Democratic Families: "The Logic of Congruence" and Political Identity

Nancy L. Rosenblum
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AND POLITICAL IDENTITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Article consists of a set of reflections on discussions of the family as they exist in contemporary democratic theory. It takes the form of contrasts and challenges. In Part I, I show that contemporary political theory on the family departs strikingly from main currents in the history of political thought by retreating from views of the family as erotic and affective in favor of an account of the family as a principled "school of justice."

In Part II, I pose a series of challenges to commonplace assumptions about the need for congruence between public liberal democratic norms and the internal organization of family life as a condition for democratic education at home. I argue that the prevailing "logic of congruence" is simplistic. Political theorists have not taken care to examine what aspects of democratic education are appropriate for children rather than adults. Nor have they taken care to examine what aspects of democratic education for children are the exclusive domain of the family rather than other institutions. It is a weakness of democratic theory that proponents rarely seek and are unlikely to find confirmation of the congruence thesis in empirical accounts of the sites and stages of moral development. Admittedly, there are other normative reasons for wanting democratic families besides producing democratic character in children, and thus other justifications for affirming "the logic of congruence." But the standard focus today is the family as a school of justice, and I challenge the prevailing assumptions behind that view. I

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ask, what can individuals get only in childhood and only at home? What irreplaceable good; what irreversible deficit?

In Part III, I look at one confirmed relation between family and democracy: the family as the source of habits of political participation and party identification ("party id"). It is one principal origin of partisan political identity. Democratic theorists are commonly averse to inherited partisanship (indeed, they do not typically ignore "party id" altogether), illustrating the stern restricted criteria they impose on education for democratic citizenship.

Utopian Families Then and Now

The history of political thought is also a history of ideal sex and ideal families. The two are inseparable.¹ Nowhere is this clearer than in the theory and practice of utopianism, which has always been a central component of political philosophy. Utopias since Plato's Republic have had eroticism at their heart. Erotic gratification has even been a subject of theories of distributive justice: the organizing principle of Fourierism was the egalitarian distribution of opportunity for sexual pleasure (at the very least, the community promised a guaranteed sexual minimum).² Despite the centrality of sex and family, sober academic studies of perfectionism typically focus on the division of labor or religious regimens as bases of harmony.³ They avert attention from the fact that in both philosophic utopias and actual experimental communities, eroticism and family relations are key.⁴

For example, as I noted in an earlier essay, "Mormons pointed to adultery, fornication, whoredom, abortion, infanticide, and hypocrisy as signs that America was sodom."⁵ And like most millenarians responding to perceived social disorder, rooted, utopian communities reorder sexual relations. Sometimes that means magnifying sexuality, as in Joseph Smith's conviction that male sexuality was naturally polygamous and must be freed from the unnatural influence women hold over men under monogamy.⁶ Other times it means diminishing desire and withdrawal from sexual involvement as in monasticism, celibacy, or the idealization

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² See id. at 68-69.
³ See id. at 67.
⁴ See id.
⁵ Id. at 68.
⁶ See id.

http://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/hlr/vol32/iss1/7
of eunuchs. "Either way, it is a commonplace that sexual order reinforces communal ideals." Thus, to take another example, the prohibition of romantic love and monogamous marriage in many communities was intended to deflect members from exclusive proprietary relations and allow them to focus affection and energy on the whole. The marriage bond and parenting, John Humphrey Noyes argued, renders the world a wilderness of self-hood, and "complex marriage" in Oneida was really supervised promiscuity, a test of love for one's fellows and fitness for community life.

Utopianism aside, a standard element in various philosophies of the best or just regime is a complementary model of the "sexual contract" on which marriage and the family rests. For example, the correspondence between monarchy and patriarchy was an orthodoxy of political absolutism, and Locke's attack on patriarchalism in politics began with an alternative account of the family organized around parental rather than paternal power. Or, in another familiar example, republican theory gave central place to the distinctive civic virtues of wives and mothers: if corrupt, they would subvert republican ardor by trying to keep their men safe at home; if virtuous they would, as Machiavelli urged, unhesitatingly give over "their blood, their goods, their life, and their children."

An example from American political thought draws again on the Mormons. In Reynolds v. United States, the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the criminalization of polygamy reflected more than moral aversion for what was seen as the subjection of women to unbridled male lust. The Court denied polygamy protection under the free exercise clause of the First Amendment on grounds that the practice was theocratic and patriarchal and therefore intolerably incongruent with democracy. "In fact, according as monogamous or polygamous marriages are allowed, do we find the principles on which the

7. Id.
8. See id.
11. See id. at 30-44.
13. 98 U.S. 145 (1878).
14. See id. at 166-67.
government of the people, to a greater or less extent, rests.\textsuperscript{15} I will return to this point in Part III.

It goes without saying that sex and family remain central elements of conservative and progressive advocacy today. Shoring up (or reinventing) traditional families is the business of conservative thinkers. They may be pushed by their own logic in surprising directions, as in this grimly instrumental concession to same-sex partnership arrangements:

Perhaps something like marriage will have to be recognized for homosexual couples, not because they need it for their happiness (though they may), but because society needs it to avoid the insecurity and instability generated by the existence in its midst of a permanent and influential subculture outside the law.\textsuperscript{16}

On the other side, where progressive participatory democrats traditionally looked to worker control in industry to instill a sense of political efficacy in worker-citizens, today democratic theorists look to the family as a school of justice. They envision exemplary companionate adult marriage, an equal division of domestic labor, equal access to economic opportunities (including, for example, parental leave), and so on.\textsuperscript{17} From this standpoint, homosexual marriage, which is said to diminish rigid gender roles and to be more egalitarian, comes closer to embodying democratic norms than heterosexual ones. The compelling reason for altering standard family arrangements and for accommodating nontraditional arrangements, on this view, is their potential for mirroring public norms of justice and for providing democratic education.\textsuperscript{18}

Contemporary democratic theory is as committed to correspondence between the organization of family life and political order as historical thinkers had been. Doubtless, the commitment rests in part on the appeal of simplicity. The image of a microcosm—cities and souls, families and polities—is powerful. The family's force as complement or impediment to political life often rests less on knowledge drawn from moral psychology and developmental theory than on the appeal of analogy. The idea is to make patterns of justice vivid. The

\textsuperscript{15} Id. at 165-66.

