in the The Adelaide Observer stressed the importance of a girl's relationship with her brother. In one of these articles printed in 1891 girls were advised to study their brothers tastes and cater for them. It stated that this should be

done without any ill temper or lack of courtesy but with feminine grace and sisterly love so that one day the girl would become worthy of the heart of some other girl's brother.(31) Such sentiments would make today's sisters shudder, but Victorian middle class girls through following such advice could prepare themselves for the role expected of females in their relationships with males in adult society. A second article printed in 1892 pitied the girl who had no brother because she had no one to teach her how to relate to males. The article advised brotherless girls to "choose as her most intimate friend a girl who has a wise brother; then she can reap the benefit of his counsel."(32) Another example of the social function of sibling relationships is found in the Reynell papers. Walter Reynell was considerably younger than his two sisters Lydia and Lucy and they obviously used their relationship with him to develop their maternal instincts. Both sisters adopted a motherly approach to Walter, Lydia called him her "dear little man" and cautioned him to write more regularly and Lucy advised him to "pay much attention to your spelling."(33)

Sibling relationships provided the opportunity for children to experiment with some of the more varied and complex social roles they would be required to assume in adult society. These included relationships between peers based upon equality and friendship, relationships between

males and females based upon Victorian notions of masculinity and femininity and where age gaps were wide, parental types of relationships based upon dominance and submission as well as caring and protecting.

The relationship between children and servants also performed a social function. The function of such relationships was quite complex and attracted a great deal of parental attention. Servants were certainly valued in the middle class household. Their labour and presence helped increase or define a family's status and maintain the Victorian domestic ideal by performing the most time consuming, dirty and arduous tasks. This meant that other members of the household could sustain and enjoy the peace and tranquillity popularly associated with the Victorian middle class home. Contact between children and servants also helped children to learn how to deal with social inferiors. However, servants were also, in one sense, the "enemy in the camp" in the Victorian household. The Victorian middle classes feared and distrusted the lower classes for a number of reasons. To some they represented the conditions and pattern of life from which they had recently risen and could easily return if their fortunes changed. To others, they represented the sinister masses, who if not controlled, could arise and destroy the wealth and privilege of middle class society. At the very least, servants represented a different culture with attitudes

and manners that had the potential to adversely influence and possibly corrupt their children's characters. Such attitudes created a paradox for middle class parents who needed and valued servants but at the same time felt uneasy about their presence in the household and their relationship with the family's children.

These complex and opposing attitudes are reflected in both private papers and advice literature. Mrs Ellis, for example, warned parents about allowing children to assume "a premature lordship and dominion over servants", and suggested they teach children "that consideration which is always due to those who spend their lives in labouring for our comfort and convenience, with no other reward than their necessary food and clothing."(34) She also warned parents about allowing children to become too close to servants who may use them for their own ends in opposition to parents.(35) Mrs Ellis displayed the two opposing middle class attitudes towards social inferiors, patronizing combined with unease and distrust. Both the Gawlers and the Gilberts illustrate the patronizing attitudes adopted towards social inferiors. Mrs Gawler gave her children's old clothing to aboriginal children, and her son Henry, following his mother's example, gave them biscuits, beef and pork.(36) William Gilbert was also aware of his duties towards his social inferiors. Whilst away at school in England, he made sure that he paid

visits to two of his father's old servants to check on their welfare.(37)

Other sources refer to a distrust of servants, particularly their ability to properly care for middle class children. On one occasion Captain and Mrs Sturt left their boys in the care of servants whilst they were away for a few days. They recounted how the maids left the boys alone without breakfast whilst they went to the seashore to spend hours "in idleness". The Sturts appeared to thoroughly approve when their sons followed the maids and hid their clothing for revenge.(38) It seems unlikely that the Sturts would have approved of their children playing such a prank upon adults of their own class even if they had been unjustly treated. These examples are drawn from wealthy middle class colonial families and represent the attitudes of "noblesse oblige" combined with fear and distrust which so often characterized their relationships with social inferiors.In Annie Duncan's diary she refers to a nurse-housemaid called Joanna who was described as "warm hearted" and "warmly attached to us all." Annie's father was horrified, however, to find that Joanna put the children to bed at night and then went out and left them alone.(39) Working class children were often left alone by their parents or in the charge of older children, usually from economic necessity as much as social custom. Joanna may have considered the practice quite reasonable, but Mr

Duncan obviously saw it as serious neglect. Such differences in attitudes undoubtedly increased middle class distrust of servants, particularly their ability to responsibly care for their children.

In conclusion, it is worth repeating that the evidence available is not sufficient to give researchers a truly comprehensive picture of the role of sibling and servant relationships in South Australian middle class families. This is a common problem shared by researchers seeking to find out how people in the past thought and felt about each other. However, it is possible to conclude that relationships with siblings and servants were important both emotionally and socially to middle class children.

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(3)Noar I: "For Our Girl Readers-Girls and Babies" in The Womans Sphere, 10, Nov 1903, p370-371

(4)Kociumbas J: Children and Society in NSW and Victoria 1860-1914, University of Sydney PhD 1983

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(6) Sisca de N. M.D.: Management of Children in Health and Disease, Melbourne, Sydney & Adelaide, George Robertson & Co, 1892, p20

(7)Muskett P.E.:The Feeding and Management of Australian Infants Sydney, Edwards Dunlop & Co, Melbourne,Melville, Mullen & Slade, 1889

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(11)Morphett G ed, Reminiscences of Charles Field, SAA Z Pamphlet 994.23 F453

(12) Reynell Papers, SAA PRG 29/29/Vol 2, letter dated 26.1.1885

(13)Davey C.M.:Children and their Lawmakers. Adelaide. Griffin Press, 1956, Chap 4

(14)Ellis, 1846, p108

(15)"Hiding from Father" in The Adelaide Observer. 11.4.1891. p8

(16)Duncan, Vol 1 p29

(17)Conigrave S, Reminiscences , SAA, Acc no 1291

(18)Stirling Family Letters, held by Mr E.S. Booth, Stirling,SA

(19)Letters of Joanna Barr Smith to Robert Barr Smith, 1860-1894, SAA, PRG 354/51 letter dated 7.11.1892

(20)"The Grange" from The Register. 13.4.1912 SAA, Newspaper Cuttings Vol 2, p14

(21)Coneybeer F.W., Diaries, SAA PRG 22/1/1-12, 1881-1900

(22)Mintz S; A Prisoner of Expectations - The Family in Victorian Culture. New York & London, New York University Press, 1985

(23)Davenport Letters, SAA PRG 40/173/items 1-27

(24) Gilbert W ,Letters, SAA PRG 266/4

(25)Burnett J: Destiny Obscure. London Allen Lane, 1982, p238

(26)Gilbert D, 1968, p4 & 5

(27)Gilbert D, 1968, p4

(28)Davenport,1864-1866 item 9

(29)Gilbert W, 1865-1866, letter dated 25.3.1866

(30)Gilbert W, 1865-1866, letter dated 16.6.1865

(31)"A Girl's Own Brother" in The Adelaide Observer, 31.10.1891 p8

(32)"The Brotherless Girl" in The Adelaide Observer, 3.12.1892 p8

(33)Reynell Papers, SAA PRG 29/29, 1828-1913, letters dated 24.2.1857 & 3,3.1857

(34)Ellis, 1846, p244 & p246-247

(35)Ellis, 1846, p246-247

(36)Gawler Letters, SAA PRG 50/19 letters dated 1.11.1838 & 28.12 1838

(37)Gilbert W, 1865-1866,letter dated 11.7.1865

(38)"The Grange" from The Register, 13.4.1912 SAA Newspaper Cuttings Vol 2, p14

(39)Duncan, Vol 1 p30 & 32

PLAY AND WORK

In agricultural, village society working families had shared their work and leisure time. Whole families including the children, worked alongside each other in the fields and participated together in the simple festivals and holiday days that provided a welcome relief from the yearly round of survival. In contrast, the daily routine of wealthy adults and their children had always been divided. Children of the wealthy were reared by servants, leaving adults the time to enjoy the sophisticated pleasures that had always been part of the lives of the rich. Nineteenth century middle class families could not follow the totally leisurely life of the very wealthy and not all of them were able to have their children reared by retainers. However, they were increasingly able to divide the spheres of work and leisure. Work became separated from the domestic sphere and family life, and confined more and more to the male head of the household. Leisure became associated with home, family and society and increasingly more sophisticated and regulated.

Such divisions are equally apparent in middle class children´s play and work. Middle class childhood was a longer and more carefree period, with more time for enjoying free and spontaneous play. However, such play

became almost exclusively associated with children and childhood. Adults no longer shared in such games and pursued their own sophisticated activities. At the same time, children's play became more adult directed with the introduction of more organized games. Such pursuits were introduced by adults into the lives of children and represent the growing awareness of the importance of middle class parents in child rearing. Organized games and leisure activities were designed to encourage the development of certain values and character traits and discriminated between the sexes. They were part of the growing belief that parents could, through proper training, actively form their children's characters.

Such principles also directed middle class children's work or at least their duties and responsibilities. Middle class children no longer had to contribute seriously to the maintenance of the family economy. However, Victorian middle class society was founded firmly on the work ethic. This ethic abhorred idleness or indolence and emphasized habits of industry and activity. Such habits were considered essential in forming children's characters and preparing them for adult life. Childhood, therefore, was not exclusively a time of play and leisure. Apart from increasingly formal education middle class children were also given regular tasks to perform in order to encourage the habits and values incorporated in the work ethic.

It is important to define spontaneous play because this chapter will discriminate between such play and the more regulated leisure activities for children. Spontaneous play refers to the informal games that have been traditionally passed from one generation of children to the next. Such games belong to an independent cultural world of childhood and have been played by both sexes and all classes. They have had only a tenuous connection with the world of adults. Some examples of such games include marbles, the many variations on chase and catch and the rhyming games that are popular with every generation of children.

Even the most cursory study of evidence from South Australian middle class family papers shows that spontaneous play was an important and extremely pleasurable part of children's lives. The many vivid and detailed descriptions of such games indicate the delight and enjoyment they brought to children. Middle class children obviously welcomed the opportunity they gave to break free from the ordered world controlled by adults and enter their own world of freedom, fantasy and independence. The descriptions of spontaneous play came from all types of South Australian middle class families, both wealthy and modest. They emphasize the exhilaration of regular outdoor play in wide open spaces. The Gilbert children, members of one of South Australia's wealthiest

middle class families, mentioned frequent opportunities for uncontrolled and often wild outdoor play. Dorothy Gilbert described an outdoor game called "wild animals in the borders" which involved some damage to the shrubbery and clothing and lots of noise. She also described a game called Tom Fiddlers Ground, a traditional game including rhyming and chasing.(1) There appear to have been few restrictions on these activities in the Gilbert household except when too much damage was done to either the formal gardens, the children's clothing or themselves. The details included by Dorothy Gilbert are typical of the vivid descriptions given of such games. Sir Joseph Verco, coming from a more modest middle class family, includes extensive details of children's spontaneous play in his recollections. He described some of the street games played by boys in Adelaide in the mid nineteenth century . These included the complicated games of marbles, their types and differing values;and the game of cockfighting where a small boy mounted the back of a larger boy and fought with another similar pair.(2) He also referred to the freedom enjoyed by children in the city where boys played on the footpaths digging their "muck" holes wherever they wished without interference from either the citizens or the police.(3)

The colonial environment appears to have encouraged the free spontaneous play of children. The good climate meant

that children were able to play out of doors for most of the year, a luxury denied their English cousins. Wide open spaces and a pioneering lifestyle also seem to have encouraged a free and independent spirit in children which enabled them to pursue their own activities free from adult intervention.

The environment also inspired some distinctly "colonial" games and activities for children. Sir Joseph Verco mentioned hunting parrots and opossums on a property at Cudlee Creek,(4) and A.H.D. Tolmer described hunting wild dogs and kangaroos out in the bush.(5) The colonial climate also made outdoor swimming possible for most of the year. Mrs S. Pizey referred to the very popular swimming holes on the River Torrens, one being ominously known as the "death hole".(6) Sarah Conigrave described one game where she and her siblings would imitate aboriginal corroborees. Apparently they became so proficient at the game that one of her father's guests thought it was a real Aboriginal tribe celebrating.(7) Caroline Clark mentioned children catching crayfish in the River Torrens and a game inspired by the gold rush where children set out on a gold hunting expedition with a tin can and a spade.(8)

Some writers have suggested that colonial life had a liberating effect on children's lives, allowing them a

freedom and independence they would not have enjoyed in English society. Brown for example, writing on the changing functions of the Australian family stated that " the children of all classes appeared to grow up in a much freer and less strictly controlled family climate than obtained in most English families ".(9) Gwen Jones has also described the colonial childhood as "mildly liberating" (10) The South Australian evidence certainly suggests that children from both wealthy and modest middle class families enjoyed many opportunities for free and spontaneous play. It appears that parents generally indulged their children's activities even when the games were noisy, boisterous or involved getting dirty. There is little evidence of the Victorian stereotype family where children were expected to be seen and not heard or not allowed to get themselves or their clothes dirty. It is possible that the colonial environment helped parental tolerance in this matter as well as aiding children's scope and freedom. Space and a good climate meant that children could play outdoors and make as much noise as possible without disturbing their parents. Dirty clothes could be washed and dried easily in warm weather. Also, the close familial relationships encouraged by the isolation and the pioneering lifestyle may have led to greater tolerance and less formality than was usual in English middle class society.

Attitudes towards children's leisure became even more tolerant in the late nineteenth century when child care experts began promoting the view that play was both a natural and beneficial part of children's lives. The earlier evangelical Victorian perspective that made all leisure activities rather suspect appears to have disappeared by this stage. Child care experts began to suggest that not only was play a natural part of childhood, but also an essential part of children's learning process. An article published in The Adelaide Observer in 1896 illustrates these views, stating that parents should encourage their children's play because it is their form of work, and advocating that all teaching for children under seven should be through play.(11) It is interesting to note, however, that children's play was justified through association with the work ethic rather than for its own sake. Such sentiments were not extensively applied to working class children, it was still a common view that work was most beneficial for all members of the poorer classes including their children. Margaret Barbalet sums up the middle class attitude towards working class childhood in the following passage from her book Far From a Low Gutter Girl: "Boarding-Out imposed on children from the pauper class an ideal of childhood but it was not the middle class ideal in every respect; rather, it was the middle class perception of a working class ideal. Like middle class children, state

children were supposed to be dutiful, passive, protected and controlled, but unlike middle class children, they had a childhood abruptly curtailed at thirteen when they went to work. Even before thirteen years of age they were supposed, above all, to be useful ". (12)

Another part of children's world of play was the more formal and organized set of games and pursuits which developed during this period. Some Victorian parents were undoubtedly uncomfortable with too much spontaneous or boisterous play. This attitude is understandable in an era which emphasized order, cleanliness and a high degree of formality in social etiquette. Organized games, which involved a purpose other than just simple enjoyment reached an unprecedented peak during the Victorian period. These included a variety of activities such as formalized sports, games and social accomplishments. They were designed to promote certain desirable traits and values and usually differentiated between the sexes.

For boys, most of their more formal pursuits involved sport. The development of boarding schools for boys based upon the prototype of Arnold's Rugby encouraged an increasing association between sport and manliness. Manliness embodied all the desirable character traits to be found in the ideal Victorian middle class male. These included physical strength, a good constitution, fairness,

self control and of course the trait most important in capitalist society, the competitive spirit. Boys had always enjoyed their own games of improvised cricket or football on a spare patch of land but school sports formalized such pursuits and organized them into "play with a purpose." Most middle class boys experienced such activities at some stage during their childhood. Often they were introduced to such games at school. Wealthier middle class families sent their boys to schools back in England whilst for the less affluent middle classes schools such as St Peters College, run on English lines, became established in the colony. William Gilbert described his sporting activities at Clifton College, England which included, as well as cricket and football, athletics and a game called Hare and Hounds. This game was developed at Rugby and involved a competitive race between a group of boys referred to as Hounds trying to catch one boy nominated as the Hare who endeavoured to lead the pack over as difficult a terrain as possible.(13) The descriptions of formalized games in children's accounts lack some of the obvious delight and enjoyment found in descriptions of more spontaneous activities. James Tinline wrote to his mother expressing relief that there will be "no football this half" because he need not be afraid of smashing himself again and stated that although he intends to go in for athletics he does not intend to overdo it.(14) James seemed much happier describing his own games

of leaping Tom or sitting on the broom and trying to knock four slippers off two chairs.(15) Formalized games undoubtedly increased the pressure on children to perform and of course to succeed, which probably diminished the enjoyment for many children. They also subjected children to the approval and expectations of adults who organized such activities.

