CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND PARENTS' OBVIOUS ROLE

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Introduction[*]

To grow from a helpless human being into a self-accepting and self-relying individual , and from an egocentric selfish child who is unable to grasp ,conceive, and accept the idea of sharing ,into a participating and contributing adult , requires a great deal of physical ,emotional ,social and intellectual learning . Since much of this learning takes place normally within a family unit, natural or biological parents , therefore, have been and will always be expected to play an important an vital role.

ملخص[*] :

إن عملية إعداد الإنسان و الارتقاء به من مستوى التبعية و الاعتماد الكلي على الآخرين إلى مستوى النضج و الاستقلال و الاعتماد على النفس و تزويده بكل ما يؤهله للانخراط في الحياة الاجتماعية بصورة إيجابية لا تقوى عليها سوى مؤسسة الأسرة لما تتفرد به من خصائص و تتوفر عليه من مواصفات . فهي بذلك المحضن الطبيعي الذي تراكمت الأدلة عبر عقود متتالية من التحري والبحث للتأكيد بأنه لا بديل له في هذا الشأن و لا غنى للفرد و المجتمع عن خدماته . فهو الإطار الاجتماعي الأصلح لإشباع حاجات الفرد النفسية والاجتماعية و التجاوب مع كل متطلبات الرعاية الإنسانية بمساهمة فعالة لأبوين رحيمين يكمل أحدهما دور الآخر ، دون مفاضلة بينهما ، في تناغم يتعزز بشعور الانتماء إلى الكيان الأسري الذي يتحول مع الوقت إلى مصدر اعتزاز و تتبلور في ظله الهوية الذاتية التي تمثل واجهة من واجهات الهوية الجماعية.

Our main concern in this article is to discuss in some broad and general terms the parents' role and the extent to which children' s immediate and future well being depends on it . It is a fact that children with their unique make-up and temperament do , in turn , influence the unfolding personality and sense of fulfillment of their parents. It is they who teach the husbands and wives to respectively become fathers and mothers . To be maximally effective , evidence (Bell ,1968 ; Bronfenbrenner, 1970) suggests that it has to be two-way process , with not only the child imitating his mother but the mother too imitating her child. For our purposes , however , we will be considering parents mainly as active providers and their offspring as passive consumers , accepting therefore , but only partly, Benedeck's view that the child's need for mothering is absolute while the need of an adult woman to mother is relative (Anthony & Benedeck , 1970 ; see also Bell , 1979) .

Basically ,the parents' principal task is to recognize their children's changing needs and to make sure they are satisfactorily met . As two children are never exactly alike, parents should adapt to each individual child's needs, which means that « whoever is caring for a child ,in Winnicott's words ,must know that child and must work on the basis of a personal living relationship with that child ,not on the basis of something learnt and applied mechanically »(Winnicott , 1965).

Although a need may be defined as a conscious, expressed desire on the part of the observed person, parents must always be aware of the possibility that their newborn baby, infant or even child might have needs which he is not able to verbalize and to express specifically by gestures or bodily movements . The more accurate parents are in

sensing their children's needs , the better they understand them , and more appropriately they can help them .

So far, children's physical needs have been given more responsible attention by most parents, and it is only in this regard that our society has, as Pringle and Naidoo have put it, « both accepted and acted on the precept that prevention is better than cure» (Pringle & Naidoo ,1975) . Parents know for sure that their infant needs oxygen in the sense that without it he will die . Similar acknowledgment in regard to food , clothing , and protection from bodily danger . What they have tended to overlook and underestimate are the children's psychological and socio-cultural needs .

It is true that « although the environment contributes in a major way to the development of social responses and cognitive talents , the child cannot benefit maximally from these experiences until certain biological forces have prepared him for these changes » (Mussen et al ,1974), and that studies of the human infant and child have suggested a number of relationships between maturation and readiness to learn, which means that premature training may do more harm than good . Nevertheless , if parents in particular and human society in general , care only about the physical side of the child , one could hardly differentiate in purpose between the development process a newborn human baby undergoes and the corresponding process which a newborn animal naturally goes through . Thus, it becomes urgent for parents to see that their child, from the very beginning of his life, develops from other angles they are expected to take in charge as well .