\textsuperscript{16} Thomas C. Grey, Eros, Civilization and the Burger Court, 43 L. & CONTEMP. PROBS. 83 (1980). This optimism is unaccountable; why not expect a replication of heterosexual problems and weakened norms: gay divorce, property disputes, and custody battles?

\textsuperscript{17} See SUSAN MOLLER OKIN, JUSTICE, GENDER, AND THE FAMILY 17-21 (1989).

\textsuperscript{18} See, e.g., Susan Moller Okin, Sexual Orientation and Gender: Dichotomizing Differences, in SEX, PREFERENCE, AND FAMILY 44, 54-56 (David M. Estlund & Martha C. Nussbaum eds., 1997).
family is a piece of political argument that typically proceeded imagistically by correspondence, or analogically.

That said, contemporary theory, although still intent on congruence, has deviated from historical and utopian discussions of sex and family in several respects. The first striking difference is the relative eclipse of discussions of sex, sexuality, and sexual relationships. The focus, even in much feminist theory, is on gender relations; that is, on women's autonomy and practical equality in the family as a condition for equality in society. Feminist theorists are concerned with the policies that would erase the vestiges of patriarchal marriage by restructuring the terms of domestic life among adults: equal parenting, a fair division of paid and unpaid domestic labor, policies of mandatory wage-sharing, or pay for caretakers, to name a few.¹⁹

A second difference, more important for my purposes, concerns precisely the shaping force of the family. In the past, the family educated its members, including children, as a result of the unreflective workings of an institution that its members do not design and do not have as their conscious purpose. Historically, philosophers thought that the constitutive power of the family lay in the fact that its operation and effects were affective, erotic, natural, sympathetic—in any case, not a matter of principle or deliberation²⁰ (Rousseau’s writings on marriage and family are exemplary here). The instincts of sex or parental love or family honor were welcome forces precisely because they did not depend on the exercise of reason. Values and practices were inculcated unreflectively, in the ordinary course of family life. Civic pedagogy was indirect. Political identity would be formed in the same way we think of the formation of ethnic or cultural identity today: through absorption and imitation in an environment marked by affective attachment. The process of political or moral formation was one of habituation and identification. Political identity could be viewed as an inheritance.

In contemporary democratic theory, by contrast, a premium is put on the family as an elected “association,” whose organization is subject to principled criticism and alteration. The family’s formative effects are guided by principles of equality or fairness. Democratic theory casts the family as a deliberate school of justice, requiring it to be as nearly as possible congruent with democratic principles. The term “school” is apt. The family is a site of civic education. Therefore, family members should be alert to internal oppression or injustice or disrespect—as

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¹⁹. See, e.g., OKIN, supra note 17, at 171.
vigilant as democratic citizens should be for the appearance of oppression or injustice or disrespect in public life. Parents have the responsibility of raising children capable of participating in public life, and disposed to civic engagement. In this school, the process of political identity-formation is reflective. It must be, given the ideal of autonomy (self-reflective, self-critical, capable of choice) at the heart of contemporary democratic theory, and given the ideal of independent-minded citizens. Notice that this account of the family as a school of justice deviates from affective accounts of the formative effects of the family. Notice too that it deviates from structural accounts of the family that emphasize correlations between socio-economic status and democratic participation or accounts of the way family structure does or does not afford leisure for civic engagement.

The congruence thesis clearly has normative roots and purposes. It is a way of modeling justice from the top down: moving from democratic principles associated with just government to insuring that important social and private institutions are also internally just. The family, the chief site of character-formation and civic education, can facilitate or thwart the demands of political life. It follows that its internal organization should mirror public norms. When it comes to applying public norms of justice to secondary associations and to the family, democratic theorists differ widely on whether they think congruence should be enforced as a matter of law and public policy, or enabled by means of public education and public incentives, or pursued by other indirect means. They differ on where primary responsibility lies—whether parents are in effect agents of the state with regard to certain aspects of the family, including the structural conditions for democratic education at home. But they are agreed that government has a fiduciary responsibility for more than securing the basic interests of families and children: physical security, health, education, and so on. They are agreed that public principles of equality and fairness should extend there. Families are, or should be, schools of justice.

Clearly, though, congruence is more than a normative aspiration to replicate justice "all the way down." Congruence also describes an actual psychological dynamic. There is a "logic of congruence." Although democratic theorists take surprisingly little notice of social

22. See id.
science or moral psychology, so that the dynamic is effectively unexplored, it is persistently invoked.\textsuperscript{24} It is what makes the application of democratic norms “all the way down” into the family imperative.\textsuperscript{25} The logic of congruence rests on the assumption that a particular psychological dynamic is at work: just families create citizens with specific democratic capacities and dispositions that spill over from private to social and public spheres.\textsuperscript{26} The logic of congruence insures mutual reinforcement of family and democracy.