Girls also had their own set of formalized activities and pursuits. These were "ladylike" pursuits designed to encourage the development of perceived Victorian "feminine" values such as passivity, domesticity, submission and self sacrifice. They included the less active or competitive games and all the necessary domestic skills and social accomplishments thought important for the future middle class wife and mother. Particularly as girls grew older and closer to womanhood the emphasis moved away from active pursuits towards the more sedentary and womanly activities. Annie Duncan remarked that her introduction to such activities came at the age of nine when her father remarried and placed her education in the hands of his new wife. Annie stated rather wistfully that she was no longer allowed to run wild with other children in Port Adelaide but was taught to draw, play the piano, memorize music, sing at sight, paint, cook and learn to make her own clothes.(16) In this description Annie referred to having ambitions which were never realized

about painting, a remark which highlights the restrictions upon Victorian middle class females. Although they were expected to develop a wide range of social accomplishments they would never be encouraged to use them in any professional sense. As Annie grew older, she was expected to always have a piece of "fancy" sewing work for the evening because dressmaking and plain work were not allowed in the drawing room, and it was expected that she should do her part socially by entertaining others with music and games such as chess, draughts, backgammon, whist or round.(17) Up until the late nineteenth century most formal pursuits for girls were usually indoor and sedentary, such as those described by Annie Duncan. Female clothing of the period could hardly have allowed for anything else. However, in the late nineteenth century there seems to have been a move towards less restrictive and slightly more energetic activities for girls. Articles giving advice on the rearing of girls suggested calisthenics, tennis and cycling although the more aggressively competitive games were still thought unsuitable for girls. By 1891 Winifred Bird's regular leisure activities included a competitive activity called the race game and several games of tennis.(18)

Also in the late nineteenth century play for both boys and girls began to be more influenced by the adult commercial world. Special children's celebrations around birthdays

and Christmas became increasingly emphasized and centred around commercially based gifts and games. The production of commercially produced toys increased in the late nineteenth century. Toys such as lead soldiers, farmyard animals, toy cars and trains, cut out puppets and theatre sets, magic lanterns, toy horses and carts, dolls, dolls' clothes and furniture, buckets and spades, rocking horses, Jack in the boxes, sewing machines and roller skates were all available to colonial children in the late nineteenth century. Many of these toys, as with the formalized activities were defined according to sex, the activity based toys for boys and the passive ones for girls. Boys played with their trains and dreamt of travel, activity and exploration whilst girls played with their dolls and dreamt of being good wives and mothers. Such toys along with the moralizing tales found in children's literature of the period helped middle class adults to mould their children and develop in them the desirable traits and values.

The development of more structured and formalized activities represent an adult intrusion into the free and independent world of children's play and it illustrates the paradox that existed in the development of our modern concept of childhood. Nineteenth century middle class childhood certainly became a more carefree and significant period of life with children rising to a new level of

importance, enjoying more time for both play and education, and being better cared for and less vulnerable. Child rearing itself rose to greater prominence as a full time occupation for middle class mothers and a new field of study for experts. However, it also involved greater intervention by adults in the lives of children with a corresponding loss of autonomy and independence and increased expectations for them to live up to. Children began to be supervised, directed and moulded by their parents and even the traditional independent world of children's play began to be invaded.

Work as well as play was part of the lives of South Australian middle class children. Two distinct types of children's work emerge in colonial family papers. One type was the small duties and responsibilities given to children in order to keep them active and encourage industrious habits. This type of children's work is commonly associated with middle class children in the stereotype Victorian family. The other type, more commonly associated with poor or working class families, was the more serious or essential work that was of significant importance to the maintenance of the family.

It is clear that in some South Australian middle class households children's labour was important to the family economy. This was particularly so in the early years of

settlement and amongst the poorer middle class families. One family of a man, wife and two children arriving in the colony in 1837 had to all set to work immediately cutting down trees and clearing land.(19) In 1840, a family of all girls had to work alongside their father in the fields until the family were able to afford to hire a man to help with the work.(20) In 1846, at the age of seven, Walter Reynell drove the bullocks whilst his father held the plough. Between them they ploughed six acres in a week. (21) Robert Ross mentioned in his reminiscences that he had to leave Williamstown school at the age of 12 to help look after his father's sheep. When a boy was hired to look after the sheep, Robert had to look after him, plough for hay, sow with the hand, mow with the scythe and help to shear. Finally, at age 17, it was considered that Robert had earned a little more education and he was sent to St Peter's College.(22)

These examples illustrate some important points about colonial middle class family life. Firstly, it shows the hardships of early pioneering days in the colony when many families coming from English middle class society were forced to seriously modify the pattern of their family life. Many families, during this period, had to use the labour of their wives and their children in order to establish themselves in the new colony. Even families like the Reynells who later became part of the wealthy middle

class establishment had to use their children's labour in the early years. There are far fewer examples of this practice in the later decades of the century when life became more settled in the colony and hired help was more readily available.

Secondly, it highlights the fallacy of speaking of a homogeneous middle class family. Poorer middle class families were always more vulnerable to labour shortages and high costs and could be forced on occasions to rely upon the labour of wives and children. Such conditions were apparent in English middle class society in the late nineteenth century when lower middle class families could no longer afford to keep their daughters at home until they married. These lower middle class daughters were then forced to enter the work force, at least for a limited period of time. The same vulnerability applied in the colonies, where families such as the Ross's were much more susceptible to changing economic conditions than wealthier families such as the Barr Smiths and the Gilberts who could always afford to hire workers and servants.

Finally, it shows the contrasts between English and colonial middle class family life. Throughout the Victorian period the English middle class family became increasingly urbanized and industrialized. The more typical family pattern became one where father solely

maintained the family working away from the household whilst wife and children remained in the suburban home with at least one servant to assist with the more arduous domestic tasks. By contrast, life in South Australia remained more traditionally and agriculturally based. Work was centred around home and property, with less access to services or outside help, and tasks and roles were more likely to be shared between all family members.

The move from England to South Australia meant drastic changes with some children who had never performed serious work before suddenly having to look after livestock or plough a field. Such changes created mixed feelings amongst middle class settlers. Some families such as the Hacks approved of such changes. John Barton Hack found the new life invigorating and felt very proud that his children were involved in useful work and gaining new skills. He said that his children were being brought up to the great and useful profession of stock keepers and stated that if his boys turned out to be lazy it would not be on account of not being put to work early enough, or for having too much time on their hands.(23) The Conigraves also believed in the benefits of the work ethic in any form. Sarah Conigrave stated that her brothers had to drive the team of bullocks whilst she and her sister carried water for the household. She commented that her parents would have required their children to work under

any circumstances because they firmly believed in the lines "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."(24) Other colonists, however, had reservations about middle class children spending too much time working. They feared a decline in middle class standards and a corresponding drop in social status. If children were forced to work their education would suffer and they could remain ignorant of middle class social skills. Margaret May made numerous disapproving references to one family whose children worked, remarking upon their increasing ignorance and wild behaviour. She also disapproved of another colonist who boasted about working his children in his fields and only giving them two weeks of holiday before harvest.(25)

The other type of children's work more commonly associated with middle class families was that of giving children tasks in order to encourage industrious habits. It is clear that even in the wealthiest families children were not allowed to be idle and had some regular tasks to perform, however minor or contrived they might have been. Dorothy Gilbert remarked that in spite of their massive entourage she was still required to look after her younger siblings and perform little tasks for them. She also said that the Gilbert children's rides had a purpose to them, her father asked them to ride the boundaries checking for rabbit holes and to report any leaks in the sheep

troughs.(26) Sir Joseph Verco also mentioned the small tasks which always fell to the boys in his family. They were expected to prepare the kindling and fetch the yeast needed for baking bread.(27) Advice material available for parents supported such practices. A typical article published in 1899 stated that children should be taught to do something useful and made to understand that they were helping. It suggested that even young children should be given tasks such as fetching father's papers or slippers or mother's work basket because an idle child is a miserable one.(28) Clearly, the work ethic remained an important part of middle class familial values throughout the period of study.

The pattern of children's work and play that became established in middle class families in the nineteenth century represents the beginning of what has become broadly accepted as the modern family situation. Throughout the twentieth century such patterns have gradually spread to families in other social strata. Today, play is firmly associated with childhood, with adult leisure occupying a separate sphere. Children are now clearly separated from the economic world with entry into the work force being increasingly delayed. In the nineteenth century, however, such patterns were only experienced by a minority of children. Working class children enjoyed only a short period of play with an early entry into the work force.

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THE FACTS OF LIFE

This chapter will examine two important "facts of life", death and sex in colonial middle class families. In relation to death it will be confined to the study of child mortality, reactions to child deaths and the involvement of children in the process of death and mourning. There is a popular assumption that Victorians were obsessed with death and mourning. Such an assumption can only be properly examined when both the extent of and the reactions to family deaths are balanced and assessed. The study of child mortality raises a number of questions which need to be answered if we are to understand how Victorians handled death. Firstly the extent of child mortality, how it affected middle class families, age groups of children affected, changes over time and the influence of colonial conditions on child deaths.

Any society's attitudes are framed, in part at least, by its mortality rates. Our modern attitudes, for example, are strongly influenced by the fact that child mortality rates are low, and deaths rarely occur in the family home. We are more isolated and removed from the process of death than our ancestors were. Secondly, the way in which child mortality was handled in colonial middle class families, needs to be explored. The grieving process, including the part played by religious faith, the involvement of mourning rituals and children's exposure and reactions to

death need to be examined. Although this study is not primarily concerned with infants, it is valid to discuss infant mortality because it was a major part of colonial child mortality and had an impact upon family life. The following graph shows the infant mortality rate in Adelaide city for the period from 1840 to 1900 and compares it with the crude death rate for the same period.(1)

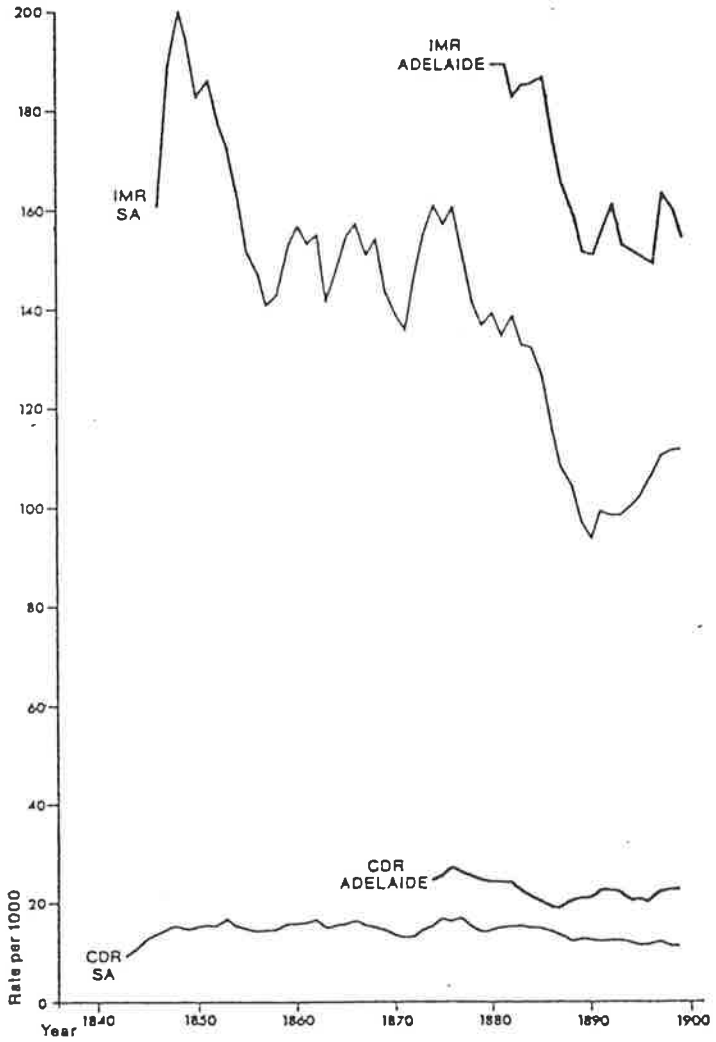

Figure 1—Crude Death Rate and Infant Mortality Rate (5 Year Running Mean Data) for South Australia and Adelaide City

The first and most striking feature of these figures is the very high rate of infant mortality, particularly when compared with general mortality rates. Whilst the crude death rate hovered around something less than 20 per thousand, the infant mortality rate only briefly dropped below 100 per thousand. In the 1840's and 1850's infant deaths accounted for almost 50% of all deaths. Even in the late 1890's when the rate had fallen, it still represented 25% of all deaths. These figures show that infants were the most vulnerable group in colonial society and that infant mortality remained a serious problem throughout the period of study.

A second feature of the figures is that although infant mortality rates were high, they were beginning to fall in the latter decades of the century. In the 1840's one in five children were dying in their first year of life but by the 1890's this had fallen to one in ten. If these are translated into social terms, bearing in mind the higher birth rate in the colonial period compared with today, this means that even in the later decades of the nineteenth century the rate was at best, one in two families affected. When we remember that in the 1980's the infant mortality rate is only ten per thousand, one in every 100 babies, it is clear just how big a problem infant mortality was in colonial society.

Another significant feature is the higher rates for Adelaide city compared with the country, for the period for which separate figures are available. In the city, infant mortality rates only fell to 140 deaths per thousand as compared to less than 100 per thousand over the whole colony. Adelaide families were more likely to experience the loss of an infant than their country counterparts.

Reports from the Central Board of Health included frequent discussion of the perceived reasons for high infant mortality rates. The report for the year 1880 to 1881 cited crowded conditions, poverty, bad drainage and sanitation and ignorance about hygiene as some of the causes. It did mention however, that as most South Australians lived above the poverty level, a major cause was the problems associated with the summer heat.(2) City dwellers probably experienced more problems with overcrowding, drainage and sanitation which may have contributed to higher infant mortality rates.

Discussions in health reports about the reasons for high infant mortality rates raise another significant issue. Figures on child mortality rates give us little indication of the types of families most affected. They do not tell us to what extent infant mortality affected middle class families specifically. Health reports on the subject do

give us some clue to this question. The South Australian middle classes would certainly have avoided some of the suggested causes of high infant mortality rates. Deficient diet, overcrowding, bad housing, squalor and filth mainly affected poorer families. However, the middle classes would have experienced the problems with sanitation and summer heat, both of which are listed as important causes of South Australian infant mortality. The question of ignorance is also relevant. It might be presumed that middle class parents knew more about health and hygiene and therefore gave their infants better care than poorer parents. One cautionary reference in the Central Board of Health report for the year 1883 to 1884 challenges this assumption. It warned against "entrusting the care of babies to ignorant nurse girls by mothers who have to work to support their families, or who find it irksome or inconvenient to attend to their own children."(3) Servants, particularly reliable and experienced servants were difficult to get in the colony. Middle class parents, wealthy and willing enough to employ a nurse girl may have risked higher levels of infant mortality through ignorant child care practises.

Child mortality did not confine itself to infants. The death rate for children under five years, even in the later decades of the century hovered between 17 per cent and 20 per cent. All children were vulnerable to epidemic

diseases as the following tables show:

TABLES SHOWING NUMBERS OF DEATHS FROM MIASMATIC DISEASES

	1879-1880	1880-1881	1881-1882	1882-1883
Scarlet Fever	74	101	43	26
Measles	nil	47	36	9
Whooping Cough	46	41	20	47
Diphtheria	89	78	68	56

(4)

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894
Scarlet Fever	3	4	2	5	35
Measles	1	nil	nil	261	28
Whooping Cough	129	42	12	121	60
Diphtheria	172	173	106	100	97

	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899
Scarlet Fever	10	4	7	15	16
Measles	2	nil	nil	54	27
Whooping Cough	44	17	nil	112	106
Diphtheria	37	21	22	38	40

(5)

Health records of the period are full of reports of such epidemics and point to the very vulnerable state of children. The 1891 report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages commented on the continuing problem with diphtheria. It pointed out that although all

ages were subject to attack, the mortality from diphtheria was chiefly confined to children under 10 years old (6). Other diseases such as whooping cough and measles followed a similar pattern.

An important point relating to such diseases is that class was no protection. Middle class children were just as susceptible to these diseases as poorer children. Cures were not available and little could be done about prevention. The regular attendance of a doctor may have been useful in alleviating the symptoms and diagnosing the disease but it could have little effect on the outcome. The figures also show that the later decades of the century brought no effective means of control. These diseases often attacked spasmodically and erratically. Measles, for example, killed no one in 1891 and 1892 but suddenly claimed 261 victims in 1893.

Evidence from private papers also supports the view that middle class families were by no means exempt from the effects of high child mortality rates. It is difficult to find one set of letters or papers that does not refer to the loss of at least one child. The two following references are typical of those found in diaries and papers of the period. Sir Joseph Verco referred to an Adelaide family who lost two children in one year from what he stated was brain fever,(7) presumably meningitis.

Mrs R.S Casely, a minister's wife from Kapunda referred to the loss of an infant, Ethel Gertrude, who was only lent to her for four months and laid to rest in Gawler cemetery (8). This was an experience that Mrs Casely shared with many other middle class mothers.

It is difficult to assess the effect of colonial conditions on child mortality rates. Health records refer to the low levels of poverty in the colony which presumably helped to limit mortality rates. There are other factors, however, that are relevant to the middle classes as well as the poorer classes, which increased the vulnerability of colonial children. One of the factors was the arduous voyage out to the colony. A long sea voyage in cramped, contained conditions with limited access to fresh food put many children at risk. Sarah Brunskill lost both of her children on the voyage to South Australia in 1839 and a total of seventeen children died on that voyage (9). Ellen Moger lost three children on her journey to the colony in 1840. She believed that her children would have survived with proper attention from the doctor and some 'natural nourishment' (10).

'Remoteness', isolation and pioneering conditions in South Australia also contributed to death rates. Mary Boothby in her reminiscences of bush life at Tintinara in 1864 referred to the loss of a child in the bush and stated

that she had heard of many other similar cases (11). As conditions and communications improved and sea voyages became quicker and more comfortable over the century, instances such as these became rarer. In the early decades of settlement, however, they did have some impact upon middle class child mortality rates. This was particularly so with poorer middle class families who suffered more primitive conditions on the voyage to the colony and colonists who settled in the more remote areas of the state.