Children need   love and affection

Chief among the psychological needs which parents should not ignore are love and affection . This need , Pringle explains ,« is met by

the child experiencing from birth onwards a stable , continuous , dependable and loving relationship with his parents (or permanent parent-substitute) , who themselves enjoy a rewarding relationship with one another » (Pringle, 1975 ,pp.34-35) . It is through experience that children come to learn how to love and how to be loved , how to give love and how to respond positively to others' affection and love . the existence of such emotional ties between parents and children is important and crucial « not only through their role in the development of later relationships but through their immediate effect in reducing the child's anxiety in new or stressful situations » (Rutter, 1975 , p.139 ; McLeod et al 2007).

The affective parental relationship is a helping factor in securing the promotion of children's independence . There is some evidence suggesting that the child is more independent in his activities when he can rely on parental affection (Horowitz , 1940 quoted in Kirkpatrick,1963) . It determines how will he be evaluating himself , constructing his future relationships and making his social choices (Campos, Besser, & Blatt, 2010). In this way the responsible mother and the responsible father act as a secure base from which their children check their own capability and try out new methods of exploring and reacting to their environment (Lancy David., 1996) .

It follows that parents should not only express and show love and affection to their little ones , but they should not, necessarily, expect anything in return . In other words , love should be provided unconditionally because , as it is hypothesized by humanists like Rogers , the degree of conditional positive regard a child receives from adults in the course of his development is correlated with the degree of conditional self-regard the latter has towards himself (Mehrabian,1968). Parents , according to this line of thought , should

exercise a low degree of conditional positive regard towards their children if the latter are to develop a fair self-concept , and any « constraints imposed upon (their) freedom of movement ,upon time and upon finance, are accepted without resentment or reproach »(Jenkins ,1961), particularly during infancy and early childhood where people like John Bowlby views mother love for her child « as important for mental health as are vitamins for physical health » (Bowlby ,1951) and where Margaret Ribble argues that parental love , and security are almost as necessary to the infant as oxygen or food (Ribble ,1941). The responsive affective mother contributes essentially in building up the first secured human relationship (Ainsworth ,1984 ; Isabella & Belsky , 1991) which would certainly help the newly human born entertain hope in life , develop self-confidence and positively engage in his self-actualization project through a practical adaptation to the changing world demands .

What happens when this love , which usually includes security , affection, praise and recognition, is not timely provided ?

The child who does not feel loved and accepted by his parents will obviously regard the whole life as an enemy . He has not been prepared for love, so he will never fully understand it . In addition , he will grow up suspicious of and unfriendly towards other people , and later may inappropriately respond to true and sincere affection . For him , if he has not succeeded in gaining the love and affection of his own mother and of his own father, there is no chance to win this love and affection from others . Poor child ! society has no place for him ! Being unaccepted and unwanted , why should he then bother to even try to fit into society ?! Nobody cares for him, Why should he care about others and about their laws ?! In what objective human grounds from which he has benefited himself does he have to pay any particular

attention or show any respect to what the social norms , made by others , dictate ?!!

These strong negative feelings will never help such a child to build up positive attitudes towards social life ,and it is not surprising that between 80 and 90% of all juvenile delinquents and young criminals , as it is stated in a UNESCO report based on material collected from countries all over the world, have come from homes where there has been a lack of love and care (Maynard,1970) . Relating delinquency to family factors such as neglect and parental inability to express appropriate affection towards their children , family instability, intense family conflict and dysfunctional cohesiveness is the conclusion reached by so many investigations with different social contexts and cultural backgrounds (Wadsworth ,1979; Smith & Thornberry ,1995; Smith & Farrington , 2004; Lang et al ,2002 ; Wells and Rankin ,1991; Kudirat B. Sann et al , 2010). This somehow justifies Winnicott's statement «When a child steals sugar , he is looking for the good mother, his own, from whom he has a right to take what sweetness is there » (Winnicott,1965). Children experiencing stable relations with their mothers were more able than those who encountered unstable ones to exhibit positive social behaviours particularly during the schooling period (Jacobson & Willes ,1986 ; La Freniere & Sroufe , 1985; Renken et al,1989) and had surprisingly succeeded in building natural relations even after twenty years (Waters et al 1995) . Neglected children, on the contrary , were during their adulthood associated with symptoms of depression   (Fortuna & Roisman, 2008) . The mother – child relationship , as research constantly shows , has its positive and negative long term effects on the siblings' mental health (Rikhye et al., 2008) . Ward, Lee & Polan

(2006)'s study reveals statistically significant positive correlations between psychopathology and dysfunctional parental attachment.