It follows that discussions of the family in contemporary democratic theory share two key features. First, family relations between men and women and parents and children shape not just stable attitudes and practices but deeper characterological traits.\textsuperscript{27} The maintenance and renovation of democracy depends on families because the shaping force of the family for good or ill cannot be performed by any other institution, and because the habits and dispositions cultivated in children are presumptively indelible.\textsuperscript{28} Second, there is a spill-over from habits and dispositions cultivated in the family to the habits and dispositions exhibited in wider social and political life.\textsuperscript{29}

II. DEMOCRATIC TRAITS FROM DEMOCRATIC FAMILIES: THREE CHALLENGES

In this section I propose a series of challenges to these premises. I propose them only; my task here is not to work them out. Nor do I discriminate among the many dispositions and values at stake in various accounts of democratic education in families. I speak loosely and interchangeably of moral, civic, and democratic education. I assume that something more is wanted than the bare minimum: citizens who refrain from willfully subverting democracy. I also assume that these challenges apply whether what is wanted is a “civic minimum” or a robust array of democratic dispositions and civic virtues—mutual respect, tolerance, a sense of responsibility and political efficacy in pursuing one’s own and the public interest, the capacity to deliberate, or any other item on the long list of what the logic of congruence is presumed to deliver.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} See id. at 181.
\item \textsuperscript{25} See id. at 181-82.
\item \textsuperscript{26} See John Rawls, A Theory of Justice 462-79 (1971) (tracing how traits and attitudes learned during childhood through family interaction affect moral development in adulthood).
\item \textsuperscript{27} See id. at 464-65.
\item \textsuperscript{28} See id. at 458-59.
\item \textsuperscript{29} See id.
\end{itemize}
The first in this set of challenges takes aim at the assumption of the priority of moral education in childhood, with the implication that if early development is inhibited or misguided, the result is irreversible. Developmental stages are fixed on this common view. There is no other chance to inculcate democratic dispositions, and antidemocratic dispositions developed in childhood are incorrigible. Given this prevalent starting point, we would expect political theorists to take better care to identify the dispositions and competences that are irrevocably lost if they are not formed in childhood. What aspects of civic education cannot be compensated for in adulthood?

A second set of challenges is a corollary to the first: skepticism about the assumption that the moral or political development of children goes on exclusively in the family. This assumption, after all, is what makes the organization of the family a pressing question and justifies attention to the laws and policies that produce, reinforce, or undermine congruence. We would expect political theorists to take better care to ascertain not only what children must learn but also what they learn best or only at home.

A. Only Childhood?

Political theory starts with the idea that certain moral and political values necessary for democratic citizenship are learned during the specific part of the life-cycle when children are raised in families. Theorists assume both the impressionability of children when it comes to democratic (or antidemocratic) dispositions and the irreversibility of these early impressions.

Nothing is more important, or less studied by political theorists, than a sound account of the stages of moral and political development and the educational goals appropriate to them. That should set parameters to what I loosely refer to as democratic education in families. Democratic education depends, or should, on an understanding of moral and cognitive capacities and the elements of civic education appropriate for children and for adults. Nothing is more important than a realistic assessment of the comparative advantages of various institutions when it comes to democratic education; nothing, that is, except understanding the many points in life at which individuals can be educated, even transformed.

30. See id. at 459, 466.
31. See id.
This question is difficult because moral development beyond childhood is plainly understudied, and changes in civic capacity and its exercise by adults are studied even less. We do know that a lot of civic education goes on among adults in the associations of civil society, which affect members’ dispositions and practices. For example, racial attitudes in the U.S. have improved despite the fact that most neighborhoods and schools remain segregated. These changes owe in large part to experiences with diversity in the workplace and in public institutions, and in part because of an array of practical incarnations of public principles of justice and other forms of moral persuasion that infuse the social world of adults. Thus, racial and gender integration in civil society is in part the result of public policy prohibiting discrimination in employment, and of laws compelling restricted membership groups to admit unwanted members. Public principles of justice are enforced in public accommodations, workplaces, housing, and social groups that provide important resources and opportunities. These policies produce and enforce congruence—public norms of fairness and equality and due process—throughout society.

Moreover, laws and public policies of equal protection and due process aim not only at insuring fair opportunity but also at shaping dispositions. This is worth noting: in court opinions and legislative records, democratic education is an explicit justification for public policies mandating congruence.\(^3\) Government as sovereign enforcer shares center stage with government as moral educator. We only have to read the briefs and opinions in a case like *Roberts v. United States Jaycees*,\(^3\) which required restricted membership groups to open their ranks to women, to find the thesis that norms and practices in one domain spill over into others.\(^4\) If the Jaycees close their membership to women, the argument goes, they perpetuate stereotypes about women that will be mirrored in business and political circles.\(^5\) Combating discriminatory attitudes (and removing any reason for imagining that government endorses these attitudes) is as decisive to the ruling as the state’s concrete goal of opening up the channels of commerce.\(^6\)

There are other reasons for attending to democratic education in adulthood. The most wide-ranging recent account of democratic participation, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s *Voice and Equality*,

\(^{34}\) See id. at 625-26.
\(^{35}\) See id.
\(^{36}\) See id. at 609.
details a process of institutional effects on civic engagement that begins with the family (mainly for its influence on levels of education and income, which are correlated to participation) and continues through adult involvements with a range of institutions. Political behavior “is rooted in the non-political world,” they argue, including work and a host of voluntary associations. Their principal finding is the significance of religious involvement as a path to political activity. Being asked to participate (“mobilization”) is crucial, and for many who would otherwise be unlikely to vote, churches are a principal entry into political life and a key political equalizer, offsetting differences in political resources.

In short, there are reasons to question whether crucial elements of democratic development are exclusive to childhood. The same assumptions about the urgency of developing democratic dispositions and habits in children underlie advocacy for civic education in schools. Perhaps both families and schools can be relieved of some of the burden imposed on them by democratic theory. If civil society is reasonably democratic, a host of formative institutions—voluntary associations, workplaces, public accommodations, religious groups, and so on—participate in shaping democratic dispositions in adults. Or, no less important, enforcing fair and respectful behavior in practice, in what I call “the democracy of everyday life.”