Some conclusions can be drawn about the extent of child mortality in colonial South Australia. Firstly, although death rates had begun to decline in the later decades of the century, child mortality was an extensive and common experience in colonial families throughout the period of study. Secondly, children, and infants in particular, were highly vulnerable to disease and death. Thirdly, the middle classes were not protected from high child mortality rates through their wealth and living conditions. Many of the factors contributing to high child mortality were not affected by affluence. Finally, there is no hard evidence to suggest that colonial conditions had any marked effect on child mortality rates. Heat affected infants in South Australia as cold affected them in England. Some improvements in living standards for working class people were probably balanced by the adverse

effects of the voyage and pioneering conditions. These conclusions show something of the social context in which colonial attitudes towards death were formed. In today's society, the death of a child, although devastating, is a comparatively rare event. In the colonial period it was a common event shared by almost every family.

Victorian middle class children were directly involved in the process of death and mourning and any attempt by their families to protect them from such experiences would have been impossible. Death took place within the home and children experienced it directly, either through their own families or through the experiences of friends or relatives. There is some evidence of a more deliberate or contrived exposure of children to the inevitability of death. Sarah Conigrave referred to one occasion when she was twelve years old and her sisters, brother and father were all suffering from dysentery. At one stage, her father called her and informed her that he was dying (12). Since he did not die this appears to have been a rather melodramatic over reaction which was no doubt upsetting for Sarah. It should be remembered however that dysentery was a serious illness in colonial South Australia and there was no guarantee that either Sarah's siblings or her father would survive it. Perhaps Sarah's father was simply preparing her for a distinctly possible outcome.

Recollections of earlier days in the colony, printed in the Adelaide Advertiser of 1886 described the presence of two children at a public execution. The children witnessed a rather horrifying hanging of a convicted murderer named McGee. The children stated that they were very frightened by the experience and "bolted away from the place" (13). There are problems with evidence such as this because it is not clear whether the children's parents knew or approved of them attending an execution, or whether it was a common practice in the early years of settlement. The Adelaide Advertiser makes no comment on the practice, but simply recorded it as a past event. However, since no other reference of this type is apparent it can be assumed that it was not a common event. Another type of contrived exposure to death was the use of it as a moral lesson for children. Victorian literature is full of stories of children who learned that death or at least disaster was the wages of sin. Some parents used stories from real life to emphasize the same point. Thea Davenport, in a letter to her son Ernest, told him about the death of a former school friend. She said that the boy had resigned himself to his death stating that he had been a careless and trifling boy but God had forgiven his sins and was taking him away so that he should never be wicked again (14). The moralizing tone and lack of subtlety in this extract is rather typical of the Davenport letters. They do not seem to have been very sensitive parents. In one letter,

for example, Robert Davenport told his sons, who were away at school, very bluntly of the death of their mother in childbirth (15). The boys were not aware of their mother's pregnancy but there was no attempt by their father to cushion the shock of the news. Such behaviour may not have been typical of South Australian parents. These examples are isolated incidents and we cannot assess how common or how extreme they were. We do know, however, that because death was a common and inevitable experience, children would have had to accept it as a reality of every day life. Whilst many parents may have been unwilling to deliberately expose their children to death, it is unlikely that they were protected from it when it occurred naturally as part of family life.

The reactions to death, that is the grieving and mourning process is another important part of this study. This process includes two major parts, the emotional reactions of grief and acceptance, and the outward or public show of grief expressed in mourning rituals and regulations. By our standards Victorian mourning rituals are at the very least excessive. South Australian mourning rituals were clearly regulated and involved children as well as adults. Periods of mourning were defined according to one's relationship to the deceased. Types of clothing, appropriate colours, jewellery and permissible social activities were all regulated. Mourning was observed for

those relatives who died back in England as well as those who died in the colony. Mary Thomas mentioned in her diary that when she was a child in 1841 her family heard of an uncle's death back in England. The children were immediately taken by their mother to Murray and Grieg's to buy bombazine and black crepe for their mourning dresses (16). The practice of putting children as well as adults into mourning was still observed in the latter decades of the century. In 1889 the Reynell girls were put into dark grey frocks trimmed with black braid as mourning for their grandfather who died of appendicitis. The baby of the family, Rupert was also in mourning and was photographed in his "ugly little mourning frock surrounded by its black braid"(17).

It is easy to dismiss Victorian mourning rituals as an obsessive and excessive practice but it should be understood within its social context. Middle class Victorian society was highly regulated and ordered. Society, social duties and etiquette were all subject to rules and definitions. Appropriate dress for social occasions, duration of calls and social events, rules for dinner parties, dances, courting and paying and receiving calls were all subject to regulations which were carefully followed. Breaches of social etiquette were disapproved of, or seen as evidence of "low breeding". Middle class settlers in South Australia sought to continue these

social rules and regulations in their new homeland. Ladies pages of newspapers include endless advice on appropriate dress and behaviour for social functions. Government House was the centre of a colonial society that modelled itself on English lines. Middle class ladies in Adelaide paid calls, left cards, and were "at home" in the same way as their English counterparts. Within this social context, rituals governing mourning would have seemed highly understandable and quite appropriate. Such rituals were also a means of handling and in part controlling such a sudden and tragic event. An ordered society such as the Victorian middle classes would have been uncomfortable with spontaneous or unexpected events. Mourning rituals brought some comfort and order to the sudden upheaval of a death in the family.

It is a popular assumption that the Victorian emotional reactions to death were sentimental, melodramatic and sometimes insincere. Exaggerated expressions of grief have been depicted as part of Victorian middle class respectability. In South Australian private papers there are many open and frank references to the emotional process of grieving. Sarah Brunskill whose children died on the voyage to South Australia, wrote a very moving letter to her parents expressing her grief. She said that her heart was ready to burst and she could never look at the sea without lamenting her children. She had hoped that

time would have helped but instead she felt their loss more every day (18). Sarah's grief is quite obviously sincere, the loss of both of her children was a devastating blow which no doubt she felt could have been avoided if they had remained in England. The Coneybeer papers include other examples of deep and intense grief. The Coneybeer's lost two children, one a boy Torrie who died of diphtheria in 1897 and a girl Ivy who died of meningitis in 1898. There are lengthy accounts in the Coneybeer papers of nursing the children but being able to do little but alleviate the symptoms. They described their sense of helplessness as they watched their children suffer and expressed their intense grief at their deaths. There is a particularly moving passage that referred to the Christmas after Ivy's death when her parents found the box of toys given to her the previous year. Both parents sat down together and wept (19). Emily Churchward was another parent who lost a child to diphtheria. She described her daughter's throat being brushed and the terrible discomfort this caused. Her anguish was so strong she felt she could not bear to think of it (20). Apart from parents grieving for their children there are also examples of children's grief. Watts describes in Family Life in South Australia Fifty Three Years Ago the grief of a little girl at the loss of her brother. It was noticed that she moped about the place lonely and spiritless (21). Another account in The Adelaide Observer of 1880 described

children at the Adelaide Children's Hospital solemnly bringing their flowers and putting them around a two year old patient who had died. This was apparently not a contrived gesture, the two year old was a popular patient and the children performed the act of their own free will (22).

These accounts suggest that South Australians were able to express their grief openly and freely. F.W.Coneybeer was not embarrassed by openly weeping for his daughter, there is no suggestion that it was an unmanly thing to do. These South Australian examples of grief nearly all involve the loss of a close relative, in most cases the loss of a child and such accounts were unlikely to have involved any insincerity or exaggeration. Victorians may well have used such things as death bed scenes in literature or the deaths of minor acquaintances as an opportunity for emotional outlet. These outbursts may have helped balance the rigid control of the industrial world which was so often devoid of emotion or compassion. The main point is that Victorians felt free to display the emotions of grief. In today's society we are often reluctant to openly display our grief, and mourning usually takes place in private. This approach has certainly led to problems in dealing with the process of death and it is debatable whether it is preferable to the Victorian method of handling the same situation. The

examples of grief at the loss of a child also show that although child mortality was common it was still a deep and devastating experience. Parents were neither complacent or immune to the loss of a child. In earlier centuries when child mortality rates were even higher it has been suggested that parents were more resigned to the loss of their children. One cited example of this complacency was the practice of giving new born children the same first name as a deceased sibling. This practice was discontinued in the nineteenth century, Victorians obviously considered each of their children as individuals with a name and identity of their own. Every child death was the loss of a unique individual who could never be replaced. Also, by the mid decades the Victorian middle class family had become a fairly long lasting and intimate institution. Falling mortality rates were creating the expectation that more and more children could and would survive. The loss of a child, although common, was not an inevitable event. The expectation that a child will survive lessens any reluctance to establish early, strong bonds of affection with the infant. Parents in earlier centuries may have controlled their emotional ties at least until the child survived its early years.

Another part of the grief process was acceptance and resignation. The evidence suggests that South Australian parents did strive to accept the deaths of their children and that their religious faith was an important part of

the process. Even at the early stages of grief there were signs of a striving for acceptance. Emily Churchward, when expecting the imminent death of one of her children felt that in spite of her anguish she could say " Thy will, not mine be done "(23). Robert Davenport, writing to his sons about their mother's death told them that although it was right to sorrow, they should still believe that God always does right and reminded them that their mother had gone to a place where she could be perfect and free from sin.(24) The Coneybeers regretted the death of their daughter Ivy whom they felt would have grown to a good and clever woman. They felt however that they must 'Bow to it and say Thy Will be Done'(25). Sarah Brunskill searched for some divine purpose in the deaths of her two children. She asked 'What great sin have we committed to be so severely punished. Did we think too much of our darlings to do our duty to our God or what'(26). In all these examples there is a striving for acceptance that is supported by a complete faith in a divine purpose. God's authority in these matters is never questioned.

These early attempts at resignation and acceptance of a child's death strongly suggest that South Australians were not obsessive in their grief. There is no hint of self indulgence or exaggeration, just honest attempts to come to terms with a devastating loss. The grieving and mourning obviously took place, but it was combined with a

growing acceptance of the inevitable and consequently an awareness that life went on. An example of this attitude is found in The Adelaide Observer advice to mothers in 1888. It said: "If you have lost a child remember that for one that is gone there is no more to do, for those remaining everything. Hide your grief for their sakes". (27) Both religious faith and the colonial environment would have discouraged long periods of excessive grief. Most middle class families in the colony, without a large number of servants, would have found that the tasks of settlement and rearing a family demanded a great deal of time and energy. Such a demanding schedule would have discouraged long periods of mourning. Colonists also believed sincerely in God, divine authority and heaven. Death was the beginning of an after life which was infinitely superior to that on earth. Excessive or prolonged grief could have been interpreted as lack of faith or a questioning of divine authority.

Three major conclusions may be drawn about the way that South Australian middle class parents handled the subject of death and children. Firstly, children themselves were actively involved in the process of grief and mourning and they were not protected from the realities of death. Secondly, although Victorians may have been melodramatic or sentimental about death in their literature or somewhat obsessive about mourning rituals, this does not appear to

be the case in dealing with the deaths of their children. The grieving of South Australian parents at the loss of a child seems to have been understandable and moderate. Grief was both open and intense but certainly sincere, and tempered with acceptance and resignation. Finally, the process of dealing with death did not seem to have changed markedly over the period of study. Although some aspects of mourning rituals, particularly children's mourning were being questioned towards the end of the century, such rituals were still commonly practiced.

The assumptions about Victorian middle class attitudes towards sexuality are as deeply entrenched as those about death. The Victorian period is depicted as an era of marked sexual repression, not least evident in its attitudes towards children's emerging sexuality. Victorian views on this aspect of family life centred around three areas, ignorance, fear and repression. One common assumption is that middle class parents deliberately kept their children ignorant of sexual matters. Stories of angels bringing babies, children found in cabbage patches or under gooseberry bushes abound during the period. J.F.C. Harrison in his book on early Victorian Britain states categorically that children's questions about sex were turned aside and they grew up puzzled, ignorant and resentful(28). If middle class children were ignorant of sexual matters, then this was

one of the many areas where they differed from poor and working class children. The structure of the middle class home was certainly conducive to maintaining privacy and ignorance. Separate areas for sleeping and living, separate bedrooms for parents, male and female siblings, adult supervision of children's play and activities and the delayed entry of children into the work force all contributed to maintaining children's ignorance about basic facts of life. Poor and working class children, living in more crowded conditions with far less privacy and an early entry and exposure to the adult world, could hardly have remained ignorant for very long.

In addition to encouraging ignorance in their children it is also suggested that middle class parents feared their children's emerging sexuality and sought to repress it. Lloyd De Mause in his book on the history of childhood refers to nineteenth century parents using restraining devices on their children or even resorting to the use of circumcision, clitoridectomy, and infibulation.(29) It is hard to assess just how widespread or how severe such repression was, although medical advice during the Victorian period was very concerned with the subject of child masturbation, its effects and the means of repression.

When the evidence from South Australian middle class families on this issue is examined one overwhelming difficulty becomes apparent. Questions on ignorance, fear and repression of children's sexuality cannot be fully answered because the available primary evidence is far too sparse and obscure. Of course, the lack of evidence itself gives some indication of prevailing attitudes towards the subject. Other areas of family life are dealt with extensively in private papers. Details about children's play, their care, attitudes towards discipline and moral training are freely committed to paper. As we have seen, even with a painful subject such as the death of a child, parents were not hesitant about writing of their feelings and emotions. The absence of any discussion of sexual matters and children's emerging sexuality suggests that these were not considered polite topics of conversation in the middle class home. Furthermore, it reinforces the view that a veil of fear, ignorance and secrecy covered the subject of sexuality in Victorian society.

The direct evidence that is available also supports such a view. Evidence suggests that children were kept deliberately ignorant about sexual matters. W.L. Beare in his reminiscences of early settlement stated that he was very perplexed when the first children were born because there were no gooseberry bushes or parsley beds in the colony (30). Dorothy Gilbert in her diary of her childhood

in the late nineteenth century, remarked that she was generally unobservant of her mother's changing shape during her pregnancies and believed that her new siblings were brought by angels (31). Joanna Barr Smith obviously sought to keep her daughter in some ignorance. In a letter she referred to a book, which appeared to be rather suspect in content, as suitable for experienced adults such as her husband and herself but definitely not suitable for an unmarried daughter (32). The age of the daughter is not specified but the tone of the letter suggests that she was well into her teens. These pieces of evidence are certainly limited but they do add to the impression that children were kept deliberately ignorant of sexual matters for as long as possible.

The direct evidence on fear and repression is even more obscure than that on ignorance. It seems unlikely that parents who were reluctant to discuss basic facts of life would have relished any reference to such distasteful subjects as masturbation. There are some very obscure references to be found in the letters of Thea Davenport to her sons at boarding school in England. She asked them rather anxiously about whether they took a cold bath and if they had separate beds at school (33). Cold baths and separate beds were considered to be essential deterrents to children's sexual exploration. Thea Davenport's anxiety about these issues would have increased when her sons went

to boarding school. The conditions and sleeping arrangements in boarding schools were considered to encourage the development of homosexual practices and masturbation. Considering some of the horrifying medical descriptions of the results of such practices it is hardly surprising that Mrs Davenport was anxious. Once more the direct evidence is far from conclusive, but it does add a little more to the overall picture of repression.

The scarcity of direct evidence gives us little indication of the influence of themes such as change over time or the colonial environment. Certainly, colonial life does not seem to have produced a more open attitude towards sex education for the young. Regarding change, this seems to be an area of family life that reflected continuity of attitudes. There does not appear to be evidence of any major liberalizing of attitudes in the late nineteenth century. Jan Kociumbas in her PhD on childhood in NSW and Victoria suggests a trend in the opposite direction stating that by the late nineteenth century the passions of sexuality were declared to be manifest even in the young. Such views, if widespread, were likely to have led to even greater repression of children´s emerging sexuality rather than less.

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn about this area of family life despite the lack of direct evidence. Firstly, available evidence from South Australian middle class families and indeed the paucity of evidence suggests that sex was a taboo subject in the home, with children kept ignorant of sexual matters for as long as possible. Secondly, such a family situation was likely to have produced fear and repression of children's emerging sexuality although the extent of this is impossible to measure. Finally, these conclusions support the assumption that the Victorian period was a sexually repressive era.

The reasons for the repression of children's sexuality are more difficult to discern. It certainly reflected the prevailing attitudes of the period. In the Victorian era the sexual drive in middle class women was denied and male sexuality was pervaded with guilt and double standards. In such a climate, the repression of children's sexuality is hardly surprising. Also, certain values associated with sexuality such as spontaneous passion, indulgence and pleasure and the draining qualities of the sex drive were the very antithesis of the values of order, control, self denial and thrift upheld so strongly by Victorian middle class society. Repression also reflects the changing views of the nature of the child and childhood. During the nineteenth century, the belief that the child was born wilful, wicked and in need of civilizing gave way to the

belief that the child was born innocent and was corrupted by the world around them. In the latter part of the nineteenth century this belief was so strong that it spearheaded the 'child saving movement' which lead members of the middle class to experiment with removing children from criminal or impoverished backgrounds and have them brought up in 'respectable' working class homes. The aim was to reform both the child and eventually society through this method. In South Australia this movement found expression in the Boarding Out Society, whose aims will be discussed later. The view of innocence and purity that became associated with children in Victorian society was likely to have encouraged in parents both a denial of emerging sexuality and a desire to preserve the innocence of children for as long as possible.

In conclusion, there is a marked contrast in the way Victorian middle class families dealt with the subjects of death and sex. Although both are fundamental aspects of human existence, Victorians accepted one but rejected the other. The stereotypical view that Victorians were obsessed with death and its rituals appears harsh. South Australian approaches to dealing with child death seem understandable and realistic considering the extent of the problem and the fact that it was an omnipresent feature of family life. However, the assumption that Victorian middle class society was remarkably sexually repressed appears to

be a realistic rather than an exaggerated appraisal. Certainly the South Australian evidence on approaches towards children's sexuality support such a view.

