Parent Family Relations Essay, Research Paper

A Delicate Balance: Parent Child Relationships.

A parent s influence on their children is immeasurable. With the support and love of their parents, a child can achieve their goals, build self-esteem, and furthermore grow into a respectable, functioning member of society. Conversely, a lack of love and support can result in a less encouraging outcome. Low self-esteem and a negative self-image are not uncommon characteristics of a child raised in a loveless home. Children look up to their parents not only as authority figures, but as role models. However, there are times when a parent does not do an adequate job of filling the position of the role model, so children may search for another elder to look up to and admire. Ultimately, it is nearly necessity for a child to have an authoritative role model in their lives, and much of what that child believes, loves and respects, is passed on to them by that person. This theme is not only apparent in society today but can also be found as a basis for many great novels and plays. In the novels, See the Child written by David Bergen, Childhood by Andre Alexis, The Last of the Crazy People written by Timothy Findley, and the Shakespearean play Hamlet the parent child relationship is not only discussed but also analyzed and questioned. It is apparent, in these works, that the attitudes regarding respect, values, morals, personal relationships and communication are passed on from parent to child. A parent s influence during childhood, whether good or bad, has an astounding effect on the development of the child.

Learning to respect themselves and other people is a lesson every child must learn. By witnessing the way that their parents treat other people, children learn what is, and is not socially acceptable behavior. As a result of this, if the parent is disrespectful to the child, the child will most likely be disrespectful in return, as it is how they have learned to deal with that situation. In the novel See the Child the relationship between Sky and his grandfather Paul is evidently one of great respect. Contrarily, Sky s relationship with his mother is not one of such great respect. In Sky s case, it is necessary for him too look for a role model different from his mother, as his mother had never really done a successful job of teaching him. The most evident aspect of behavior in the novel which shows the respect that Sky is lacking for his mother, and the respect that he gives his grandfather is the fact that, while Sky calls Paul Grandpa he refers to his own mother by her first name, Sky looked up suddenly. Said, as if they were peers, Where s Nicole? . (Bergen, 86) Not only does this show a lack of respect, but it also shows that Sky has learned how to be respectful from Paul. It is obvious that since Paul has demanded respect form Sky since they first met that Sky has learned from this, and treats Paul with respect. Paul taught Sky to respect him in a non-violent way; however; this is not always the case. In the novel Childhood respect is taught through fear. Thomas, the main character in this novel, respects his grandmother. Perhaps he does not respect they type of person that she is, which is very sad, but she has taught him to obey and respect her through force. There are many different ways of teaching children; Thomas grandmother used violence. I was six or seven at the time, no match for her. She had been drinking, and she had a frying pan with her. I saw it rise above me. I put my hands up to protect my head. (Alexis, 7) Thomas grandmother used fear as a tool to demand respect. In the novel The Last of the Crazy People there is a different lesson being taught about respect, obligatory respect. Hooker, a young confused boy, never really knew his father, the man is a mystery (Findley, 45) and so, he learned to respect his father because he had to. Hooker learned from his brother that there are some things that you just have to do, even if you don t know why. In the patriarchal household where Hooker lived, it was expected that father was to be honored and respected. In the development of the novel, one can see that this quality was adopted by Hooker who is known to say I m not sure why, I just did (Findley, 89). Respect can be taught in many ways and is not something that a child can learn on their own. The level of respect that one person gives another, is often the level that they find themselves receiving in return, thus it is just as important for a child to respect their parents as it is for parents to respect them in return. If there is not respect shared between parent and child, that parent may find it extremely difficult to instill strong morals and values into their child.

Values and morals are the cornerstone of our society. Mostly every family has a different set of morals and values. It is the parents job to instill them into their children so that the child will be able to respect and live by their parents’ views. It is important that a child know right from wrong, good from bad, and thus it is important that the parent takes responsibility to share what is and is not acceptable with their children. The effects of a skewed moral system could be detrimental to a child s future, as in the novel Childhood. Thomas is forced to steal for his mother, and is never taught that it is wrong to steal but is only left to determine this for himself. They were in fits, both of them, by the end of the story. I didn t see anything funny in it, though. It all amounted to Mr. Mataf using me to steal two bottles of Coke, and though I d stolen one or two small things in my life, I d always believed that theft was wrong. It was wrong, in my little world. (Alexis, 92) As a result of never being set straight that theft was indeed wrong, Thomas goes on to steal from his mother later in the novel. Because Thomas mother did not believe that stealing was terribly wrong, Thomas learned from her that it was okay to steal. His mothers lack of morals aswell as her lack of judgement of right and wrong, and her skewed view of reality all rubbed off onto Thomas. This pattern of monkey see monkey do can be mirrored in Shakespeare s tragedy Hamlet. Hamlets uncle s lack of morals and values influence Hamlet and lead him to believe that murder is a viable option. Though in Hamlets case, the steaks are a little higher, his situation can be compared to Thomas . When Hamlet learns the disturbing news that the serpent that did sling thy father s life; Now wears the crown. (Shakespeare, I: 5) he reacts in passion, much the same way as his uncle did, slaying his brother to be with his wife. Hamlet may not have learned to react this way from his uncle directly, however a child can learn much by simply watching an elder. Whatever behavior the adult deems appropriate it usually the behavior that the child will accept as being permissible. Conversely, in The Last of the Crazy People Hooker is taught a proper set of morals from the families maid, and Hookers companion, Iris. As previously stated, when a parent is unable to provide the guidance needed, it is not unusual for a child to look elsewhere for direction. The relationship between Hooker and Iris is one of mutual respect and love so Hooker easily will take lessons from Iris and trust her judgement which is key when a young child is learning right from wrong. Love and communication can have an astounding effect not only on the level of respect shared between parent and child, but the validity that the child gives to their parents advice and actions.