A division of moral labor among institutions is possible, but only if we allow that important dispositions and patterns of conduct are alterable, and that adults are educable.

Americans should be particularly open to the idea of ongoing moral development in adulthood. After all, in the U.S., being “born again” is commonplace, and support groups promising moral transformation are big business, enrolling something on the order of four out of ten adults. Indeed, new stages have been added to our understanding of the life-cycle. One is the increasingly extended period between dependent childhood and adult responsibilities, with measurable effects on political participation. The most dramatic addition to life-cycle theory, though, is old age. Old age is not new, but until recently few got there intact. Now

38. See id. at 452.
39. See id. at 455-58 (discussing the impact of parents’ religiosity on political participation).
40. See id.
42. See id. at 66.
we expect to reach sixty-five in good health, and many people are well into their eighties. The current generation is not only the most privileged generation of elderly in history but also the most mobile, independent, and powerful, with a feared political lobby.\textsuperscript{43} The elderly are also a cultural avant-garde. There is the seldom-noted erasure of difference between men and women’s sphere of activity as we age. And in a reversal of “family values,” older men and women use their good health and independence to get away from their children. Retired people contribute to the unstoppable American migration west and south, and whole cities of elderly exist by choice, where for weeks they see no one under the age of sixty and are separated from the day-to-day lives of their relatives.\textsuperscript{44} The political mobilization of the elderly through advocacy groups like AARP is only the most familiar aspect of their distinctive modes of political engagement.

Despite evidence of transformation over the life-cycle, the propensity to fix on early experiences as decisive holds sway in democratic theory. If we think that compensation and reparation are possible, that democratic education missed in childhood can be made up, and especially if we think that most elements of democratic education are originally and properly part of adult experience, then our perspective on the question of congruent families will shift. It will also shift if we think that other formative contexts are as strong or stronger than families when it comes to instilling certain dispositions and practices in children.

\textbf{B. Only in Families?}

For those aspects of democratic education appropriate for children, what are the key constitutive contexts? Even if families do some work in shaping democratic dispositions, they do not do so alone, and certainly not if they remain incongruent with public principles of justice.\textsuperscript{45} Schools of course are the preferred supplement and corrective.\textsuperscript{46} The thought that “schools have become the primary institutions for the formation of democratic character”\textsuperscript{47} explains the weight democratic theorists put on the heated question of school choice. It explains the innumerable studies and experiments in formal and informal civic

\textsuperscript{43} See id.
\textsuperscript{44} See id.
\textsuperscript{46} See id. at 163.
\textsuperscript{47} Id. (quoting Michael McConnell).
education in schools, both as a source of moral dispositions like respect
and of basic political knowledge, which correlate to stable political
attitudes and participation. The strongest case for classroom-based civic education is to produce a baseline of fundamental political
knowledge; without it, even rising levels of education will not translate
into civic engagement. Democratic theorists move back and forth
between families and formal education as schools of justice for children,
contesting what is the exclusive preserve of each, and how each can
compensate for the deficits of the other. Advocates of democratic
education at home and at school share a starting point, though, both
emphasize children and both tend to undervalue democratic education
outside of their respective institutions, even in childhood.

Arguably, neither incongruent families nor pluralist education that
fails to meet a civic minimum are fatal to democratic education if we
credit the formative effects of other institutions in civil society. With
rare exceptions, neither families nor schools are isolated from the flow
of social life. So there are good reasons to take some of the burden of
democratic education off families and schooling and to acknowledge a
division of educational labor here too.

One reason to encourage this step is skepticism about the stability
of attitudes or dispositions developed in childhood. We know little about
what habits spillover outside the orchestrated educational environments
of schools. This is true even for schools dedicated to democratic
education with exemplary curricula, or schools that are well-integrated
racially or religiously. We know little about what school experiences
produce sturdy norms, whether or when the lessons in school effectively
inform adult experiences, and whether they survive contradictory adult
experiences. It appears that certain moral effects traced to early
childhood, such as gender differences in moral orientation, vanish under

48. See, e.g., William A. Galston, Democracy and Civic Engagement—Civic Education and
Political Participation, 85 PHI DELTA KAPPAN 29 (2003) (explaining that research over the past
decade concerning civic education and political participation reveals that the civic knowledge of
today’s U.S. students is not greater than that of previous generations).

49. Compare Amy Gutman, Civic Minimalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Patriotism: Where
Does Democratic Education Stand in Relation to Each?, in MORAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION 23
(Stephen Macedo & Yael Tamir eds., 2002), with Christopher L. Eisgruber, How Do Liberal
Democracies Teach Values?, in MORAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION, supra, at 58, and Michael W.
McConnell, Education Disestablishment: Why Democratic Values Are Ill-Served by Democratic
Control of Schooling, in MORAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION, supra, at 87 (discussing the roles of
families and schools as institutions for inculcating democratic dispositions in children).

50. See Rosenblum, Pluralism, supra note 45, at 163.

51. See VERBA ET AL., supra note 37, at 455-56 (emphasizing the role of religious
involvement as an alternative path to political activity, one which is unconnected to the usual
stratification variables that structure participation).
new social circumstances. Formalized “political socialization” remains largely aspirational. The most that can be confidently said for democratic education of children in schools is that knowledge matters, and that political knowledge and stances shaped later in teen years are more likely to persist than earlier civic education. Not surprisingly given the uncertainty of the democratic effects of schooling, we know even less about the sturdiness of democratic education in families.