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(2) Report of the Central Board of Health, 1880-81, S.A.P.P.

(3) Report of the Central Board of Health, 1883-84, S.A.P.P.

(4) Report of the Central Board of Health, 1879-80 to 1882-83 S.A.P.P.

(5) Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1890-1899, S.A.P.P.

(6) Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1891, S.A.P.P.

(7) Early Recollections of Sir Joseph Verco, 1851-80, S.A.A., Acc no 1032, p6

(8) Memoirs of Mrs R.S. Casely, S.A. Collection Z Pamphlet, 994.2303 C337, p11

(9) Brunskill Letter, 1838-39, S.A.A., Acc no 581

(10) "Mrs Ellen Moger's Letter to her Parents" in Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia. No 4, 1978, p86-92, p87

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(12) Reminiscences of Mrs Sarah Conigrave, S.A.A., Acc no 1291, p8

(13) "A Boy's Recollections" in the Adelaide Advertiser, 27.12.1886, S.A.A., Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 1, p158

(14) Davenport Letters, S.A.A., PRG 40/173/1-27, letter 40/173/3

(15) Davenport, letter 40/173/13

(16) Thomas Diary, S.A.A., Acc no 1058, 1836-46, Entry 11.5.1841, p11

(17) Reynell Papers S.A.A., PRG 29/29,1828-1913 Biographical Notes, p61

(18) Brunskill Letter, section dated December 2nd

(19) Diaries of F.W. Coneybeer, S.A.A., PRG 22/1, 1881-1900, Vol 11, Entry Dated 25.12.1898

(20) Diaries of Emily Emma Churchward nee Padman, S.A.A., PRG 452/2/Vols 1-3, Vol 3 Entry Dated 14.11.1886

(21) Watts J.I.: Family Life in South Australia 53 years ago, Adelaide, Thomas & Co, 1890, p63-64

(22) "A Touching Incident at the Adelaide Children's Hospital" in The Adelaide Observer, 25.9.1880, micro pge no 554

(23) Churchward, Vol 3, Entry Dated 29.5.1881

(24) Davenport, letter 40/173/13

(25) Coneybeer, Vol 10, p1048

(26) Brunskill, 1838-39

(27) "Advice for Mothers" in The Adelaide Observer, 22.12.1888, p8

(28) Harrison J.F.C.: Early Victorian Britain 1832-51, Britain, Fontana, 1979, p146

(29) De Mause L: The Evolution of Childhood. New York, Psychohistory Press, 1974, p48

(30) Reminiscences of W.L. Beare, S.A.A., Newspaper Cuttings Vol 2, p40

(31) Gilbert D, Account of her Childhood at Pewsey Vale, S.A.A., PRG 266/34, p16

(32) Letters of Joanna Barr Smith to Robert Barr Smith, S.A.A., PRG 354/51, 1860-1894, letter undated

(33) Davenport, letter dated 25.11.1864

THOU SHALT & THOU SHALT NOT

The subject of children's moral and religious education during the Victorian era is almost as prone to stereotype assumptions as the subjects of death and sex. Images of sanctimonious, moralistic parents such as Charles Dickens' Mr Murdstone tend to influence thinking and sometimes cloud judgements. The popular image of the Victorian middle class family often includes sternly moral parents preaching rigidly defined values and religious precepts to their children. The image also includes moral lectures, didactic tales, solemn family prayers and strict Sabbath observance. Overall, such an image suggests that the Victorian era was a period when moral and religious values were absolutes, right and wrong was indisputable and there was little tolerance of any diversity or non conformity.

The problem of determining how much of these images was real and how much was illusion is compounded by twentieth century attitudes towards Victorian values. During the Victorian period Britain and the British Empire were at the height of their power and confidence. The superiority of Britain and everything British was unquestioned, at least within her dominions. Colonies such as South Australia were established during this confident period when settlers sought to transplant all things British in Australia. As the twentieth century has progressed such confidence has diminished, doubt and disillusion have set

in and Victorian values have been questioned and often rejected. However, the influence of the era has proved powerful and enduring, society is still struggling to change Victorian attitudes towards such subjects as women's rights and prostitution. Whilst this process continues it is difficult to view Victorian values and morals in a wholly objective manner. It is too easy to view them as totally rigid and repressive and almost monolithic in character.

Another problem arises when the past is judged by contemporary standards. One example of this approach is Lloyd De Mause's book The History of Childhood. De Mause appears to begin from the premise that child care and attitudes towards child rearing today are more humane and more enlightened than anything which has gone before. The evolution of childhood therefore becomes a whiggish progression of gradual progress and enlightenment. This approach also deals with child care as an isolated subject and tends to ignore the broader social context which influenced attitudes towards child rearing. When judged by contemporary standards the moral and religious education of Victorian middle class children can readily appear rigid, repressive and authoritarian. However, such a judgement may lack any understanding of the society in which such values were formed.

Bearing in mind these problems, the aim of this chapter is to study the moral and religious education of South Australian middle class children within the family. This involves studying what values parents taught to their children and how they were taught them. It also involves a consideration of certain themes such as the degree of consensus, continuity and diversity involved in the approaches towards children's moral training. Finally, it may provide some indication of how far the Victorian reality fits the stereotype.

Firstly, unlike today's society, the moral and religious education of children centred almost exclusively around the home, family and parents in particular. In Victorian society the supremacy and authority of the family in the matter of the socialization of children was unchallenged. Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century most middle class children attended school although some wealthier families such as the Gilberts and Stirlings still educated their daughters at home. Middle class children also attended church although usually as a part of a family group and much religious teaching still took place in the home in the form of family services or study of religious texts. Neither of these agencies, however, sought to supplant parents and family in the training of children. Also, nineteenth century children were not subject to the influence of outside value standards

* footnote insert

It is difficult to determine with any accuracy the numbers, sales and circulation of English child management advice manuals in colonial South Australia. It is clear, however, that publications such as Mrs Ellis's 'The Mothers of England their Influence and Responsibility' were available in nineteenth century South Australia. Also numerous pieces of English child care advice were regularly re-printed in South Australian publications such as 'The Adelaide Observer'. It is reasonable then to assume that South Australian parents had access to such material although the extent of circulation cannot be fully determined.

brought into the home by the mass media. Victorian middle class parents could readily control the degree and type of outside influences which were exerted over their children.

Any examiner of detailed South Australian middle class family papers cannot fail to note the numerous references to the moral and religious training of children. Advice material of the period emphasized the supreme role that parents should play in this area. Mothers in Council Quarterly told parents, in July 1899, that there was no escape for them from this duty because they formed the characters of their children.(1) This message was awesomely reinforced in the October edition of the same year when an article stated that the parent is a fellow worker with God in training the child, with the aim of making him as perfect as his Father in Heaven.(2)

Although both parents were considered responsible for the moral and spiritual welfare of their children, advice literature emphasized the special role of the mother in this area. As early as 1846, Mrs Ellis referred to mothers as the main spiritual examples. She said that it was the duty of the mother to exemplify by her whole life that she drank at a well of deeper interest in her religious experience.(3) The same message was still being echoed later in the century in an article published in The Adelaide Observer in 1895 entitled "A Mother's

* See footnote insert on facing pge.

Prerogative". It stated that mothers and mothers alone mould the men and women of the next generation and advised them to always consider the effect of their words and training on the characters of their children.(4) Private papers also suggest that mothers or mother substitutes often took the major responsibility for the moral and religious training of their children. Thea Davenport filled her letters to her sons with moral and spiritual dissertations.(5) William Gilbert in his correspondence with his parents referred all queries on his religious and spiritual life directly to his mother.(6) Dorothy Gilbert stated that her mother's companion and helper Miss Molero, or "Ummie" as Dorothy called her, was responsible for most of the children's religious upbringing teaching them the catechism, the collect, the gospels, the sacraments and some of the Epistles.(7)

According to Victorian attitudes mothers appeared to be the natural moral educators as well as the natural child rearers. Middle class Victorians viewed their new capitalist, materialistic society in two distinct and very different ways. On one hand the increased material wealth and the division of spheres and roles for men and women were generally regarded positively. However the economic world and some of its new values were regarded with some suspicion. They were sometimes depicted as morally corrupt or at least inferior to the "purer" or more "natural"

values of traditional rural society. Middle class women were isolated in their domestic haven and protected from the corrupting influences of the economic sphere. In this way, they came to be seen as purer and even morally superior to their husbands who were forced to deal in the corrupt economic world. This moral superiority, combined with their exclusive domestic role, gave them both the time and the appropriate values to act as the moral and religious educators of their children. It also added to the immense pressures on Victorian women to conform to an almost impossible image of a perfect and pure domestic angel.

When we investigate the types of religious and moral values taught to middle class children one is struck by the durability and acceptance of such values as obedience, respect for authority, cleanliness, order, industry, punctuality and knowing one's place. Mrs Ellis emphasized the importance of these values in her advice to mothers published in 1846.(8) In the later decades of the century Thea Davenport emphasized similar values in her letters to her sons(9) and Annie Duncan referred to the need to respect one's elders and never monopolize conversation.(10) It appears that middle class parents tended to stress the same values which were in turn accepted and internalized by their children. The same appears to have applied to religious beliefs and

observances. Pike mentions that even in the early days of settlement Sabbath observance was important in the colony. The gates and swings in children's playgrounds were padlocked each Saturday night.(11) In the 1850s Sarah Conigrave mentioned how her father was so concerned about his children's spiritual welfare that he arranged for a minister from Goolwa to come over to Hindmarsh Island to hold a Sunday morning service.(12) Such practices continued into the late nineteenth century, Dorothy Gilbert mentioned a daily family service held in their household(13) and Winifred Bird referred to regular Sunday school and church attendance.(14)

The overall impression of values taught to middle class children is one of certainty, consensus and continuity. It appears that every Victorian middle class family held the same or similar values, had a firm religious faith and dutifully educated their children in the same vein. There seems to have been nothing of the uncertainty, questioning and multiplicity of values that exists in today's society. Such consensus and consistency is hardly surprising in such a rigid and authoritarian society that existed in Victorian times. It was such a confident period with well defined roles which were supported by the values of obedience, respect for authority and knowing one's place. Other values such as cleanliness, order and punctuality were very important in defining middle class status.

Religious beliefs and practices also supported the hierarchy of society and acted as an important social forum for the middle classes. Church attendance was part of the respectability that was so essential to Victorian middle class society.

Although the evidence supports the view of moral consensus and consistency, R.S. Neale has pointed to some possible flaws in this picture. His theory suggests that there may have been more deviation and diversity in Victorian middle class society than is suggested by the direct evidence. He says that there were some small pockets of Bohemian diversity who quietly and privately broke some of the rules.(15) There is no evidence of such diversity in South Australian private papers. The differences that are apparent appear to have been only of degree. For example, the Davenports' correspondence is full of sanctimonious and pious preaching whilst the Gilbert family appear to have been more relaxed and less serious. However, it is worth noting that the Victorian notion of public respectability was so strong that it is unlikely that any really deviant views would have been expressed except in a very private forum.

It also seems that colonial children accepted and conformed to their parents' values. There is no evidence of any rebellion or rejection of parental values in South

Australian private papers. Conformity is also apparent in colonists' desire to maintain and transplant the values and standards originally formed in English middle class society. Pike quotes the views of one settler who in 1845 proudly proclaimed that English society, manners, language and habits had been successfully transferred to the colony. He was pleased with the absence of "colonial character" evident in neighbouring colonies.(16) Nineteenth century South Australians were clearly proud of the free system of settlement which tied them much closer to society in the mother country than to that in their sister colonies. Colonists were also concerned that values and standards did not drop in the new colonial generation. Early settlers such as John Barton Hack, despite the difficult financial and practical problems involved in establishing his property, appointed a schoolmaster to ensure his children's standards were maintained.(17) As the colony grew, schools such as St Peters College were established to ensure that English middle class morals and values were continued in the colony.

The apparent lack of any evidence showing rebellion or rejection of parental values lends support to the views of writers such as Roberts who conducted an oral history survey which covered English childhoods in the late nineteenth century. Roberts concluded that in the period before World War I, there is no evidence from respondents

that they rejected any of the basic ethical principles transmitted and received from their parents.(18) However, the same cautionary note needs to be made about conformity as consensus. Dissension or rebellion within Victorian middle class families was unlikely to have been discussed openly in any public forum. Stephen Mintz in his book on the Victorian middle class family, A Prison of Expectations, has suggested that tensions certainly existed between generations but they took a very private and internalized form. If such tensions existed in colonial middle class families we can only presume they were expressed either in strictest privacy or in obscure ways.

Despite apparent consensus in most values there were differences in the character traits thought suitable for male and female children. Biological differences tended to be extended to areas such as character and personality. The values to be promoted in girls were associated with the Victorian view of the female role and femininity in general. Women's interests were of secondary importance, they were expected to serve male interests and femininity was defined in terms of dependency, passivity, self sacrifice and service. Jan Kociumbas, writing of the Eastern states in the 1890's, suggests that this process was even more intense and destructive to the female image in Australian society. She says that the national colonial

values were active, aggressive and independent, values that were closely associated with life in the Australian bush. Females were not allowed to display such values, which were intrinsically male. Furthermore feminine values were seen as destructive of these bush values and hostile to them. This added to the negative image of females in Australian society.(19)

The evidence certainly supports the view that passivity, dependency and submission characterized the values thought suitable for females. The Adelaide Observer of 1889 advised girls to cultivate the art of pleasing others, the skill of making sacrifices and the need to always make allowances for the opinions, feelings and prejudices of others.(20) The Girls' Own Annual of 1880 is typical of the literature available for girls during that period. It included stories that stressed virtue and unselfishness, accounts of the lives of "worthy" feminine models such as Queen Victoria and articles on domestic accomplishments such as music, needlework and cookery.(21) Annie Duncan describes in her diary the "ladylike" traits which were encouraged in her sister and herself. Much attention was paid to their deportment, the way they sat and entered a room. They were taught to always be orderly and proper and never to make any unnecessary noise.(22)

By contrast boys were encouraged to develop assertive, active and competitive traits. Kociumbas mentions that writers in the late nineteenth century suggested that a failure to permit a certain amount of devilry in boyhood was to repress the manly qualities of chauvinistic energy in the growing male. Such sentiments were certainly echoed in an article in The Adelaide Observer of 1891. It advised mothers that boys were none the worse for possessing a little swagger and self assertiveness and suggested they allow boys a little elbow room and not attempt to break their temper.(23) This type of advice would never have been applied to girls, terms such as swagger, and self assertiveness were considered totally inappropriate for females. Manliness, referred to earlier when discussing children's play, was a combination of Christian and macho ethics which became immortalized in literature such as Tom Brown's School Days. Advice literature dealing with the rearing of boys in the late nineteenth century reflected this concept. An article in The Adelaide Observer of 1882 summarized the two sides of manliness. It acknowledged that boys would be active, noisy and impetuous but stressed they should also be trained to respect womanhood.(24) Such attitudes helped to further the view that females were weaker than males both in mind and body and therefore in need of protection.

The restrictive nature of such narrowly defined sex roles are obvious. Middle class Victorian women were expected to be passive, submissive and non competitive. They were denied entry into the economic world and confined to an exclusively domestic role. Even their sexuality began to be denied. In contrast, middle class men were trapped in their competitive, macho image. Any expressions of sentiment or emotion could be regarded as unmanly. Scientific and religious opinion supported such views by suggesting that males and females were biologicly, psychologically and spiritually suited to different roles. It is cynical but significant to add that, of course, all the scientists and ministers of religion were male. Only in the late nineteenth century did individuals really begin to seriously challenge middle class society's restrictive and repressive definition of sex roles.

The late nineteenth century, as we have seen in other chapters was a period which differed from the earlier decades of the Victorian era. In the late nineteenth century we can begin to identify the seeds of change in family life and child rearing. Although religious faith and the core of moral and spiritual values remained unchallenged, evidence of the process of questioning some attitudes is apparent. One of these areas was the attitudes towards the rearing of female children.

There is no evidence of radical shifts in attitudes but by the late nineteenth century some advice available to parents was suggesting that middle class parents prepare their daughters for a limited period of independence. An article in The Adelaide Observer 1889 advised mothers to encourage independence in their daughters. It suggested that girls should not be encouraged to focus on marriage as their only goal, and stated that a thorough knowledge of some business, trade or calling would ensure a girl's independence on all occasions.(25) Such advice was unlikely to have been offered in the mid decades of the century. Some individuals were also expressing dissatisfaction with the emphasis on a domestic role. Winifred Bird, a girl in her early teens, writing in her diary in the 1890s expressed frustration with her domestic duties. She said: "I wish we had no holidays instead of five weeks, because I'll have to work and I would rather stew at lessons than do dirty housework."(26) This type of complaint, although perhaps not typical, does represent girls' growing disenchantment with a purely domestic role and an interest in broader activities which had previously only been open to their brothers.

Such changes resulted from altered circumstances as well as dissatisfaction. Late nineteenth century middle class society was concerned about the inequality in the numbers of eligible males to females and a growing reluctance of

men to marry young or in some cases at all. Declining economic conditions were also affecting middle class families and making it more difficult for them to maintain daughters at home. It was also becoming more apparent that females were dissatisfied with their domestic role. Such dissatisfaction took both an active and passive form. In the late nineteenth century the "women's disease" referred to in the chapter on family relationships,was becoming more and more common. Although this condition may have been associated with post natal depression it was also inevitably connected with the boredom and lack of variety in womens daily lives. Also, the feminist movement was growing and allowing more middle class women a forum for criticism and an opportunity to involve themselves in public life. The growth of the new woman demanded new values.