In terms of opportunity and development , a child who is denied or simply does not get enough love and affection becomes usually anxious, confused about himself . This child , as Maynard argues , « cannot be emotionally free enough to learn well the many things he must know if he is to live adequately and happily ... [and] may be afraid to be friendly to people , timid about trying out new things , because there has been no one who cared enough to stand behind him and encourage him as he tried himself out » (Maynard ,1970 p.14) . Infants and young children need to go on finding out whether they can still rely on their parents and that when frighteningly new situations are met , they « wish to know that the external controls are still there » (Winnicott ,1965) .

One remark here is that although lack of love, affection and care are the most serious of the mistakes parents can make, it is also quite possible for them to make the opposite kinds of mistakes trying to keep their children as babies for as long as possible , without giving them any chance to try and do things themselves .This type of protection does not do these children any good . In fact , it can be just as much harmful for them as the total absence of protection and love . The overprotected child can become backward , lazy , helpless , and will undoubtedly lack self-confidence. Maternal over-control, for example , has been found to be related to childhood facing later social anxiety disorder (Erin Lewis-Morrartyett al , 2012) . Similarly with security , as Winnicott explains « good conditions in the early stages lead to a sense of security , and a sense of security leads to self-control , and when self-control is a fact then security that is imposed is an insult » (Winnicott ,1965) . In more general terms and relying on the

cumulative research findings (Enns, Cox, & Clara , 2002 ; Grotmol et al., 2010…) , it is well established that both excessive and lack of parental care increased the incidence of mental disorders and dysfunctional behavior in siblings when they reached adulthood.

It seems justifiable to conclude that not only do children desperately need love , affection , acceptance, recognition and care of all kinds , but the quality of these required for a normal development is something that parents only can afford and parents only can fully provide .

Need for socialization

Parents so far then are mainly concerned with their children's changing biological and psychological needs .With the constant care and attention , they have given them a feeling of safety and security . By their unquestioning love and affection they have given them a feeling of being wanted and by allowing them , at the appropriate moment , to move about freely they have given them a feeling of freedom and adventure .

From a sociological point of view , however , another of the parents' main function is to prepare their children for the unavoidable life outside the family home . Having valued their children on an unconditional basis and provided them with a secure refuge against inward as well as outward difficulties, parents then or rather simultaneously - since a human being from birth enters into a social network - proceed with the teaching of the necessary skills that will guarantee the children's social survival (Palmer & Cochran ,1988) . The family will be acting , in addition to the many other functions , as a

source of ideology which includes the inculcation of values , norms , beliefs , and provision of codes of behaviour that determine their child's conception of his environment and his own place in it (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997) . This socialization of the children - which Mac Candless defines as « a learning-teaching process that , when successful , results in the human organism's moving from its infant state of helpless but total egocentricity to its ideal adult state of sensible conformity coupled with independent creativity » (Mac Candless ,1967) - is as much required and necessary for human normal development as food and fresh air ; and here again if parental role is lacking , and these socio-cultural needs are left unsatisfied , social response in children is bound to be severely retarded . In fact , there is a considerable agreement that « it will necessarily result in children's failure to attain full human status » (Kirkpatrick ,1963, p.212).

There are of course different views as to how children learn these social rules , values , proscriptions , and modes of behaviours which fit them to their appropriate role in the social network and which make them acceptable to others . What we need to know here is that all the theories have emphasized the role of the parents . As an illustration of this role which parents play in their children's socialization , one can refer to one particular but important aspect ,namely sex-typing .

Sex-typing is the process (or processes) by which a child learns the behaviours and internalises the attitudes culturally accepted and appropriate to his or her sex . This aspect of socialization is important in the sense that children's integration , cooperation and adjustment within the human society cannot be conceived without it .