In fact, we can have somewhat greater confidence in the moral and civic education of children that goes on outside of both families and schools. Much of what we call civic education—habits of cooperation and reciprocity, for example—is learned mainly among peers in informal settings without adult intervention. Moral psychology confirms that justice, along with certain other virtues, is not confined to the domain of parental influence or to the guidance of teachers but is also the work of other adults in authoritative relations. It owes above all, however, to the practical, spontaneous comments on children’s conduct by friends and other peers. These appear to make genuinely lasting impressions, a fact confirmed by a political science study indicating that the variables most closely related to subsequent political participation are involvement in student government, after-school activities, clubs, and so on, where young people acquire “civic skills.”

Again, if we think that for at least some dispositions, capacities, and values no single formative context is determinative and that one social experience can compensate for the deprivations and depredations of another, we should be interested in what I call “the moral uses of pluralism.” The disposition to fairness, for example, can be shaped on the playground, at school, in secondary associations, and at work. It can be undone in these settings too. My friend who grew up in the Hebrew Jewish Orphanage in New York describes incompetence, repression, and the denial of individuality within the orphanage, but indicates that it was perfectly capable of turning out good citizens with many social virtues, including a sense of fairness.

To repeat, there are good reasons for wanting just families, reasonably congruent with public norms of equality and fairness, but cultivating justice in children is not chief among them. The question

53. See id. at 117.
54. See id. at 1-2.
55. See VERBA ET AL., supra note 37, at 425.
56. See ROSENBLUM, MEMBERSHIP, supra note 41, at 8.
remains: what can only families provide? What can individuals get only in childhood and only at home? What irreplaceable good; what irreversible deficit?

C. Only in Childhood and Only in Families

The compelling contender for childhood learning at home is the development of moral emotions, or moral sense. That, and not democratic education proper, has claim to be the exclusive domain of the family, because basic moral education, the truly irreplaceable foundation of moral sense and practice, is provided by parental authority.57

A Hole in the World is Richard Rhodes’ account of the hole that opened up when his mother committed suicide.58 The book is a testament to the Andrew Drumm Institute in Missouri, where he recovered from an abusive stepmother, developed admirable character traits, and cultivated his identity as a writer. But Rhodes also describes emotional deprivation and despair, chronic depression, and difficulties with his own marriage and children.59 What does this have to do with moral development and democratic education?

William Damon’s The Moral Child reports the presence of empathy, shame, guilt, and anxiety over other people’s violation of standards early in life.60 Parental authority and the shared rules of conduct maintained by their authority are crucial to developing the moral sense.61 “The child’s respect for this authority is the single most important moral legacy that comes out of the child’s relations with the parent.”62 If that relation is cold, erratic, or discordant, children are at moral risk.63 The crucial link, then, is between emotional attachment and the translation of moral emotions into substantive rules, values, and standards. What we get exclusively from early relationships with parents or caretakers is love and the capacity to form intimate attachments. Emotional security does not lead inexorably to good character or good citizenship. But insecurity interferes with the formation of every social connection in which moral awareness is sharpened and translated into

57. See DAMON, supra note 52, at 51.
59. See generally id.
60. See DAMON, supra note 52, at 13.
61. See id. at 52.
62. Id.
63. See, e.g., id. at 122-24.
responsibility. It increases the chance that we will react to others with avoidance, fear, anger, or hostility.

Judgments about which moral capacities most need cultivating differ, guided by whether we think crime, for example, arises from an early lack of empathy or from impulsiveness and aggressiveness, a lack of self-control. The translation of moral emotions into specific values or rules varies too, whether responsibility principally means self-sufficiency or sharing. But the capacity for any movement from moral sense to conduct is formed or deformed early on.64

John Rawls incorporated this understanding in his discussion of moral development in A Theory of Justice.65 Almost alone among political philosophers, Rawls bases his theory of the acquisition of a sense of justice on moral psychology, in particular the work of Piaget and Kohlberg.66 In his account of the stages of moral development, Rawls discusses the process by which unconditional love produces trust in children, a sense of self-worth, and the first stirrings of reciprocity.67 The family provides the necessary grounding for the moral sense that will eventually enable adult men and women to develop the capacity for justice.68 The sense of justice itself is formed only in adulthood, and only after individuals have traversed other moral sites and stages, including the specific type of moral learning that goes on in families and in associational life.69 This account of the family does not rest on the dynamic of congruence, indeed it rejects congruence, and it does not represent the family as a school of justice.

We know that adequate moral development goes on in families of different kinds, and sometimes outside families altogether.70 The World War II concentration camp babies Anna Freud studied had bonded to one another, and strange as it seems, they mothered one another.71 We know of creative efforts to secure conditions for effective parenting, among them Judith Stacey's work on "post-modern" families and Carol

64. See RAWLS, supra note 26, at 458 ("A second thesis is that the desire to conform to moral standards is normally aroused early in life before we achieve an adequate understanding of the reasons for these norms.").
65. See id. at 462.
66. See id. at 459, 461 n.8.
67. See id. at 464.
68. See id. at 473.
69. See id. at 468-69.
70. See OKIN, supra note 17, at 18.
Stack’s study of networks of support among poor African-Americans.\textsuperscript{72} In fact, we are constantly surprised by how even very young children manage to find what they need for themselves under unimaginably adverse conditions. Democratic theory could profitably attend to the conditions that permit families to provide the irreplaceable resources for moral development—reasonable parental authority and emotional security.