A final significant change that can be observed in the late nineteenth century was the rising importance of middle class standards and values. Middle class familial values were seen as superior and such attitudes led to criticism of other strata in society particularly the lower classes. Child care experts such as De Sisca writing in 1892 warned of the reckless and injudicious marriages of people unfit to be parents. He stressed that being a parent should be a privilege that involved self denial and the possession of values such as obedience and self

control.(27) Such statements were clearly intended to promote values which were important to the middle classes and their aims. Mothers in Council Quarterly in 1899 went further than De Sisca and included a scathingly critical article on lower class parents. It stated that evil results from parents who regard children as a curse rather than a blessing. It complained about lower class parents who declare that their children are unmanageable and said that this is because they were never taught the elementary lessons of obedience and self control or any discipline or regularity of habits.(28) Such criticisms were part of a broader middle class movement designed to spread a middle class concept of family life to the lower classes. This movement will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn about the moral and religious training of middle class children. Firstly, the family and the home were indisputably the centre of children's education in these areas. Secondly, there was a high degree of certainty about the moral and spiritual values thought suitable for middle class children. As in other areas of middle class life there was little room for doubt or diversity. Thirdly, in this area of family life, as in others, the late decades of the nineteenth century can be identified as a period of change and upheaval which contrasts with the earlier decades of the Victorian era. Finally, and hopefully, the evidence on

these issues gives us a greater understanding of the reality of Victorian middle class family life and the social context in which that reality was formed.

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(2)Mothers in Council Quarterly. Vol IX, no 36, Oct 1899, p236

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(4)"A Mothers Prerogative" in The Adelaide Observer. 11.5.1895, p40

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(16)Pike, 1957, p496

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(22)Duncan, Vol 1, p170-171

(23)"A Boy's Temper" in The Adelaide Observer, 9.5.1891, p8

(24)"About Boys" in The Adelaide Observer,17.6.1882, p42

(25)"Make Your Daughters Independent" in The Adelaide Observer, 16.2.1889, p8

(26)Bird, 1891-1892

(27)Sisca N. de M.D.: Management of Children in Health and Disease, Melbourne, Sydney & Adelaide, George Robertson & Co,1892

(28)Mothers in Council Quarterly, Oct 1899, p221-222

CARE AND CONTROL

Discipline and nurture in the Victorian middle class family are associated with two opposing images of child rearing. Discipline is associated with a repressive image that emphasizes the picture of the stern, remote and authoritarian Victorian parents and submissive, obedient children. It stresses the importance of duty and respect rather than love and affection. In contrast, nurture is associated with close and intimate family life based upon loving relationships. Nurture is epitomized in the picture of the cosy Victorian family gathered around a blazing fire sharing hugs, kisses, games and close relationships found in the literature of the period. It was this feature of Victorian middle class family which Lawrence Stone described as "explosive intimacy"(1) The purpose of this chapter is to examine how South Australian middle class families disciplined and nurtured their children and how they balanced these opposing functions of child rearing.

Evidence from advice literature on discipline in families stresses the importance of the concept of obedience to authority. Mrs Ellis advised parents in 1846 that children should never be allowed to call into question the authority of those under whose care they were placed. In this way, she said, the child will grow up without the least idea that obedience is a hardship and will habitually submit to rightful

authority.(2) Child care advice continued to stress the same theme in the later decades of the century with little change in emphasis. De Sisca writing in 1892 stated that parents should not be weak, and warned that a lack of parental authority accounted for much of the lawlessness afflicting the community. He emphasized the need for obedience, control and self restraint otherwise children's health and character would be destroyed.(3) An article in the The Adelaide Observer of 1894, whilst acknowledging that parents should forgive children readily, also stressed that they must ensure that they are obeyed.(4) By the late nineteenth century obedience appears to have become a symbol of middle class status as well as an important concept in child rearing. Middle class evaluations of poor and working families include frequent criticisms of poorer parents for failing to ensure their children's obedience, or for allowing them to get out of control.

Such evidence is contrary to the suggestion by some authors that the colonial environment led to a lack of discipline and a defiance of authority. Twopeny, writing in 1883 stated that nine out of ten colonial children took advantage of their over indulgent parents and gradually as the child grew older disobedience passed into disrespect and want of respect into want of affection.(5) It should be noted, however that Twopeny may have interpreted

physical freedom or pioneering conditions as a breakdown in authority. He may also have been comparing colonial families with the upper middle class English family who led a far more regulated, ordered and somewhat restricted life. A similar theme has been echoed by more recent writers of Australian family history. Brown, writing in 1957 stated that there was a defiant and ambivalent attitude to authority that stemmed from rebellious attitudes of some of the main groups of early migrants to Australia.(6)

The South Australian evidence from private papers suggests that colonial children enjoyed a considerable amount of physical freedom away from direct adult supervision but there is no suggestion that this involved any defiance of parental authority. Sir Joseph Verco described boys playing in the streets of Adelaide free from adult interference(7) and Thorburn Brailsford Robertson found it odd that whilst in England he was expected not to walk unaccompanied, in South Australia he was accustomed to walking alone on the beach at Glenelg or wandering the hills at Clare and Callington.(8) Private papers, however, contain no details of rejection of parental values or defiance of authority and there seems to be no evidence to support the conclusions drawn by Twopeny and Brown. On the contrary, a respectful attitude to parental wishes even in adolescents or young adults is apparent. Annie Duncan,

writing in the late nineteenth century, referred to her brother wishing to leave the navy because he was homesick and ill. His father sternly rejected the idea stating that it showed a "want of fixity of purpose". The young man accepted his father's dictate, apparently without questioning his parent's authority to direct his choice of career.(9)

In South Australia the fact that middle class children generally accepted their parents' authority may be explained by their class status and the special nature of the colony's settlement. Brown suggests that an ambivalent attitude to authority stemmed from the rebellious attitudes of the main groups of early settlers. Presumably, Brown is referring to convicts or perhaps some ethnic groups such as the Irish who had many reasons to resent authority in the colonies. The South Australian middle classes, however, were free settlers, often of some means, with a tradition of being supportive rather than antagonistic to authority. They certainly sought to establish a colony based upon some new concepts such as no convict labour and no established church but this did not include any rejection of British heritage. Brown and Twopeny could have been influenced by evidence drawn exclusively from eastern states sources. There has been a tendency in Australian history to apply such conclusions to the whole of Australia without properly examining the different experiences and settlement patterns of other

areas of the continent. Some writers may also have been unduly influenced by the "bush" characterization attributed to Australians and promoted by writers such as Russel Ward. This theory suggests that Australia's national character sprang from "bush" people and a defiance of authority has been depicted as an important part of their personality.

South Australian evidence from advice material and private records supports the view that the concept of obedience was an important familial value throughout the period of study. Children were taught and were expected to obey their parents' wishes. These findings support the views of writers such as Calder and Walvin, English historians whose field of study has been the Victorian family. Their respective books, The Victorian Home (10) and A Child's World. A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914 (11) have commented on the strength and the enduring quality of the concept of obedience to authority in the Victorian middle class family. The importance of such a concept is hardly surprising when we consider the structure of Victorian society, which was hierarchical and authoritarian, with firm patterns of dominance and submission. These patterns were defined and followed in most strata of Victorian society and the family was the main socializing environment for children entering that society. Children learned quickly that their father was

the head of the household, the symbol of patriarchal authority who must be obeyed without question. Mother deferred to and obeyed her husband and children were required to obey her as well as their father. Servants occupied the base of this structure and children soon became aware of the paternalism and distance needed to keep servants in their place. Obedience to authority was then an essential factor in maintaining the family structure and the broader Victorian society.

When enforcing their children's obedience, South Australian parents obviously had to deal with minor lapses and the whole question of punishment. Some families appear to have been quite tolerant of their children's misdemeanours. Joanna Barr Smith commented in her letters about her husband's soft approach towards their children's discipline. She described him as the softest most kind hearted Daddy long legs in the world. She also admitted frankly that she and her husband had never been accustomed to very well behaved children.(12) The Gilbert family also appeared to have been tolerant of minor misdemeanours. Dorothy Gilbert referred to children's punishment in her family which included fairly mild measures such as standing in the corner, sitting in a chair until they apologized or at worst being sent to bed early. She stated that they never received corporal punishment and commented that her father considered the use of such punishment as an admission of parental failure.(13) Both William Gilbert

and Walter Reynell complained about the use of caning at their schools.(14) Their horror at this practice suggests they were not accustomed to corporal punishment at home. Such attitudes were not universal, not all parents were as tolerant as the Barr Smiths or shared the Gilberts' views on corporal punishment. Mrs S. Pizey in her reminiscences, stated that she and her siblings were severely slapped for soiling their gloves and pelisses.(15) It is clear that whilst all middle class parents punished children's disobedience they differed in their methods of doing so.

The differences in attitude towards appropriate punishments for children was affected by the type of family as well as the individual preference. The Barr Smiths and the Gilberts were wealthy, well educated middle class families leading comfortable established lives. Their homes were large, with servants to assist with domestic duties including child care. If children became tiresome or difficult, they could be handed over to the care of a nursegirl or a governess. Poorer middle class families experienced a less comfortable existence. A more limited education combined with financial or pioneering hardships, a lack of servants and the full time responsibility for the care of children would certainly have led to more stress and less tolerance in the handling of disobedience.

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, there is some evidence of a softening of attitudes towards the disciplining of children. Child care advice, for example, became increasingly critical of the use of corporal punishment. An article in The Adelaide Observer, May 1887 suggested only the limited use of such punishment. It stated that if obedience could be secured without resorting to blows, parents should never whip children. It also said that there was no need to use corporal punishment at all after the child reached five or six years old.(16) It is interesting to note that whilst this article represents a softer attitude towards punishment, the concept of ensuring obedience is still of paramount importance. Another article published in 1899 suggested the substitution of moral influence for corporal punishment and stated that "to spare the rod is no longer considered spoiling the child".(17) Other evidence of a softening of attitudes towards discipline is found in articles urging a greater tolerance for children's individuality and natural high spirits. An article in The Adelaide Observer of 1896 made the following statement: "The exuberant spirits of childhood often lead to unexpected occurences; yet there is no wickedness in these, and they are not blameworthy. Mischances also, which are the result of accident, are unfortunate but the children to whom they occur are not naughty; they are not subjects for scolding."(18) By 1899 The Adelaide Observer

included an article which stated bluntly that the days when children should be seen and not heard were over.(19) Mothers in Council Quarterly. in the same year warned parents against too much censure, criticism, nagging and fault finding (20)

The evidence from South Australian papers suggests that whilst the concept of obedience to authority remained constant and strong throughout the nineteenth century, the methods of ensuring that obedience did soften in the later decades. We should, however, be cautious regarding the limited nature of the printed advice material. It may or may not have reflected what was happening in middle class families. It cannot be presumed that large numbers of middle class parents in the colony were abandoning corporal punishment or allowing their children to freely express their natural spirits. However, advice material did represent the vanguard of public opinion which, in the late nineteenth century, was moving away from harsh discipline to an acknowledgement of children's individuality and a growing tolerance of behaviour which would have been unacceptable in the "little adults" of earlier decades.

The opposing side of disciplining and training children is caring, loving and nurturing them. Private South Australian middle class family papers contain many

references to parental pride in their children, and close and affectionate family relationships. John Barton Hack's financial and pioneering difficulties in the early days of settlement did not appear to diminish his delight in his growing family. He spoke proudly of expecting his eighth child in a few weeks and felt that a finer family could not be seen.(21) The Coneybeer papers are another example of a loving and caring father who was actively involved in the rearing of his children.(22) Sir Joseph Verco mentioned, in his recollections of the mid nineteenth century, a regular close and intimate family scene in his home. On Saturday nights after bathing, the Verco children would sit on their father's and mother's knees in front of the dining room fire and sing songs before being carried pick a back up the stairs to bed.(23) Helen Madder Tinline was anxious and upset when she had to leave her youngest child temporarily in the care of an aunt and uncle. Helen described how she peeped in at the door to check that her child was all right before leaving.(24) Apart from these numerous references there is a suggestion in Margaret May's diary that uncaring parents were disapproved of. Miss May referred to a fellow colonist whom she felt did not show a proper level of affection for his children. She stated that from some cause or other he was tired of his dear children and did not appear to have an atom of love in him.(25)

Whilst not all parents would have been as caring and affectionate as those quoted, the evidence does suggest that in colonial middle class families children were considered a blessing rather than a curse. This suggestion is reinforced by middle class criticism of poorer parents lack of appreciation or interest in their children, a subject which will be discussed more fully in a later chapter. Such criticism ignored the economic reality that in a poor family a new arrival meant another mouth to feed, and such a prospect was not always a cause for joy. In contrast, middle class families were assured of economic survival, with their women free to both welcome and concentrate on child rearing once the hazardous pregnancy and birth were over. Falling child mortality rates in the later decades of the century also aided the strengthening of close family bonds. Parents could be more confident than ever before that most of their children would survive their childhood years. The image of relaxed, close and intimate family relationships contrasts with some stereotyped pictures of the Victorian middle class family. Such pictures, common in popular literature of the time, emphasize the stern, remote qualities of life with parents and children leading separate domestic lives and authoritarian fathers who encouraged emotions of duty, respect or even fear in their children. Calder, when examining this stereotype in the English Victorian middle class family, came to the conclusion that it applied to

the upper middle classes rather than the lower. Calder states that: "the fewer the servants the more likely the parents were to participate in the activities of their children, and so inevitably the picture of the lively and affectionate family tends to belong to the lower middle class or to the freer atmosphere of rural surroundings."(26)

South Australian evidence supports Calder's conclusions because colonial middle class families were almost all of the type identified by Calder as the lower middle class Victorian family. Servants in the colony were expensive and scarce and only the wealthiest families were able to hand over all child rearing and supervision to paid help. Parents were actively and extensively involved in the rearing of their children allowing, no doubt, for close and affectionate relationships to develop. The rural, pioneering life in the colony meant that both parents and children spent most of their days engaged in the same family enterprise sharing tasks, hardships and benefits. They also shared isolation, both geographic and familial, cut off from extended family ties left back in Britain. These conditions undoubtedly led to closer and more intimate "nuclear" family bonding.

As well as developing close and intimate relationships, middle class parents were also concerned with influencing the physical and emotional development of their children. One of the major concerns in this area appears to have been diet, a subject which seems to have concerned child care experts throughout the decades of the Victorian era. Mrs Ellis, in 1846, gave parents some typical mid Victorian advice on children's diet. She emphasized plain food, given at regular intervals with nothing in between meals and very few treats.(27) This attitude became somewhat modified and softened by the later decades of the nineteenth century. An article published in The Adelaide Observer in 1880 suggested that it was quite acceptable to pamper children occasionally with food, just as adults occasionally pampered themselves.(28) A later article, published in 1894, warned parents about being too rigid in their approach to children's diet. It advised parents not to force children to eat even wholesome food they disliked. It also suggested that treats such as biscuits, cake or sweets should not be eliminated altogether from children's diets.(29)

Regularity is another important theme evident in advice on the physical care of children. In 1846, Mrs Ellis stressed the importance of regularity and moderation in children's diet and exercise.(30) De Sisca followed the same theme in 1892, emphasizing the need for moderation and regular

habits. He advised regular bathing, regular meal times and regular bedtimes as part of a proper routine for children.(31)

The major theme that runs through all the advice on the physical care of middle class children is that of control. Middle class parents were being encouraged to have more control over their children's health and growth through monitoring aspects of their life such as diet, exercise and periods of sleep. This theme is evident in other areas of Victorian middle class child rearing. The chapter on moral and religious education discussed how parents sought to actively form their children's characters and there have been many references to middle class criticisms of working class parents who did not have sufficient control over their children. It seems that as the child became more valued as both the inheritor of a new industrial age and as a unique and special individual in its own right, society became more and more reluctant to leave any aspect of the child's development to chance. Suddenly, great potential for change, development and growth was seen as embodied in children, so their environment had to be moulded in order to fulfil that potential. A similar theme is apparent in the child saving movement of the late nineteenth century, which will be discussed later in this thesis. If the environment for deprived and criminal children could be changed and controlled then they would

grow into adults who would serve rather than disrupt society. Control, order and regularity were certainly very acceptable concepts to Victorian middle class society. Almost all aspects of the society were highly regulated and ordered and parents would have welcomed the view that their children's daily lives and physical development could be made to fit a similar pattern.

The one cautionary note in the increasing control over children's physical development was in the area of illness. Throughout the Victorian period parents remained unable to control their children's vulnerability to serious and potentially fatal illnesses. Very little was known about either the causes, spread or prevention of disease, even in the later decades of the century. In the later period child mortality rates certainly began to fall, but children remained at the mercy of epidemic diseases. Private papers contain numerous details of parents coping with the problems of nursing their children through long and debilitating illnesses. They were usually in the unenviable position of alleviating the symptoms but having little control over the final outcome. Many of these illnesses were the type that today's parents are able to treat with a few days in bed and a course of antibiotics or avoid with immunization. An example of this process is found in the Churchward diaries. One of the Churchward children was suffering from bronchitis, hardly

a life threatening illness for today's children. The Churchward parents did all they could for their child but were reduced to anguish because they feared she would die. (32)

A new development occurred in advice on the care of children in the late nineteenth century. In the mid decades of the century advisers such as Mrs Ellis dealt mainly with the physical and moral care of children. They tended to be presented as little pieces of clay that could be moulded and fitted into shape with little concern for the child in question. By the late nineteenth century, more and more articles began to deal with children as individuals and were concerned with their emotional as well as their physical development. An article, published in 1895 advised parents to judge and treat each of their children as individuals.(33) Another article in 1896 allowed for the differences in children's emotions and discussed the special care needed for the precocious and imaginative child.(34) An article published in 1898 and addressed to mothers stated that they should strive to make their children's childhood the merriest and happiest period of their lives. They should, it stated, study the individual character of each of their little ones and allow them a judicious amount of freedom both in thought and action in which to develop and expand themselves. It warned mothers that in nine cases out of ten cramped

children make cramped men and women with narrow aims and distorted views of humanity.(35)

This development illustrates the early beginnings of three modern themes. Firstly such advice illustrates the early growth of psychology and its influence on child care. Experts in this area began, late last century, to emphasize the importance of the mind, feelings and emotions of the child and to discuss parents' role in guiding their children's emotional development. This is an area which has continued to increase in importance in this century. Secondly, it illustrates the early growth of individualism, another important trend in modern society. By emphasizing children's individuality it reflected capitalist values which stressed the needs, wants and rights of the individual, even at the expense of society. Finally, it marked another step in the growth of parental responsibility, where parents, particularly mothers, became increasingly responsible for their children's development and the type of adult they would ultimately become.