A child s relationship with their parents can be difficult to define, even for the involved parties. Through good communication skills and a strong love for one another, children and their parents can develop a loving and lasting relationship. However, without love there is little hope for a healthy relationship. In Childhood Thomas describes the relationship between him and his grandmother, I don t think she was pleased to have me. She was past the age of easy tolerance, and she was cantankerous Her only loves were the wine she made and the poetry of Archibald Lampman. (Alexis, 5) There was seldom a time in Thomas life where he felt loved. His relationship with his mother was also shaky in that he felt his mother wasn t what (he) had expected. Her voice was lower. She wasn t warm and loving, and (they) didn t take to each other (Alexis, 93) As a result of this lack of love in his childhood, Thomas finds it difficult to trust love, or even enjoy love is his older age. This is evident as he writes to his girlfriend, Yet it was only then, as I stood by the window, it struck me that I d never invited anyone home, let alone this woman whom, to my dismay, I love. (Alexis, 263) The love between a parent and child can be shown in many ways however. Even with a simple act, a simple gesture, the love that one person has for another can come shining through, Jewels, Sky said. There. He forced a finger in, touched a back molar. Paul bit down on Sky s finger. Hard enough to keep him there. Ouch, Grandpa. Paul sucked Sky s finger. Slid it out. Growled. Again, said Sky. (Bergen, 84) Simply by spending this little time together, the love that Sky and Paul share shines through. The relationship that Sky and Paul build is one of trust and loyalty. Sky has learned through Paul s actions that love is immensely valuable and that trust is possible. As the love that Sky and Paul share mature their relationship, the lack of love Hamlet feels for his mother degraded Hamlet and his mothers relationship. Hamlet is disgusted with his mother when she marries his uncle and expresses this to her:

Hamlet. Now, mother, what s the matter?

Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet. Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet

Hamlet. What s the matter now?

Queen. Have you forgot me?

Hamlet. No, by the rood, not so. You are the queen, your husband s brother s wife;

And, -would it were not so! -you are my mother. (Shakespeare, III: 4)

There is a bitter relationship between Hamlet and his mother which somewhat explains Hamlets rage. The lack of love in this relationship prevents Hamlet from having an outlet for his frustrations. He does not trust his mother, or for that matter his uncle, he feels alone, and although he is no longer a child, he continues to learn from him elders. His mother quickly re-marries after his fathers alleged murder showing Hamlet that love is replaceable. Love is an important part of life, and so, it is an important part of any parent child relationship. When there is little or no love between parent and child a barrier is forced between them and it is nearly impossible to build a relationship. The way a child is taught to love will stay with them for the rest of their lives, which is why it is vital that parents teach their children not only what love is, but how to love and be loved.

Clearly, the influence of a parent significantly affects the manner in which a child grows, behaves, and what a child believes. This point is demonstrated countless times in the novels Childhood, See the Child, The Last of the Crazy People, and the Shakespearean tragedy Hamlet. By watching their parents children learn valuable lessons and skills. Respect, values, morals, personal relationships and communication are all passed on from parent to child. The relationship between parents and their children, is one of the most basic human interactions. Mothers and fathers provide both physical and emotional care for their young sons and daughters. In the process, parents will instill children with family values and goals, while teaching them the accepted norms and values of society. This is done in the hope that parents will one day see their own children become mature adults, with their own goals and purposes in life. Ultimately, each parent only wants what is best for their child. By watching and learning from a positive role model, children have an excellent chance of growing up to be contributing members of society. Unfortunately, there are many children who do not have stable nurturing homes and sadly may not be given the opportunities and love that they deserve. With luck, and time, every child will find a home where they will be loved, nurtured and treated with respect.