Arguably, adults have greater resources for children if they are not poor, overworked, or unempowered at home. We know that two-parent families have a greater probability of succeeding, although these are only a minority of families.\textsuperscript{73} We also know what most often fails—young parents without a high school education or history of earning. The ability to generate attachment in children and to authoritatively set and enforce rules and responsibilities is also crippled by things more elusive and less amenable to public policy than poverty or an unfair division of labor. The various elements of parenting do not all go together, and some can be reinforced by external resources or substituted by other institutions altogether.\textsuperscript{74} In the end, only some adults make good (or good enough) parents. Little in all this has to do with democratic education.

Each of these queries (why childhood? why families? what is unique to moral education in families?) can be sharpened and focused on specific capacities or values deemed crucial to democracy. My point is simply that the presumptive logic of congruence will be affected if we think that key moral capacities are developed in adulthood or in childhood but outside the family. In contemporary democratic theory, however, the logic of congruence typically holds, unrefined and unattuned to the moral division of labor among life stages and institutions. If political theorists restricted themselves to ideal theory, this lapse would not be crucial. After all, imagining the constitution of the family as a school of justice serves the age-old purposes of utopianism. But insofar as democratic theory appeals to the logic of congruence as a real dynamic, indifference to moral psychology is a real weakness. It is a distraction from attempts to understand what, from the point of view of democratic education, children must get and only families can provide.

\textsuperscript{72} See Judith Stacy, Brave New Families (1990) (discussing the incongruous array of resources, patch-work style relationships, and kinship strategies designed to overcome isolation and provide support for supporters). See also Carol B. Stack, All Our Kin 43-44 (1997).

\textsuperscript{73} See Okin, supra note 17, at 22.

\textsuperscript{74} See Rosenblum, Membership, supra note 41, at 67.
III. FAMILIES AND POLITICAL IDENTITY: INHERITED “PARTY ID”

Up to now I have cast a skeptical eye on accounts of the family as a site of democratic education. I want to look at the question from another angle by considering one specific democratic trait: the disposition to participate in electoral politics. Put simply, families shape partisan political identity, or “party id.” I choose this element of democratic education at home because it is concrete, and because the formative effect of the family on political participation and partisanship is demonstrable. This influence of the family on democracy is also egalitarian. Certain respects in which one generation influences the political activity of the next reinforces social stratification; family background often sets boundaries to educational and occupational opportunities, for example. Other influences act as counterweights to stratification across the generations. That includes one aspect of political socialization in particular: partisan political identity.75

Given widespread concern about political apathy and ignorance, and given the assumption that participation is important for the quality and legitimacy of political decision-making, we could expect democratic theorists to see this formative influence of the family on participation as significant and welcome. So it is striking that this confirmed element of democratic education is generally ignored.76 In part, this depreciation of “party id” owes to a widespread depreciation of voting and partisanship generally. Political theorists favor more substantial forms of participation (social movement activism, for example) and more demanding forms of deliberation. In part, it owes to the fact that, from the perspective of democratic theory, this ostensibly beneficial effect of the family on political participation is unwelcome because political identity originating in the family is seen as unreflective.77 Political theorists generally want independent voters, not “blind” partisans.78 In some respects “party id” could be looked on as the same sort of inherited identity as ethnicity or cultural identity, which produce versions of “identity politics” and “voice” that democratic theorists treat respectfully. By contrast, the partisan from youth, in many respects like the individual self-identified by religion, ethnicity, or race, is cast as

75. See VERBA ET AL., supra note 37, at 458-59.
76. It is worth noting that the large literature on identity politics similarly ignores or rejects partisan identity as a significant type of political identity. See BRUCE E. KEITH ET AL., THE MYTH OF THE INDEPENDENT VOTER 2 (1992).
78. See KEITH ET AL., supra note 76, at 5-9.
something of a democratic reprobate. Democratic participation via partisanship is held to an unusually high standard of independence.

This tension between the family as the origin of what can be described as inherited partisanship and democratic standards of civic independence are longstanding. Earlier, I referred to Reynolds v. United States,79 the Supreme Court decision in which polygamy was identified with undemocratic patriarchy.80 A key argument in the debates over anti-polygamy legislation was that "the government of Utah today has no semblance to republican government."81 As then President Grant B. Hayes wrote: "Laws must be enacted which will take from the Mormon Church its temporal power. Mormonism as a sectarian idea is nothing, but as a system of government it is our duty to deal with it as an enemy of our institutions and its supporters and leaders as criminals."82

As I discussed in an earlier essay, this concern was played out in the politics of Mormon women's suffrage, which turned on the independence of women voters.

Enfranchised in 1870, women in Utah were among the first in the United States to vote, and had the backing of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who lobbied against proposed federal antipolygamy legislation. The Congressional bill enfranchising women in all the territories was passed in part with the thought that downtrodden Mormon women would use their political rights to overturn polygamy.83 Since Utah's non-Mormons opposed female suffrage, the enfranchisement of women would have been impossible without the active support of the Mormon leadership, and to the surprise of federal officials, the Mormon-dominated Utah legislature implemented it.84 They made it plain, however, that public participation by women was an extension of domestic relations.85 As voters, women's main political activity was defending plural marriage, and they voted solidly for the Mormon candidate in the elections of 1872.86 Female suffrage, therefore, exacerbated fears that patriarchal polygamy would subvert secular democracy: "I have often seen one solitary man driving into the city a

79. 98 U.S. 145 (1878).
80. See id. at 166-67.
81. See Rosenblum, Democratic Sex, supra note 1, at 75 (quoting then-President Grant B. Hayes).
82. Id.
83. Id. at 76.
84. See id.
85. See id.
86. See id.
whole wagon load of women of all ages and sizes. They were going to the polls and their vote would be one.'87 Eastern feminists joined with other anti-polygamy groups to repeal the franchise of Mormon women in 1887.88

"Faced with a situation in which the Church could not own land or effectively conduct its affairs; in which most of the leaders of the Church were disenfranchised, in prison, or in hiding; and in which no legislative or judicial recourse remains,"

the president of the church announced a counterrevelation inspiring Mormons to halt the teaching of plural marriage and submit to the law . . . . Only after the manifesto abandoning plural marriage and prior to the admission to Utah to statehood in 1896 did the church disband its political arm, the People’s Party, and allow members to affiliate with national parties and to become politically independent.89

Nothing as dramatic as this exercise of patriarchal authority over the vote is at issue today when it comes to “party id.” But it remains true that for democratic theorists the independence of voters is a central moral concern, tied closely as it is to ideals of autonomy in general and democratic deliberation in particular.