It is widely accepted that the child's adoption of the parent of the same sex as an identificatory model facilitates the acquisition of

appropriate sex-typed behaviours (Huttunen ,1992., Beal, 1994., Witt ,1997) . The conditions that promote such an identification have not always been analysed in the same way . Some theorists consider that the child identifies with and imitates the behaviour of the parent who is warm and nurturant , and there is , as far as research is concerned , a great deal of support for this claim. In a study of high school boys , Payne & Mussen found that subjects who were highly identified with the father possessed more sex-typed masculine behaviours and attitudes , and all perceived their fathers as more nurturant than minimally identified boys (Payne & Mussen ,1956). Similarly , in a study supported by National Institute of Mental Health in the United States, Mussen and Rutherford , testing among other hypotheses : " masculinity in boys is correlated with the fact of fathers being warm and nurturant" and " feminity is correlated with mothers' being warm and nurturant" . It was found that warmth in the same-sex parent does in fact facilitate sex-typing both in boys and girls (Mussen & Rutherford ,1963 ; see also Alan Russell & Judith Saebel ,1997) .

Further evidence is provided by social learning theorists . Bandura and Huston , having carried out an investigation of their own ,came to the conclusion that a nurturant model is imitated more than a nonnurturant (Bandura & Huston ,1961 ; see also Laflamme , Pomerleau , & Malcuit, 2002) .

Other theorists have claimed that the child identifies with the dominant parent . Common sense and reality , however , can only lead to the rejection of such a generalization , because if this is true, many of our girls would have never gained their feminity since in most Muslim families fathers are usually the dominant party . Even scientific research does not support the view in its generalized form . In a study which examined the effect of parental warmth , dominance , and

conflict on imitation in children of both sexes , Hetherington and Frankie found that while warmth was more crucial for girls , the parental dominance was exceptionally important for boys' sex-typing . Boys from father-dominant homes displayed more masculine sex-role than did boys from mother-dominant families (Hetherington & Frankie ,1967).

Other theorists like Parsons and Johnson suggested that masculine and feminine behaviour patterns are acquired , at least in part , through interaction with the opposite parent (Parsons ,1955; Johnson ,1963 ; see also Landerholm & Scriven 1981; Lindsey & Mize ,2001) .

Most behaviourists claimed , in their turn , that it is the direct encouragement from parents to their children's participation in the activities culturally and traditionally engaged in by members of the children's own sex that really makes the difference . Behaviorists' argument is that by doing so , parents make it clear to the children that they approve and expect certain kinds of attitudes and behaviours and regard others as inappropriate to themselves . In Mussen and Rutherford's study already mentioned , the encouragement of children's participation in activities appropriate to their sex proved to be sound and effective for girls only . Such encouragement from parents had no significant effect on the boys' masculinity .

In Kohlberg's theory maturation is so important in gender development (Kohlberg ,1966).. This is why cognitive psychologists are rather interested in the way children make sense of information about gender and how such an understanding changes over time .They consider that through the developing thinking processes children develop their gender identity (Martin et al , 2002) , and are

continuously adapting themselves to their   organized social world's expectations.

Finally , humanists regard self-acceptance on the part of the parents to be an active factor in children's sex identification . Their prediction is based on the assumption that fathers and mothers who accept themselves and are , as a result , satisfied with their own sex will be in a better position as to reinforce and reward children's activities imitating and copying their own . Pointing to the girl's mother who is self-accepting , Mac Candless admitted that « she provides the best available model for the appropriate sex-role » (Mac Candless ,1961 p. 347).

All these views , however different they may be , point to one single fact namely that the operant factor in children's identification followed by the appropriate sex-typing , is the parent , the parent's behaviour , the two parents' interrelationships as perceived and conceived by these children . Therefore , one may confidently say that there is no better place for children to learn what is appropriate to their sex than within a lively harmonious family with a lovely mother and a wonderful father who are all along reliably present and consistently themselves .

These are but few of the various needs that should be satisfactorily met if children are to enjoy life and develop into healthy adult members of society . They must not be conceived as independent from one another , and if we have conceptually isolated them, it is only to sharpen our analysis and deepen our understanding . These needs are in fact inter-related , inter-dependent , and in a state of constant qualitative and quantitative change relative principally to the children's sex and age .