In conclusion it is clear that South Australian parents fulfilled both functions of care and control in their child rearing. The concepts of obedience and control remained important in this process throughout the century but the means of achieving them modified and softened.

There was a move from the harsher discipline of the mid nineteenth century to a greater emphasis on caring, nurturing and understanding the child by the later decades of the period. Colonial parents seem to have always valued their children, but by the late nineteenth century love and affection occupied the same level of importance as discipline.

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(6) Brown S: "Changing Functions of the Australian Family" in Marriage and the Family in Australia. A P Elkin ed, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1957, p90

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(15) Pizey S, "Memories of 1858, a childhood in North Adelaide", SAA Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 2, p74

(16) "The Punishment of Children" in The Adelaide Observer, 21.5.1887 p41

(17) "Nursery Discipline" in The Adelaide Observer, 25.3.1899, p36

(18) "Be Just to Children" in The Adelaide Observer, 22.8.1896, p40

(19) "Children's Questions" in The Adelaide Observer, 4.2.1899, p36

(20) Mothers in Council Quarterly, Vol IX, No 35, 1899, p140

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(22) Coneybeer F.W, Diaries, SAA PRG 22/1, 1881-1900

(23) Verco J, p89-90

(24) Tinline Letters, SAA PRG 21/1/Item 19 letter dated 15.12.1864

(25) May Margaret Diary & Letters, SAA PRG 131, 1843-1845, section dated 6.10.1844

(26) Calder, 1977, p89-90

(27) Ellis Mrs, 1846, p228-229

(28) "Children's Feeding" in The Adelaide Observer.
24.1.1880, micro no 155
(29) "Forcing Children to Eat" in The Adelaide Observer.
28.7.1894, p40
(30) Ellis Mrs, 1846, p229
(31) Sisca, 1892, Chaps 4,5,6,& 7
(32) Churchward E.E, Diaries, SAA PRG 452/2/Vols 1-3,
Vol 3 entry dated 29.5.1881
(33) "An Injustice to Children" in The Adelaide Observer.
11.5.1895, p40
(34) "Restless Children" in The Adelaide Observer.
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(35) "Mothers Please Remember" in The Adelaide Observer.
18.6.1898, p40

THE COLONIAL CHILD

Earlier chapters of this thesis have referred to the effects of colonial conditions on many areas of children's lives. This chapter will concentrate exclusively upon the colonial environment and its effect upon the lives of middle class children. Firstly, did life in colonial South Australia create a new and unique environment for middle class children and if so what were the characteristics of that environment? Secondly, did that environment produce a unique child with a distinctly colonial personality ?

The first part of the first question can be answered simply and readily. The move to South Australia in the nineteenth century for middle class children must have represented an upheaval comparable only to a family migrating to the moon today. The first step in the journey was a long sea voyage, for many children probably the first sea voyage they had ever taken. The voyage in cramped, sometimes primitive conditions was no doubt strange, exciting and certainly sometimes dangerous. Children undertaking the voyage experienced the excitement of shipboard life and visits to foreign ports combined with restrictions, deprivations and in some cases the loss of friends or members of their own family. The length of the voyage alone meant a complete disruption of children's normal routine. The arrival in the colony meant adapting

to a new climate and a rural pioneering environment which lacked many of the things considered essential to middle class existence in the comparatively civilized environment of suburban or rural England. In the early years of settlement, in particular, properties had to be located and fenced, families had to live in makeshift dwellings whilst their houses were built and all this often had to be achieved without the assistance of servants or hired labour. There is no doubt that middle class families coming to South Australia in the nineteenth century faced adaptation to a new and radically different environment.

What were the characteristics then of this new environment, particularly those that affected children? Some children obviously revelled in a measure of new found freedom. Sarah Conigrave, describing life on Hindmarsh Island in the 1850s summed up what must have been the view of many colonial children. She stated that "the wild life suited us children splendidly "no schools to bother us, black piccaninnies to play with, we enjoyed life to the full."(1) The open spaces, good climate and the freedom to enjoy them must have proved irresistible, particularly to middle class children who had been brought up in the wet, cold and controlled environment of suburban England. J Watts, writing in 1890, of life half a century earlier described how the children spent so much time in the water at Glenelg that they became almost amphibious. One little girl could never be caught to be dressed and would

tear naked along the beach like a wild animal.(2) Although life became more settled along English lines in the later decades of the century colonial middle class society was never as rigid as its English counterpart and the space and climate in South Australia still allowed children much enjoyment. Even wealthier middle class families with a full complement of staff and servants allowed their children to romp and roam through their property with few restrictions on their freedom.

Another aspect of the colonial environment that clearly delighted children was the flora and fauna. Middle class children who had been reared in English cities had little exposure to wild animals except in a zoo and even those brought up in rural England would have been enchanted with the completely new types of plants and animals found in South Australia. A settler, remembering his boyhood in the Unley area, recalled his wonder at the lorikeets swarming on the blossom of the gum trees. He was amazed at being able to actually touch the birds on lower branches.(3) Shortly after arriving in South Australia young John Cox Gawler wrote to his grandmother about his collection of native fauna which included a cockatoo, parakeets, a falcon, an owl, an emu, an opossum and what he described as a laughing jackass.(4) The same settler from Unley also recalled a trick played on a new immigrant by one of his brothers, using some local flora. The immigrant was handed

what he thought was a cherry but when he bit into it he found it was a cherry tomato, a fruit unknown in England.(5) Local fauna also provided a new dietary experience for some children. Mary Thomas referred to an unusual diet of local fauna which the family ate during their early days of settlement at Holdfast Bay in 1837. It included parrots, emu, crane, wallaby, bandicoot and kangaroo tail.(6)

As well as new and unusual plants and animals, children were also fascinated by the new types of people they encountered. Probably the most unusual to English children's eyes were the Aborigines. Annie Duncan was fascinated with the remaining Aborigines of the Adelaide tribe who camped at Port Adelaide in their "wurlies" with their dogs and piccanninies.(7) Middle class parents were less delighted with and less tolerant of Aboriginal people. Their attitudes depended on how willing Aborigines were to conform to white standards. Mary Thomas, for example was delighted when she saw a large number of Aboriginal children attending Trinity Church on one Sunday morning in 1846.(8) Margaret May, however, was less impressed with an Aboriginal girl she took into her home to civilize and educate. Margaret May complained that the child could not understand that one person was in the least above another and stated that "she was very quick and when she liked could do very nicely, but she seldom

did like, and then she was as slow and awkward as possible."(9) Clearly, Margaret May found the white man's burden to be a very heavy one indeed! The children of Adelaide also encountered other types of new people. Sir Joseph Verco mentioned the Chinese who camped on an open space of ground in Morphett Street in the 1850s. He commented that people said "after they had gone there was a phenomenal dearth of cats in the neighbourhood". The Verco boys however, were intrigued with the "horde of queerly dressed Orientals with their baskets and boxes swinging from the ends of their long staves balanced on their shoulders, pass by at their chinaman's trot with their pigtails hanging down their backs".(10) Sir Joseph Verco also mentioned another unusual identity who fascinated the boys of Adelaide. He was an Afghan hawker named Asinelli who drove through the streets of Adelaide in a small two wheeled vehicle drawn by a goat. Sir Joseph stated that "boys would walk from Adelaide on Sundays to the Port to see the little coloured man and have some fun with him. He would not permit any swearing or unsavoury talk near his home. He would tell the boys that " 'it was not nice, it was not good.' "(11).

Children clearly delighted in the pleasures of their new colonial environment. The new experiences were invigorating and refreshing and free from the anxieties experienced by their parents. Although children were

expected to work on family properties, particularly in the early years of settlement, they were free from the worries associated with pioneering. Unlike their parents they were free to enjoy the advantages of the environment without the concerns of taming that environment to grow European crops in order to ensure economic survival. They also enjoyed the sights of new people without the compulsion to subdue and civilize the indigenous population. The delights of pioneering must have been more real to middle class children than to their parents.

Colonial life, however, was not entirely composed of delightful experiences, even for children. Evidence shows that children shared the hardships and difficulties of pioneering as well as its delights. One of the problems of settling in South Australia both for children and parents were the difficulties associated with the hot summers. Mrs. S. Pizey in her reminiscences described conditions in Adelaide in the 1850s during summer. She stated that before ice cream or cool drink shops, waterbags, ice chests or street fountains, "there were no means of alleviating heatwaves. For many nights we did not attempt to sleep indoors, but lay on cork mattresses and air pillows on the footpaths, or wandered in the garden eating fruit and drinking warm water and battling with swarms of mosquitoes. We often walked to the home of our grandfather, who lived where the Children's Hospital now

is, at all hours of the night for a cool drink out of his well. By the end of the summer we were white faced and limp."(12). Annie Duncan also recalled summer nights at Port Adelaide in the 1850s with the heat and mosquitoes and "no such thing as ice to be had."(13)

The heat along with primitive sanitation, water shortages and the general dangers of pioneering created special problems for children.Apart from the high child mortality rates discussed in an earlier chapter children also had to cope with the problems resulting from poor drainage and sewer systems. John Barton Hack, in a letter to his mother written in 1840, stated that they had decided no longer to risk their children in a crowded part of the town without sewer or drainage but to retreat into the country.(14) Sir Joseph Verco also described conditions in Adelaide in the mid nineteenth century when the Board of Health was not particularly vigorous, and did not exercise control over sanitation. He stated that there was no analysis of drinking water or any regulations respecting the watershed of the Torrens or the area it drained. At that time, in fact the Torrens was a common sewer and many families and their children contracted typhoid which was often called Colonial fever.(15) Life in the bush also had its own dangers for children, particularly young children who were likely to wander off and get lost. Mary Boothby mentioned a neighbour's child who became lost in the bush and

despite extensive searches was never found. Mary appears to have been wiser and less prejudiced than some other settlers, because after this incident she put her own son in the hands of an intelligent black boy whose duties were to follow him and instruct him in bush arts and crafts.(16)

Middle class children and their families also had to cope with the general hardships of pioneering as well as the dangers. Mrs John Meier described the experiences of her family and herself when they first arrived in the colony in 1884. The family had to travel and find their block of land at Denial Bay on the west coast. They had to cut a track through the scrub with axes and the children had to clear the track whilst their parents cut the mallee down.(17) Sarah Brunskill described the conditions that middle class families lived under in South Australia in 1839, conditions quite different from those left behind in England. The Brunskills lived in a house 28 feet long and 10 feet wide with a piece of green baize at one end and nothing at the other. The family lived in one part of the house and their servants in the other.(18) Francis and Caroline Clark described conditions for families in Adelaide in 1850 in a letter to their relatives back in England. They stated that "the practice of making shift is almost universal, even in public buildings you may have a nail driven into a door to serve instead of a handle, or a

sash propped up with a bit of wood and in the houses the absence of conveniences is extraordinary to us newcomers. No one has closets or cupboards, few have pantries and a sink in a back kitchen is "an English luxury". Of course there are no drains anywhere."(19) The reactions of the Clark relatives to these revelations is not recorded, but there is no doubt that such primitive conditions came as a shock to some middle class settlers.

Although children shared the hardships of colonial life and were certainly directly affected by them, there is little record of their reactions. Whilst some hardships such as the problems of the hot weather would have been uncomfortable for children, other hardships like the primitive conditions may have been far more depressing for adults. To some middle class children, at least, pioneering must have been an exciting adventure which freed them from the comparatively dull and predictable round of English middle class life.

Conditions in the early years of settlement were also something of a levelling experience for middle class children as well as their parents. By the later decades of the century South Australian society became more divided along traditional class lines. Catherine Spence commented on the early years of settlement and the changes that occurred over the nineteenth century. She said that in the

early years "there was very little difference in the actual circumstances of different classes - some had property and some had none, but property was unsaleable for money and barter only exchanged one unsaleable article for another. Nobody employed hired labour who could possibly do the work himself, and every one had to turn his or her hand to a great deal of miscellaneous work, most of which would be called menial and degrading in an older community, where large classes have been from time immemorial set apart for drudgery, and where other classes would rather sacrifice anything than take a part of it.". However, by 1878 Catherine Spence was able to comment that "it is gratifying to see that the old dwellers in tents and in four roomed cottages have now handsome mansions and can ride in easy carriages."(20) The egalitarian spirit of the early decades may well have been a liberating experience for middle class children. Whilst their parents concentrated upon basic survival and the recreation of English life in the colony children could enjoy the lack of supervision and adult control.

It appears clear that colonial children experienced both the advantages and disadvantages of a unique environment in their new country. Writers have suggested that this unique environment produced a colonial child with a distinctly colonial personality. Burns and Goodnow in their book Children and Families in Australia state that

the freedom and outdoor life experienced in the Australian colonies produced independence, self reliance and high valuation of competence and practical skills in children. They go on to note, however, that middle class parents observed and feared the declining standards of education and manners in their children.(21)
Brian Gandevia also notes the combination of self confidence and arrogance in colonial youth, particularly boys. He quotes Frank Fowler writing in 1859 who said, "The Australian boy is a slim, hard eyed, olive complexioned young rascal fond of cricket and chuck penny and systematically insolent to all servant girls, policemen and new chums.(22) M.S. Brown also refers to the undisciplined cocksureness of Australian youth and states that nineteenth century observers noted that family discipline was not nearly so rigorously maintained in Australian as in British families.(23)

These writers have pointed to the two sides of the colonial child's personality. One side incorporates self confidence, independence and an overall competence in many areas, which enabled the child to deal with a variety of lifestyles and situations. Such characteristics were obviously born from the freedom, outdoor existence and the difficulties and hardships of pioneering life. The other side of the personality of the colonial child, the negative side, suggests an arrogance and ignorance born of

isolation, primitive conditions and the lack of a well rounded education.

Articles and publications written in the nineteenth century tend to support these views. Colonial girls seem to be viewed more leniently because they obviously possessed the practical skills without too much of the overbearing arrogance observed in colonial boys. The Adelaide Observer published an article in 1891 entitled "The Australasian girl". It stated that although they lacked the 'dainty bloom' of the English girl, they were well educated, domesticated and quite used to taking a share in the household work. The article goes on the say that "the circumstances of the social life of Australasia render the reserve of English women impossible. The colonial girl is more free in speech and action than her sisters in the mother country and equality is a living reality and not a theory"(24) The English middle classes with their restricted notions of femininity may not have regarded such comments as complimentary. Another article printed in The Girls' Realm, 1899 frankly praised the natural qualities of the Australian girl. It advised colonial girls, particularly those from the city, "that they should avoid the affectation of English mannerisms and show themselves more frankly daughters of the soil".(25) An article published in 1891 compared Australian girls with American girls stating that they

both enjoyed a good foundation combined with a large measure of freedom. The article, however, was obviously concerned about the negative effects of such freedom because it added a cautionary note warning mothers not to allow such freedom to lead to licence.(26) Although contemporary writers gave cautious praise to the characteristics of colonial girls, they were very critical of colonial boys. Frank Fowler's comments written in 1859 have already been quoted. The terms arrogant and cornstalk and larrikin are fairly common in contemporary discussions of the personality of the Australian boy. Twopeny who wrote in 1883 was one of the harshest critics. He stated that "The Australian schoolboy is indeed a 'caution'. With all the worst qualities of the English boy he has few of his redeeming points. His impudence verges on impertinence and his total want of respect for everybody and everything passes all European understanding". He went on to complain that "Indoors the Australian boy is more objectionable than the English one because he is under less restraint and knows no precincts forbidden to him. Generally intelligent and observant, he is here, there and everywhere, nothing escapes him, nothing is sacred to him".(27) Clearly, to Twopeny, the negative aspects of the colonial boy's personality totally eclipsed any positive traits.