Another exemplary moment in which this tension between political identity learned at home and democratic independence was played out was progressivism. Historical progressivism was antiparty, its opposition rooted in the view that party machines are a form of organized crime that aimed at political power for the purpose of enriching leaders and advantaging loyal partisans.90 The view of party supporters as lackeys or dupes (Lincoln Steffens’ famous Shame of the Cities thesis)91 is only slightly worse than the alternative view of partisans as rational calculators out for spoils. The heart of the progressive view is that parties corrupt citizens by creating an entrenched system of dependence.92 "The clientelist politics of the machines, grounded in ethnic loyalty and the exchange of favors for votes, appeared to be a

88. See Rosenblum, Democratic Sex, supra note 1, at 75.
89. Id. at 77.
91. See LINCOLN STEFFENS, THE SHAME OF THE CITIES 1-18 (1904) (stating the idea that supporters of political parties are merely passive participants in the political process in that they are pawns of the bosses who run the political machines).
92. See, e.g., Adam Winkler, Voters’ Rights and Parties’ Wrongs: Early Political Party Regulation in the State Courts, 1886-1915, 100 COLUM. L. REV. 873, 877 (2000) (discussing the Progressive movement’s effort to reform the spoils system of the political party machines, which functioned to render its constituents forever indebted to the party and its bosses).
plague, incubated in immigrant neighborhoods and infecting the entire body politic." Dependence is the ultimate antidemocratic effect of parties and the root of every other form of corruption.

Faith in the independent voter was thus closely linked to an opposition of intellectuals to political machines—and, indeed, to parties as such. Since the thoughtless ones were the supporters of the corrupt party machines, then almost by definition the thinking members of society had to become independents.

"Thoughtless" is the telling term. Separated from corruption, it is a central source of distaste for partisanship.

In its varying historical incarnations, the progressive norm of the independent voter mixes moralistic and intellectual bits in varying measures. Laudatory accounts of independent citizenship as protecting one's own interests and advancing one's own opinions frequently shade over into a more lofty ideal of disinterested voters acting with a view to the public interest. In either case, independence entails aloofness from parties and partisanship. Consider, for example, early praise for Virginia farmer Edward Pendleton:

"None of his opinions were drawn from personal views or party prejudices. He never had a connexion with any political party, ... so that his opinions were the result of his own judgment, and that judgment was rendered upon the best unbiased estimate he could make of the publick good."

The same sentiment is echoed in this contemporary assessment of self-declared Independent voters as uncommonly reflective:

Millions of citizens are still voting, even if they are not relying on party cues or early-learned partisanship to the degree they once did. ... this might encourage the public to judge candidates and parties on their policies and governmental performance—producing a deliberative public that more closely approximates the classic democratic ideal.

94. See HOWARD R. PENNIMAN, THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESS 38 (1962) (recounting the late nineteenth century era in which politically unsophisticated and illiterate immigrants often automatically cast their votes for the political machine despite the rampant corruption which was associated with those institutions).
95. Id.; see also KEITH ET AL., supra note 76, at 38-39.
97. Id. (quoting Edward Pendleton on Thomas Jefferson).
This development may be more likely because the new independents tend to be young, better educated, and cognitively mobilized.98

"Cognitively mobilized" lends independent judgment a connotation that is a bit less moralistic than the eighteenth century unbiased estimate of the public good, with its emphasis on disinterestedness or impartiality, and a bit more intellectual than the progressive account of judgment uninfluenced by political favors. In each case, though, partisanship is represented as an inhibition on autonomous judgment, or as plain evidence of loss of moral and intellectual self-control.

Bribery, bossism, patronage, and fraud—the historical justifications for original progressive antipartyism—are rarities today. But elements of progressivism combine to produce a progressive political mood, which is recurrent. The notion of partisanship as an inheritance of early family experiences, and of democratic participation as an enactment of inherited identity, falls short of independence. This may be one reason contemporary democratic theorists have little interest in or overt aversion to parties and partisanship. The result is that democratic theory has nothing to say about the one tangible product of democratic education in the family.99

Disinterest in partisanship and its sources distances democratic theorists from the political science literature on participation where "party id" is a standard item in the academic lexicon.100 The phrase "party id" refers to individual voters’ avowed affiliation with a political party, and has both cognitive and affective elements.101 It is a matter of personal identification, not legal status or membership, and political science ascertains this identification principally through survey research.102 "Party id" is "antecedent to, distinct from, and influential for individual voting decisions."103 It is a stable predisposition, acquired early.104 It is strongly associated with the motivation to vote and a key (though imperfect) predictor of the voter’s choice.105 The authors of The New American Voter put it this way: "party identification [is] a
remarkably stable predisposition that is crucial to the evaluation of that which is unique to a particular election and that which is generic to a series of elections. This, of course, explains its interest for political scientists. Authors of *The Myth of the Independent Voter* refer skeptically to the "putative growth in independence." Disaggregating and exhaustively analyzing electoral data, they conclude that most Independents are "closet Democrats and Republicans." Most of the time the majority of voters remain partisan in their voting behavior. As one scholar concedes, "party id" is "the Unmoved Mover" of electoral behavior.