What we have discussed in relation to parents is but the least that is expected from them . If we have intentionally avoided any sort of discrimination between the mother and the father in terms of their role vis-a-vis their children, it is simply because we believe and evidence also suggests that both of them do influence their offsprings' development , sometimes on focusing on the father's affective reactions towards his children , an aspect no more held to be the mother exclusivity (Lamb , 1997), sometimes on discussing children's changing parental preferences within the development stages they go through with all the sexual differences (Lamb ; 1984) , and sometimes on making the emphasis on the nature and kind of attachment children have towards each of the two parents (Van I Jzendom & Bakermans-Kranenburg , 1996) , and more often on accepting the fact that both father and mother are able to interact and communicate with their children at all ages (Pedersen ,1980 ; Yogman , 1981) , and in practically all times on considering the quality of parent child relationship particularly (Alessandra Randem , David Fergusson & John Horword , 2013). Each parent's duty is equal to yet , in many respects , different from the other's so that it is sometimes difficult and in cases even wrong to ask : « Which parent is more important ? » , because not only is the family a network of relationships , in that the mother and father do not operate independently , but also what might change one person affects necessarily the whole group . The family does consist on individuals and pairs of individuals , and this variety is expected to add to the beauty and enrichment of the family , but it is also « a social group of its own and needs to be considered as such » (Rutter.M,1972) . Furthermore, the nature of children's needs and the multitude of expectations of human society necessitate and require a home with two effective parents .

Institutions and children's needs

Now it is desirable to know what happens to those children who cannot , for one reason or another , live in a family unit . This does not include fostered or adopted children , since fostering and adoption if carried out by skilled workers « can give a child nearly as good a chance of a happy life as that of the child brought up in his own home » (Bowlby ,1953 ,p.132 ., O'Brien& Zamostny , 2003; Rojewski , 2005 ; Thomas & Tessler , 2007; Juffer & van Ijzendoorn , 2007 ; Dozier, et al, 2001). Besides , children do not usually suffer from having several-parent-figures so long as stable relationships , and good and responsible care are provided , and so long as the changing needs of these growing individuals are recognised and adequately met. Although it is usual for the child's natural mother to be his principal attachment-figure , as John Bowlby has put it (Bowlby ,1978) , but there can be no doubt that her role can be taken effectively by others (McKeganey.N et al , 2002., Karen. R,1998) . It is true that it may be less easy for a substitute mother than for a natural mother, for many reasons , to act and behave in a complete mothering way to a child . But in some cases it is necessary to ask for a minimum without always expecting perfection , and there is no reason why this minimum of care cannot be provided by a comprehensive responsible substitute mother (Harry F. Harlow 1958) .

What is needed is a brief discussion of the case of children who spend life, especially early childhood , in impersonal surroundings , in such institutions as orphanages , to find out what research particularly has to say about them .

There is convincing evidence that for young children who have been deprived , by long term institutionalization , from adequate parental care , there is likely to be temporarily , if not permanently , a loss of intellectual , emotional , and social capacities that could not be expected if they were raised in a well functioning family .

From the numerous studies and investigations carried out in this area , one must admit that children have needs that cannot simply be afforded in these impersonal institutions . Having carefully observed and diagnosed a number of young children reared in institutions , Bettlheim concluded that an undesirable personality type results from such a rearing (Bettlheim ,1950) . In his statistical study Brown found strong evidence showing symptoms of neuroticism in such children , something that he did not witness in the control group of children who were living in a family environment (Brown,1937) . Similarly , after a review of a significant number of studies and investigations involving children raised in institutions , Bowlby and sula Wolf , both of them emphasizing specially the role of the mother , came nearly to the same conclusion ; and while the former openly stated « we suggest that the evidence is now such that it leaves no room for doubt regarding the general proposition , that the prolonged deprivation of a young child of maternal care may have grave and far-reaching effects on his character and so on the whole of his future life » (Bowlby ,1953 , p.53) , the latter concluded that « between six months and three years of life , the baby depends for his future emotional and intellectual development on stimulation and affectionate care from people to whom he can become attached , whom he knows well and who know him as an individual . Whether such needs can be met in the absence of a continuous mother-figure is not yet known . What is known is that loss of the mother , especially if followed by care in an impersonal institution , is likely to

have long-lasting and perhaps permanent adverse effects »(Wolf,1969,p.35).

This is not to minimize the role of the father . Indeed , just as John Bowlby , Sula Wolff and others have argued that there may be a sensitive period in the formation of the mother-infant relationship , other thinkers like Nash have suggested something similar about the father , and that there may be an early crucial and critical period during which one might expect the father-child relationship to be significantly important (Nash ,1965) . And as far as research is concerned father absence has also been found to act as a strong negative factor affecting children's psychological and social life (Kagel, S. et al ,1978 ., Rohner & Veneziano , 2001., Pfiffner., McBurnett & Rathouz, 2001) .