It was stated in an earlier chapter that such descriptions as Twopeny's rely upon evidence from the Eastern states and did not necessarily apply to South Australia. However there is some evidence to suggest that middle class parents did fear declining standards for their children and sought to avoid the more negative qualities found in the eastern states boys and girls. The main answer to their concerns appears to have been a determination not to neglect their children's full and proper education. As early as 1838 Maria Gawler wrote to her husband asking him to look out for a clever man and his wife to instruct their children.(28) John Barton Hack remarked in a letter written in 1842 that his children had an excellent schoolmaster named McGowan. He stated proudly that "I have made such arrangements that their education goes on as regularly as it could do in England and at a very small cost to myself".(29) Small private schools sprang up in the very early years of the colony as much to maintain manners, values and standards as to teach the three R's. Charles Field remarked that he was sent to school at four years old to get him off the streets and prevent him going wild.(30) Some settlers were obviously critical of parents who neglected their children's manners and education and allowed standards to fall. Margaret May made the following comment about a neighbour's handling of his children. "I do not know how he gets on - He won't send the two boys to England, and they as well as their brothers, are I am

afraid, in a fair way to be ruined - they are now, and there seems no probability of their ever being anything better than common bullock drivers...if some of them were properly educated and disciplined they could make nice boys, as to the rest, they are the most harem-scarem children imaginable, say the best I can for them."(31) In the later decades of the century, and particularly among the wealthier middle class families there was a clear desire to raise children closely along English middle class lines. E. Williams writing about the wealthy pastoral families of the Central Hill Country of South Australia stated that their children were brought up in a fashion similar to those of the British gentry. When young they were left in the charge of servants or governesses. When older the wealthiest sent their sons to public schools in England. Others sent them to St Peters College or Prince Alfred's College in Adelaide, both founded on British lines with the expressed intention of producing 'Christian gentlemen'.(32)

Parents' fear of declining standards was clearly a part of the whole question of the development of a distinctly colonial child. South Australian middle class parents appeared to accept that colonial life would have an effect upon their children's character. Increased freedom, greater independence and a broader knowledge of practical skills were tolerated and even applauded, but the

arrogance, ignorance and bad behaviour mentioned by some observers of colonial youth was clearly unacceptable to the South Australian middle classes. These views were most clearly summarized by a Scottish settler writing in Adelaide in 1845 who stated "It is the very want of colonial character in South Australia that constitutes the peculiar feature of the province, and to our taste, English society, manners, language and habits have been successfully transferred, and most heartily ashamed and sorry should we be if the children of our colonists were ever to degenerate into the variety of animal which has occasionally exhibited itself in our streets in all the vulgarity of rings, red hair and tawdry waistcoats, as the young 'currency' of the neighbouring colonies."(33)

The evidence contained in this chapter and other evidence on the effects of the colonial environment in previous chapters clearly show that conditions in South Australia had an effect both on middle class family life and the characters of middle class children. The South Australian middle class family shared experiences and similarities with other types of families both in Australia and back in England but it also developed unique qualities and characteristics of its own. Such conclusions remind us of the pitfalls of stereotypes and generalizations when dealing with the whole field of intimate human relationships.

(1)Reminiscences of Sarah Conigrave, SAA,no 1291,1853,p7

(2)Watt J.I; Family Life in South Australia.53 years ago. Adelaide, Kyffin Thomas & Co, 1890, p134

(3)"When Victoria Avenue was Farmed" from The Register 4.12.1926, SAA, Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 1, p84

(4)Letters of the Gawler Family, SAA, PRG 50/19,1838-1841, letter dated 17.3.1839

(5)"Boyhood Memories", The Register. 6.12.1926,SAA, Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 1,p84-85

(6)Extracts From The Diary Of Mary Thomas, 1837-1846, SAA, Acc No 1058, p1

(7)Reminiscences of Miss A.J. Duncan SAA, PRG 532/6, Vol 1, p43-44

(8)Mary Thomas Diary, SAA, Acc no 1058, 1837-1846, p48

(9)Diary and Letters of Miss Margaret May, SAA, PRG 131 1843-1845, p27 typed manuscript

(10)Verco, 1851-1880, p112-113

(11)Verco, 1851-1880, p235

(12)Reminiscences Mrs S Pizey, SAA, Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 2 p74

(13)Duncan, Vol 1 p62

(14)Hack Letters, SAA, PRG 456/7/13-23 1837-1841, letter dated 1.5.1843

(15)Verco, 1851-1880, p83

(16)Boothby M: "Memories of my Bush Life" 1860's printed in Journal of the Historical Society of SA. no12,1984, p123-124

(17)Morphett G ed: "Hard Work in West Coast Wilds" in The Chronicle. 30.5.1940

(18)Sarah Norman Brunskill Letter, SAA, Acc no 1058

(19)Letters of Francis and Caroline Clark to relatives in England SAA, PRG 389/1, 1850-1871, letter dated 18.8.1850

(20)Spence C.H.: Some Social Aspects of SA Life by a colonist of 1839. Adelaide, Kyffin Thomas, Z pamphlet 994.2303 S 774, 1878, p2 & 5

(21)Burns A & Goodnow J: Children and Families in Australia. Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1979, p30 & 34

(22)Gandevia B: Tears Often Shed Child Health and Welfare in Australia from 1788. Sydney, Pergamon, 1978, p63-64

(23)Brown M,S,: "Changing Functions of the Australian Family" in Marriage and the Family in Australia. Elkin A.P,ed, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1957, p90

(24)"The Australasian Girl" in The Adelaide Observer. 31.10,1891, p8

(25)"A Daughter of Great Britain-The Australian Girl", in The Girls Realm. Jan 1899

(26)"Girls and Liberty", in The Adelaide Observer. 7.2.1891, p8

(27)Twopeny R.E.N.:Town Life in Australia. London, Elliot Stock, 1883, p83 & 89

(28)Gawler Letters, letter dated March 1838

(29)Hack Letters, letter dated 30.4 1842

(30)Morphett G. ed: Reminiscences of Charles F, Field, Z Pamphlet 994.23 F453

(31)Margaret May, p 111 of typed transcript

(32)Williams E: A Way of Life. The Pastoral Families of the Central Hill Country Of SA. Adelaide, Adelaide University Union Press, 1980, p17

(33)Pike D: Paradise of Dissent. SA. 1829-1857. London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1957, p496

THOSE "OTHER" CHILDREN

In numerous chapters of this study there have been references to working class children and their familial experiences. Most of these references have pointed to the fact that these experiences were generally very different from those of middle class children. Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss the family lives of working class children in detail, it is both relevant and important to consider middle class attitudes towards working class families and their children. A study of how and why the middle classes involved themselves in the lives of families outside their social class helps to both further illuminate middle class familial values and gives some insight into the differing family situations existing in nineteenth century South Australian society.

One of the most striking things about middle class involvement with working class families and their children is the quite marked increase in that involvement in the late nineteenth century. In South Australia, prior to this period, the involvement seems to have been sporadic and isolated and based upon the duty of the wealthy to occasionally assist those less fortunate, In an article published in 1886 there are references to Reverend Stow and Lady Gawler involving themselves in charitable work with children in the early years of the colony,(1) The

Gawler papers also contain some isolated references to acts of charity towards the poorer classes.(2) In the late nineteenth century such involvement became far more widespread, organized and formalized. In this period middle class government and private groups suddenly banded together and began to involve themselves in the health, welfare, education, and general day to day lives of poorer families and their children.

One of the most well known and well documented examples of such involvement is the Boarding-Out Society. The individuals associated with the Society have left in their writings many valuable sources of information on how these South Australian middle classes viewed poorer families and their children. It is not the purpose, however, of this chapter to write a history of the Boarding-Out Society. The subject has already been covered admirably by Margaret Barbalet in her book Far From a Low Gutter Girl. It will, however, draw heavily on such evidence to answer two crucial questions; firstly, what were the main aspects of middle class attitudes towards poorer families and their children, and secondly why did the middle class hold such views and why did their involvement in this area blossom so markedly in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

In the late nineteenth century, South Australian middle class ladies, like their counterparts in Britain and the United States became involved in the movement known as child saving. This movement took a variety of forms but all of them were concerned with 'improving', by middle class standards, the lives of poorer children. In South Australia it was reflected, among other ways, in the concept of Boarding-Out which involved moving destitute children from institutions to be cared for in the homes of state approved foster parents. It was based upon a belief in the superiority of the family as an agent for the socializing of children. This concept was not new for the middle classes, home and family had been an enshrined and almost holy institution throughout the Victorian era. It was in the late nineteenth century, however, that the middle classes accelerated their efforts to spread this belief to the lower classes. A firm belief in this concept is clearly reflected in the writings of individuals connected with boarding-out in South Australia. Catherine Helen Spence, a founder member of the Boarding-Out Society in 1872 and later a member of the State Children's Council made the following comments; "Nowhere else has the question been framed in its entirety, the State being <u>in loco parentis</u> to the children committed as deserted, orphaned, neglected or destitute, what is the best thing for each little waif -and the answer found a home and a mother."(3) She repeats the same theme in a paper read to

the Congress of Workers Among Dependent Children in 1909. She affirmed that the family was the sphere in which body, mind and affections could best be developed.(4) Caroline Emily Clark, another founder of the Society and a colleague of Miss Spence, echoed the same theme. She stated that the people who formed the Boarding-Out Society were deeply concerned at the evils arising from bringing up children within the artificial conditions of an institution. They hoped that these evils would be eradicated by scattering such children among the families of "the better class of our labouring population."(5) Rosamund and Florence Hill, pioneers of child saving in England visited South Australia and commented on the problems arising from bringing up children in institutions. They felt it produced "dependence on others, want of pluck and shiftless and displeasing habits, quite inconsistent with the requirements and decencies of advancing civilisation."(6) The Hills also advocated boarding children out in families as a solution to these problems.

Such comments refer only to a small group of destitute and dependent children but they illustrate a much broader middle class concept. This was a belief in the family as a basic institution not only for the middle classes but for the rest of society. It also reflected a desire to spread that belief to others. It is important to note, however,

that these ladies were not suggesting that poor children should enjoy the same family lives as their own children. Caroline Clark referred to "the better class of our labouring population" and in doing so illustrates an important part of the middle class belief in the family model. They did not advocate spreading their own family model to the rest of society but aimed to define the characteristics of a "better class" of working family and help reform those families who did not meet those standards.

Primary sources show that the middle classes sought to define a "good working class family" by their own values and standards. Davenport Hill and Fowke, in their book published in 1889, referred to the sort of homes that would be considered suitable for boarded-out children. They emphasized cleanliness but stressed that " we cannot insist to the same extent on these minor matters as we would about our own children in our own homes".(7) Cleanliness seemed to have been particularly important to the middle class definition of a "good" working class home. Florence and Rosamund Hill described what they saw as an ideal working class home, in their discussion of a visit to a South Australian foster home. They said "the house indeed was roughly built but substantial looking and a goodly store of bacon and hams hung from the rafters. The foster mother was preparing a hot dinner for the

children at a huge wood fire. She was "from County Wicklow, she told us and was not only kindliness itself, but the very pink of neatness."(8) Such middle class ladies as the Hills saw themselves as appropriate judges of working class homes and families, and in their eyes modesty and cleanliness were important values to be looked for. Sources do not give us any indication of how working class people felt about these middle class invasions into their private family life.

Work and the work ethic were other values thought important in working class homes.Caroline Clark felt that children should acquire the habits of industry and self reliance in their foster homes.(9) W.T. Rhodes' definition of suitable homes included good people who could train children for a life of respectability and usefulness.(10) An article in the The Adelaide Observer asserted that boarded-out children should be trained in the ways of order, sobriety and industry.(11) Such comments are not confined to individuals discussing the rearing of state children. Child care experts in the late nineteenth century were increasing and directing their advice towards the working classes who were believed to need guidance in their parenting roles. De Sisca, an Australian child care expert, in his book Management of Children in Health and Disease, stresses values such as obedience, respect for authority, frugality, thrift and cleanliness as vital in the proper rearing of children.(12)

In these comments, there is not only an indication of what was required in a "good" foster home for state children but more broadly there was a definition of what was required in any "good" working class family. Such a definition was firmly based upon middle class values and standards. Values such as industry, sobriety and cleanliness were frequently stressed because they were thought essential in producing a useful and, of course, compliant working class. There was no suggestion that the working classes should adopt a carbon copy of the middle class family model, rather they were encouraged to accept a middle class model of what working class families should be. It included a modest and frugal home with mother dutifully taking care of domestic concerns, children at school and father labouring in the workforce.

Childhood for working class children was never expected to be the same as that experienced by middle class children. They were to be controlled and regulated by parents and school, be expected to work in the home after school and at the age of 13 years end their childhood and enter the workforce. Above all, they were to be taught at all times to know their place. Such a model suited middle class interests, especially the requirements of the capitalist economy. Working class families who adopted such a model would provide the support needed to produce an increasingly ordered and regulated workforce without

seeking to either ape the lifestyle of the middle classes or rise above their station.

An obvious progression from describing a "good" working class family was middle class criticisms of families who did not meet the prescribed standard. Primary sources in the late nineteenth century contain many criticisms of "deficient" working class families along with calls for domestic education and reform. Mothers in Council Quarterly in October 1899 included a scathing criticism of some working class families. It stated that the working classes saw their children as a curse instead of a blessing and complained that their children are unmanageable. The article said that working class children were not taught by their parents the most elementary lessons of obedience and self control; they never learned to discipline their wills by regularity in such simple things as the time of going to bed, saying their prayers, coming home straight from school, quickness in their errands and usefulness about the house.(13) These comments once more emphasize the values thought important by the middle classes in the socialization of poorer children, namely order, control and industry. Helen Mayo, an Adelaide doctor, used a similar critical tone in her address to the Congress of Workers Among Dependent Children. She referred to the lack of knowledge of parental duties and principles of hygiene amongst poorer

families. She attributed ignorance in children to parents who "having been similarly brought up have no systematic knowledge themselves and consequently they can only give erroneous teaching, or none at all." Helen Mayo's solution to the problem was a suggestion that the teaching of principles of health and hygiene should be included in the school curriculum.(14) This was a typical answer to the perceived deficiencies in poorer families, they should be remedied by education by the middle classes or at least by a middle class dominated institution such as the school. De Sisca was also critical of "some parents" and their ability to fulfil their parental duties. He alleged that mismanagement of children was a factor in the high rate of infant mortality and attributed it in part to the reckless and injudicious marriages of people unfit to be mothers and fathers. He advised that parents should see parenting as a privilege which involved self denial, caution and the ability to preserve their authority over their children.(15) Such comments were clearly directed towards poor and working class parents.

The most striking thing about such commentary is that it illustrates clearly the overwhelming arrogance and self-confidence of the Victorian middle classes. By the late nineteenth century they felt they had achieved a domestic ideal and were ready to teach a modified form of that ideal to the working classes. A shining example of this

attitude is the use of middle class lady visitors to inspect foster home used by the Boarding-Out Society. Such ladies were thought to give the home "tone" and be able to advise working class foster mothers on the proper management of home and children. There appears to have been no consideration of how working class families felt about such advice or the intrusions into their domestic privacy. There was also no discussion of the ethics involved in the manipulation of family patterns and relationships which may have been in place for centuries. Furthermore there was no analysis of the deeper social and economic reasons behind the poverty and deprivation which caused problems in poorer families. Such self questioning was not a characteristic of Victorian middle class thinking.

Movements such as child saving represent a changing attitude within the middle classes towards poorer children and their families in the late nineteenth century. The middle classes, during this period, actively sought, with reforming zeal, to directly involve themselves in the lives of poorer families. Other examples of this drive were the use of child care experts dedicated to teaching working class mothers some of the middle class principles of childhood, compulsory primary education for the children of the poor and the generally increased government intervention in the domestic sphere.

By the late nineteenth century the middle classes had developed a clear model of what working class family life should consist of and they were prepared to impose that model upon the poorer classes.

Probably the most interesting part of this issue is to ask why the middle class sought to leave their secure cocoon of superior domesticity and involve themselves in the family lives of those less fortunate. Were the middle classes in the later decades of the nineteenth century suddenly struck with a severe attack of social conscience? Or was there a more pragmatic need for some social manipulation? Or, was it simply a temporary phase or fashion which for a time suited the requirements of the middle classes? There is certainly evidence to support all or any of these conclusions.

The child savers themselves emphasized the philanthropic and humanitarian motives behind their work. Catherine Helen Spence in her autobiography asserted that the motives for child saving were philanthropic and high minded. Referring to middle class ladies involved in the boarding-out movement she said "when ladies saw the children in these homes and watched how the dull faces brightened and the languid limbs became alert after a few weeks of ordinary life - when the cheeks became rosier and the eyes had new light in them, when they saw that the

foster parents took pride in their progress at school and made them handy about the house as they could never be at an institution where everything is done at the sound of a bell or the stroke of a clock these ladies testified to what they knew and the public believed in them."(16) Such a statement suggests that child savers sincerely wished to improve the lot of individual children. They went further than this, however, by suggesting that their movement could improve society by helping to eliminate pauperism and crime. Florence Hill, referring to the child saving movement in Australia, stated that "the managers and those interested in the subject gradually perceived that these institution children were singularly backward and stupid, and threatened to form a distinct and hereditary class of paupers will all the characteristics of their English prototypes, namely dependence on others, want of pluck, and shiftless and displeasing habits, quite inconsistent with the requirements and decencies of advancing civilization".(17) Caroline Emily Clark echoed the same theme when she stated that the ladies and gentlemen who formed the Boarding-Out Society were "deeply impressed with the evils arising from the custom of congregating pauper children under one roof and bringing them up among artificial conditions which unfit them for the battle of life".(18) Sir Henry Parkes speaking in New South Wales, summed up most clearly the reforming motives of the child savers in colonial Australia. He cited a number of

arguments in favour of children being brought up in a "respectable" family environment. Summarized they were, improved health, stronger moral characters through exposure to family life and family ties and the reduction of the size of the pauper class which he identified as the chief source of supply to the criminal classes.(19)

The child savers, like the child care experts and the workers in health, education and welfare were part of a broad middle class movement who declared their desire to reform society through changing attitudes towards child rearing and socialization. If their rhetoric is to be believed their motives were to reduce poverty and improve the lot of individuals through changing the way the next generation were to be reared. Children who were raised in a family environment based upon attitudes and values defined by middle class standards and exposed to an education system defined along similar lines would hopefully grow up to be "better" and " more useful" citizens who would be free from the taint of pauperism or anti social attitudes. Such ideals certainly appear high minded but it is not clear whether they were prompted by a sincere acknowledgement of society's ills and a desire to remedy those ills, or a desire to manipulate society to suit the changing needs of the middle classes.

As well as evidence from the middle class reformers themselves, it is also worthwhile to consider briefly the view of South Australian writers on this question. Needless to say, they have differed. Brian Dickey and Ian Davey have tended to give the child savers the benefit of the doubt, leaning towards the social reform and humanitarian argument. Brian Dickey commenting on health and welfare reform states that the expansion of social welfare services in the late nineteenth century was prompted by a middle class sense of pride in colonial society and a desire to achieve respectability but it was also influenced by humanitarian concerns.(20) Ian Davey has also emphasized the reforming motives of the middle class intrusions into lower class family life. He states that "the transformation of childhood experiences can be understood in the context of a wider reform impulse to remake the social relations of South Australian families at the turn of the century. These reforms were interventionist in nature and progressive in intent and represented an assault on common sense understandings and practices of child rearing."(21) Dickey is sympathetic towards the child savers, although he acknowledges the points made by studies that have emphasized the disturbances and breakup of biological family ties. However he does assert that "in the large majority of cases the steady progress of children through school and service culminated in their secure entry into adulthood,

supported by regular inspections, reports, state subsidy and above all genuine family care.(22)

In contrast, Margaret Barbalet is far more cynical about the motives of South Australian child savers. Barbalet emphasizes the way in which the middle classes through movements such as child saving sought to manipulate society to their own advantage without ever having to acknowledge the deeper causes of social and economic problems. Barbalet states that "At the heart of the philosophy of boarding-out was a double sided notion of the family, at times pejorative, at other times prescriptive. The class which it was hoped could be eliminated by boarding-out was the pauper class, which was seen as a drain and danger to the state." Barbalet asserts that in an age of universal suffrage the middle classes feared the pauper class and its anti social potential. In order to combat the threat some families had to be broken up and others augmented.(23) Barbalet also considers the effects these reforms had upon families who were disturbed and broken apart, an area which appears to have been neglected by other writers. When children were taken into the care of the state the rights of natural parents were basically destroyed. Under the boarding-out system natural parents were not normally allowed access to their children and letters sent to their children were vetted before being sent on. Barbalet states that poor children were

oonsidered different from middle class children and says that "to some extent boarding-out was predicated on the notion that working class family ties were weak 'their' children did not have feelings like 'our' children and it was believed they could be transplanted to new homes". She quotes Nigel Middleton who wrote of the care of children in Britain saying that " one widespread belief was that working class parents wished to abandon their children for someone else to bring up: there was little appreciation of the bonds binding this type of family."(24)

The views discussed so far outline the two main arguments concerning the reasons for middle class intervention into the lives of poorer families. One side of the argument suggests that middle class reformers were motivated by humanitarian concerns and a sincere desire for social reform. The other side suggests that it represented social manipulation designed to serve the selfish interests of the middle classes. Although these arguments are the most powerful and persuasive, it is also useful to consider other factors which may have influenced the question.

In the late nineteenth century colonial women like their western counterparts were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the narrow confines of their domestic role. Late nineteenth century movements such as the demand

for female suffrage and the general feminist movement are examples of the push to be more involved in public life. Most middle class women were still somewhat constrained by the long Victorian era and its confined view of femininity. For these women work amongst poorer families provided a socially acceptable alternative to the domestic cloister. Welfare work amongst the poor and working classes and amongst children in particular, allowed them to take a small step into the public arena without being seen to have abandoned their traditional domestic role. After all, to most Victorian men child care and child welfare belonged exclusively to the women's sphere. In South Australia child savers were also moved by motives of economy and a shortage of domestic labour. In the late nineteenth century the South Australian economy was not strong and even the middle classes were feeling the pinch of fiscal restraint. There are numerous references to the "cheapness" of the boarding-out system. Caroline Emily Clark was obviously pleased to note in her account of the society that many people would take older children without any payment in return for the extra labour they provided. (25) In an article published in an early twentieth century Contemporary Review. Miss Edith Sellers stated that "Cheapness it must be noted is a marked characteristic of the whole South Australian children's system, the cheapness that results, however, not from any stinting but from obtaining good value for the money spent" (26) Such a

statement was guaranteed to gladden middle class hearts and silence any critics. South Australian child savers were also proud of the way that boarding-out had helped to solve the problem of a "dearth of domestic servants". At the age of 13 years boarded out children usually left their foster homes and entered domestic service, at least until the age of 18. Exposure to domestic duties in their foster homes also meant that they were better equipped to act as servants than children who had lived in institutions.

Although these practical factors had an influence upon middle class reformers the main motives appear to lie with either reform or manipulation or perhaps realistically somewhere between the two. It should certainly be acknowledged that reformers were probably motivated by a sincere concern for the welfare of others and many children's life chances were undoubtedly improved by their work. However there are reasons which suggest that middle class reformers were motivated by their own self interest as well as altruistic concerns.

Firstly, there was no serious attempt on behalf of reformers to give working class children the sort of childhood enjoyed by middle class children. In Children of the State, a boarding-out inspector is quoted as saying "I do not think it is our duty to lift the children above the

condition in life in which they would probably have been if the had not come into our hands".(27) The middle classes did not wish the working class to adopt the same domestic life enjoyed by their social betters. Honesty, hard work, and a limited education was prescribed for the working classes. Such qualities and such a prescription was not designed to alter the structure of society or to make the working classes more politically aware. Rather it was designed to produce compliant and useful individuals who served the needs of the middle classes and accepted the values thought important to the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Secondly, the middle class prescription for working class family life and their attempts to reform families who did not meet their standards, illustrate traditional patterns of superiority and dominance rather than reform. Middle class wisdom on domestic life and child rearing was automatically assumed to be superior. There was no investigation of working class family ties or relationships or consideration of the skills they produced or the bonds they formed. Instead, working class families and patterns of child rearing were to be changed to fit middle class standards and any families who did not choose to submit to such "reform" could be legitimately torn apart.

Thirdly, there was no apparent attempt to reform the basic structure of society or to deal with deeper social problems. Working class children and their families were to continue to form the lower rung of society. They were to continue to "know their place". Middle class ladies would leave their domestic haven and "visit" foster homes but only as judges or advisers, never as friends or equals. Reformers were continually concerned with the "bandaiding" of problems, they never attacked the root causes of poverty and social distress. The distribution of wealth, power and privilege was always to remain untouched.

Finally there were circumstances existing in the late nineteenth century which made the middle classes aware of the need for a little social manipulation. The middle classes had been extolling the virtues of their domestic ideal throughout the Victorian era, whilst ignoring the family patterns and domestic conditions of the poorer classes. In the latter decades of the century the middle classes became increasingly aware of the masses and their potential power. The masses were becoming enfranchised and politically conscious. Trade Unions were entering the political arena through the birth of the labour party. The perceived anti social tendencies of the pauper and criminal classes were increasing fears in middle class society. The middle classes were also aware that the old

methods of repression would not work under these new conditions. A united, enfranchised and radical working class could not readily be intimidated and could potentially overthrow the power and privileges of the middle classes. Industrially, things were changing too, new advances were creating the need for a better trained, educated and ordered workforce. Social control through limited reform would have appeared an attractive answer to these problems. A new domestic environment and education system could be created to produce the standards required in the new workforce. The masses could be controlled politically and socially through division. The "deserving" poor could be drawn into the bourgeois fold by encouraging them to adopt capitalist values. In this way the oppressed would accept the values and ideals of their own oppression. The "undeserving" poor were to be increasingly isolated from the rest of society and hopefully eventually eliminated.

In conclusion, the changing attitudes of the middle classes towards working class families discussed in this chapter are further evidence supporting the view that the late nineteenth century marked the beginning of important changes in family life, This period was certainly the beginning of the spread of a modified model of middle class domesticity to the rest of society, a phenomenon that was to continue and increase during the twentieth

century. The major characteristics of this model were a companionate marriage, separation of roles and spheres and an increasing focus on the rearing and socialization of children. The period also marked the beginning of an increased involvement by the state in the domestic lives of individual families.

(1) "A Boys Recollections" the Adelaide Advertiser 27.12.1886, SAA, Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 1 p158

(2) Gawler Letters, SAA, PRG 50/19

(3) Spence Catherine Helen: Things I have seen and people I have met, SAA, PRG 88/2 p8

(4) Spence Catherine Helen: "The Family Home or the Institution" Congress of Workers among Dependent Children, Adelaide, 1909

(5) Clark Caroline Emily: An Account of the Boarding-out Society in SA, SAA, PRG 399/10 1882

(6) Hill R & F: What We Saw in Australia. London, Macmillan, 1875

(7) Davenport-Hill & Fowke F: Children of the State. London, Macmillan, 1889 p241-242

(8) Hill R & F, 1875, Chap 8

(9) Clark C.E., 1882

(10) Rhodes W.T.: Opening Address, Congress of Workers among Dependent Children, Adelaide, 1909

(11) "State Children and their Guardians" in The Adelaide Observer. 28.9.1895 p14

(12) De Sisca N: Management of Children in Health and Disease. Melbourne, Sydney & Adelaide, G Robertson & Co, 1892, Chap 4

(13) Mothers in Council Quarterly. Yonge C M ed, Vol IX, No 36 Oct 1899, London, Wells ,Gardner, Darton & Co,

(14) Mayo Dr. Helen: Some Contributory Causes to the high rate of Infant Mortality, including the lack of fitness in young people for parenthood, Congress of Workers Among Dependent Children, Adelaide, 1909

(15) De Sisca, 1892, Chap 3

(16) Spence Catherine Helen: An Autobiography. Adelaide, Kyffin Thomas & Co, 1910, p48

(17) Hill & Fowke, 1889, p233-234

(18) Clark C.E, 1882

(19) Ramsland J: "The development of Boarding-out Systems in Australia" in Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society. Vol 60, pt 3 Sept 1974, p186-197

(20) Dickey B: No Charity There. Melbourne, Nelson, 1980, p16

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(22) Dickey B: "Care for Dependent Children in SA in 1888" in Journal of the Historical Society of SA. No 10, 1982, p84-91

(23) Barbalet M:Far From a Low Gutter Girl. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983, p191

(24) Barbalet, 1983, p195

(25) Clark C.E, 1882

(26) Recollections of Susan Mary Clark, SAA, PRG 389/9 p159

(27) Hill & Fowke, 1889, p241-242

CONCLUSION

Conclusions relating to individual aspects of middle class childhood in nineteenth century South Australia have been drawn throughout this study. It is now timely to ask what broad conclusions relating to the major themes of exploration can be drawn?

The first and obvious conclusion to be drawn is a definition of middle class childhood in colonial South Australia. Such a definition involves two distinct parts. One is the characteristics shared with other middle class families in western society during the nineteenth century. The other is the characteristics that were distinctly colonial.

Relating to the first part and bearing in mind the very broad range of families and familial experiences that can loosely be termed middle class, there seem to be two major characteristics of childhood and family life that, by the mid nineteenth century, can be termed middle class. The first of these is a focus on child rearing as a major if not primary function of the family. During this century we have come to accept the socialization of children as a primary function of the family in all groups in society. However, this aspect developed first amongst the middle classes and was not accepted by either the upper or lower

classes in the nineteenth century. To the upper classes the main function of the family was the maintenance and continuance of wealth, privilege and social position. In contrast, the main focus of the nineteenth century working class family was, as it had been for centuries, economic survival.

The second characteristic, which is closely related to the first, is the rising importance of children and childhood. As child rearing as a function became elevated by the middle classes so were children, not only as an asset to their own families but as an asset to society. This characteristic is illustrated by increasing amounts of legislation covering the health, welfare and education of children and the greater involvement of experts in the field of child rearing. Such developments were particularly apparent in the later decades of the century. By the end of the nineteenth century, childhood was defined as a distinct phase of life ideally epitomized as a period of play, development and education strictly centred around home and parents. Once more this characteristic and its corresponding developments were uniquely influenced by the middle classes. Aristocratic parents often left child rearing to retainers whilst working class parents had only minimal time to devote to their children who were forced to make an early entry into the workforce. Only the middle classes sought to make

childhood a distinct and extended period of dependence closely controlled by parents.

The second part of this definition is to identify the characteristics of middle class childhood that were distinctly colonial. Aspects of children's lives were certainly affected by colonial conditions and these have been noted and discussed in each chapter. However, the South Australian evidence presented in this study has not supported the suggestion made by some writers that colonial children were undisciplined or defiant of authority. They may well have been freer and less controlled than their English cousins but this was a matter of degree rather than difference and caused more by the pioneering lifestyle than a change in parental attitudes.

Although the evidence from South Australia does not support the view that children were undisciplined there is evidence of some distinctly colonial characteristics. Children appeared to possess a certain independence, practicality and adaptability which seems to have been born of the freedom and uncertainty of colonial life. Many colonial children experienced a long period of disruption and resettlement in the journey from England and the process of establishing the family in a new land. Even those born in the colony were subject to disruption caused

by South Australia's climate, fluctuating finances and shortages. Some endured a complete change of lifestyle which meant a childhood of hard physical work rather than play and education. Such experiences were very different from the comparatively ordered and more formal existence of their English cousins. The informal and unpredictable life of the colony undoubtedly led to the free and frank independent spirit found in its children.

A second theme which followed through the chapters of this work was how South Australian middle class childhood and family life compared with popular assumptions. This theme was always fraught with potential problems. The definition of a popular assumption, to whom it applied and how broadly it was upheld were some of the questions which were difficult to answer. Despite these difficulties, this study has shown that some individuals and some individual families did not fit the popular "Victorian" model. Also, some broader perceptions of Victorian family life have been supported or challenged by the South Austalian evidence. Some of the more well known assumptions such as Victorians' prudish attitudes towards sexuality were upheld by the evidence on how middle class parents handled their children's emerging sexuality. However, there are two areas of South Australian middle class family life that seem to challenge some widely held popular assumptions. The first of these areas is

connected with the image of firm family discipline and stern, authoritarian fathers often associated with Victorian family life. In South Australia the evidence suggests that children were seen and heard as well as loved and tolerated. Family discipline was moderate and tempered and fathers were generally caring, involved and gentle with their children. Whilst I am cautious about asserting that all South Australian middle class families were close, intimate and caring the evidence suggests that many of them were.

The second commonly held assumption that Victorians were morbidly obsessed with death and its rituals has been firmly refuted by the evidence on child deaths in South Australian middle class families. When the responses to child deaths are considered within the social context of mortality rates and the environment in which such deaths took place, one can only be struck by the balance and moderation achieved. There is only room for admiration and respect for the way in which such families dealt with the ever present reality of death, particularly when compared with our own society's fear and distaste for the subject.

A third theme dealt with the question of change over time. Middle class family life in nineteenth century South Australia can be readily divided into two distinct periods, both interesting and unique. The evidence has

shown that the mid decades of the century in the colony were characterized by settlement and pioneering. Middle class families shared primitive conditions, deprivations and hardships which resulted in a rather egalitarian social climate and a blurring of class distinctions. Middle class childhood during this period meant hardships, discomfort and probably a measure of hard physical work as well as a relaxation of standards and adult supervision that resulted in a freedom that was more commonly associated with working class children.

The later decades of the century differed markedly from the earlier period and were characterized by both a return to order and the beginning of change. It was during this period that middle class life in South Australia settled to a more ordered pattern based upon middle class lines. By this stage the South Australian middle classes had developed their own social circles, acquired servants and the material trappings appropriate to their class. Middle class children were no longer required to work in the fields or allowed to run wild for indefinite periods. Parents, governesses and schools ensured that middle class children spent time acquiring the skills, manners and general education thought proper for their station in life. The later decades were also the beginnings of changes that were to have a serious impact upon family life. Legislation covering such subjects as the status and

rights of married women and minimum periods of education for children were being enacted. Experts on child care and other family health and welfare matters were becoming increasingly vocal and prominent. The feminist movement was challenging the middle class woman's traditional role. Such developments threatened to change traditional family autonomy and the pattern of domestic life. Whilst some of these changes sought to project the middle class family lifestyle as the "ideal" for the rest of society, others threatened the fabric of that "ideal".

The question of the middle class "ideal" of family life leads to a summary of a fourth and final theme, the historical significance of the nineteenth century middle class family. Despite some significant pressures for change mentioned in the previous paragraph, the middle class family had, by the end of the nineteenth century come to be seen as the ideal model of family life. It became the model for the family of the twentieth century, a model that is still widely and vigorously supported in the 1980's. The model includes a companionate marriage based upon intimacy rather than survival or social connections, family income and economic survival based solely upon the male head of the household, wife and mother devoted to domestic duties and child rearing and children experiencing an extended period of play, education and dependency. The whole family is child

centred with the socialization of its offspring as its primary function.

Although the middle classes had adopted this pattern of family life throughout the nineteenth century it was only in the later decades that it began to take the form of an evangelical crusade. Health and welfare agencies, bands of experts, governments and private charitable organizations, dominated by the middle classes, sought to spread their message of "idealized domesticity" to the rest of society, particularly the working classes.

The legacy of this movement is now obvious. During the twentieth century the middle class model of family life has spread downwards to the lower classes and upwards to the aristocracy. It is so widely accepted that changes such as the return of married women to the workforce or an increase in the numbers of single parent families are regarded by some sectors of society as threats to some "natural" or even "God given" concept of what families should be.

The historical significance of the nineteenth century middle class family is, therefore, great. It had a major impact on society through the successful spread of its familial concepts to other classes. The impact was enduring as such concepts are strong and flourishing and

their positive and negative aspects are still being vigorously debated in the 1980's. I suspect that they will still be being debated as this century draws to its close.

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Abbreviations

SAA = South Australian Archives, State Library of South Australia.

PRG = Private Record Groups, State Library of South Australia.

SAPP = South Australian Parliamentary Papers

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