As has been stated before , child-rearing is most successful and most enriching when it is performed jointly by the two parents in the context of a secure marital relationship .

The fact that children institutionalized in their early life develop very poorly when compared to those living with their parents , holds true even when the latter happen to live with relatively bad parents . Adverse effects on children's emotional, social, and cognitive development as a result of long-term institutional care has been established in early studies (Goldfarb, 1945; Provence & Lipton, 1962; Spitz, 1965) as well as in the more recent ones (Youngleson 1973 . , Tizard ,& Rees ,1975., Tizard & Hodges , 1978., Bush ,1980., Quinton , D. et al ,1984., Cohen ,1986., Quinton, 1987.; Hodges & Tizard ,1989., Triseliotis & Hill. 1990., Colton, 1992., Rutter, 1992., Frank, D . et al , 1996 ., Berrick, Jet al ,1997 ., Barth , 2002 ., UNICEF , 2003.,) . The main conclusions that have consistently been subject of general approval that institutions and all types of orphanage care are unable to provide human beings with long-term, stable,

affectionate relationship so essential for their later social relations, and that institutionalized persons are generally less well adjusted and frequently manifest less self-esteem, restless and disruptive attention-seeking behavior, poor peer relations, disciplinary problems …

Two studies were reported by Bowlby , the first examined a group of children , aged between one and four years , who had spent their lives in institutions , and was compared to a similar group of children who lived often in very unsatisfactory homes and who used to spend the day in nurseries because their mothers were working . As expected , there was a clear-cut difference between the two groups , and in terms of development , children living at home and attending nurseries during the day were very much favoured . The second , which was a follow-up study ,compared the social adjustment in adult life of a group people who spent five years or more of their childhood in institutions to another similar group of people who had spent the same number of years at home with about 80% of them living in very bad homes . The results were again in favour of the adults who spent their early life with their parents (Bowlby , 1953 ,pp.78-79)   .

This sort of evidence has been confirmed in other studies regardless of how good , or how modern and up-dated the institutions were , and suggests that children need more than what we call a stimulating environment where opportunities for exploration and play are fully provided . They also need a continuous and reliable relationship with persons who , in addition to being special , can respond to them according to their individual needs and who can stand and act as a source of continuity of experience (Wolff,1969) .

Conclusion

Thus , if on the one hand , we cannot generalise that all children who are deprived of family life will necessarily suffer in one way or another , because this is simply not true , since there are always children who , after experiencing all kinds of adverse situations and crises , may still survive . On the other hand , we simply cannot afford to overlook and ignore the ill-effects that such situations have had and will probably still have upon a significant number of children . Even if the evidence is not a challenge to action , it cannot be denied that , as Newson put it « the best that community care can offer is impartiality , to be fair to every child in its care ». But , as he added « a developing personality needs more than that : It needs to know that to someone it matters more than other children ; that someone will go to unreasonable lengths ... for its sake » (quoted in Pringle,1975).
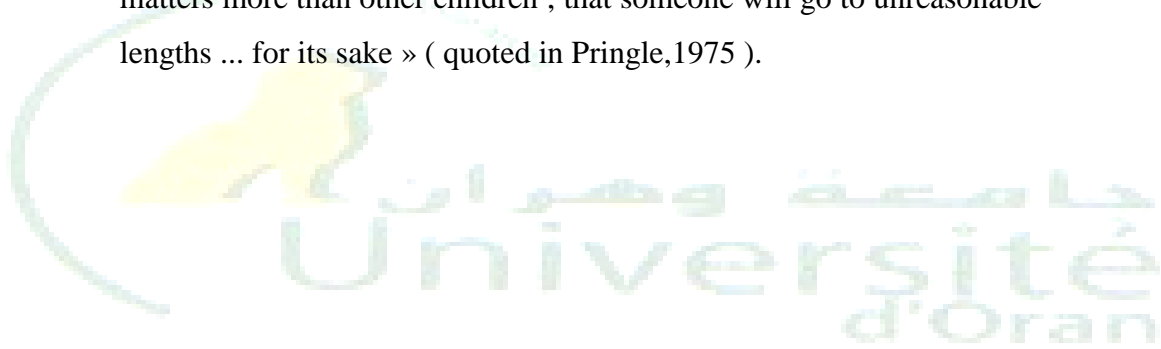
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