The importance for my purposes is the finding that the process of partisan identification is traced to, though hardly explained by, the black box of political socialization in the family. Party loyalty, or something more gripping, such as identification, is learned at home. The inter-generational character of "party id," its inherited and stable character, was, and to a considerable extent remains, a working assumption in political science.

It is not surprising that normative judgments of inherited "party id" are often disparaging. The influence of parents' partisanship on the next generation of voters is described as "inertia." Academic analysts argue that it could be altered by national traumas such as the Civil War or the Great Depression, and there are identifiable periods when a whole cohort is affected by the intrusion of events, like 1968. But "steady state" is the rule. The fact that "party id" is stable and responds "very slowly to voters' impressions of current party leaders, their policies, and their success or failure in handling government" is not a welcome finding. It confirms the fear that partisanship is "blind."

106. *Id.* at 119.
107. KEITH ET AL., supra note 76, at 2.
108. *Id.* at 4 (emphasis omitted); see also Steven Greene, *The Psychological Sources of Partisan-Leaning Independence*, 28 AM. POL. Q. 511, 511 (2000).
109. Most Independents are party "leaners." Self-styled Independents have a complex relation to partisan affiliation. It may be a "way station" to and from partisan identification. Or, voters may regard themselves as both partisan and independent. One study suggests that fifteen percent of adults regard themselves that way, and that another nearly thirty percent of adults, if allowed to choose nonattachment of either kind, will, though the relation between outright anti-partyism and political independence is not robust. Diana Owen et al., *Public Support for the Party System in the United States*, in WILLIAM CROTTY, THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA 12 (2001).
110. See MILLER & SHANKS, supra note 105, at 152.
111. See *id.* at 129.
112. See *id.* at 122.
113. See *id.* at 162.
114. See *id.*
115. *Id.* at 495.
That discontent, combined with evidence that family socialization cannot be responsible for a large fraction of citizens who are party identifiers, spurred a revisionist literature. Rejecting the thesis that family was the most important source of partisan identification, political scientists swung in the opposite direction, arguing that “party id” is responsive to current policy preferences. It exists “only as a political attitude that is the product of contemporary short-term factors with no more durability or centrality than other political attitudes such as preferences on questions of public policy.” This revision makes partisanship and voting a matter of experience and reflection on experience. It makes attitudes responsive to events. It makes “issues” central (giving rise to persistent questions about circularity: the extent to which partisanship structures issue preferences). It shows partisanship to be “subject to the continuing influence of policy preferences and the association of these preferences with party and candidate positions.”

In short, it counters the view of inherited “party id” as unreflecting, describing voters as reasoning if not optimally rational or ideally reasonable.

In response to revisionism, a newer literature has it that revisionism is correct as to some aspects of partisanship but not as to the deeper phenomenon, the psychological state, of “party id.” Researchers continue to produce ever-more refined analyses of the origins and causal status of “party id.” One example is Niemi and Jennings’ careful work across the first stages of the life-cycle of political participation. Their study confirms the revisionist perspective in part, finding that from very early on influences other than the family effect “party id.” They also find erosion (or “defection”) in the connection between parental and offspring partisanship. Parental influence is very high at the onset of adulthood, after which the effects of issues increase rapidly, with a notable and ongoing decline in parental influence. At the same time, however, the study demonstrates that partisan identification is the most stable element of political orientation, and that early learning in the

116. See Niemi & Jennings, supra note 77, at 970.
117. MILLER & SHANKS, supra note 105, at 117.
118. See Niemi & Jennings, supra note 77, at 971-72.
119. Id. at 987.
120. See Greene, supra note 108, at 529-33; MILLER & SHANKS, supra note 105, at 128-32.
121. See, e.g., Greene, supra note 108, at 518-19 (assessing "party id" of older voters through a psychological survey).
122. See generally Niemi & Jennings, supra note 77.
123. See id. at 980.
124. See id. at 972-73.
125. See id. at 986.
family is a major determinate of both initial and enduring political direction.126 "[P]arents’ affiliations are still a greater influence on the offspring than any single issue," they conclude, and the influence of parental partisanship "was always present to a significant degree" into adulthood.127 The study shows too that partisanship becomes less responsive to current political forces as individuals age.128 In short, there is a small window for life-cycle or political event influences on "party id," but partisan identity is not persistently malleable.129 "Party id" is not an immutable commitment, but it remains central and is the most stable element of political identity.130

Why is this important for democratic theories of the family? Because "party id" is important. In fact, partisanship matters whether or not it is a determinate of a voter’s electoral choice. The correlation between party identity and patterns of voting is only part of the story. "Party id" also "shape[s] perceptions and transmit[s] values to the attitudes and beliefs that, in turn, lead to the individual’s vote choice." Most importantly, partisanship is a major influence on voting per se.132 A study of nonvoters indicates that nearly half called themselves Independents.133 At a time when the percentage of nonvoters is high enough to raise the alarm of large-scale democratic failing, "party id," with its presumption of committed political engagement and identity, looks good.134

There is a disjuncture, then, between democratic theorists’ concern for participation and unconcern for partisanship. Party affiliation, again, is strongly rooted in family practice and is consistently related to participation.135 There is also a disjuncture between democratic theory’s strong normative ideals of political independence and the assumption that inherited "party id" is unreflective. The political science literature shows that voters who profess "party id" tend to participate in elections, and further, that partisans are more than just contingent choosers, or

126. See id. at 987.
127. Id. at 980, 986.
128. See id. at 986.
129. See id.
130. See id. at 987.
131. See MILLER & SHANKS, supra note 105, at 133.
132. See id. at 133-34.
133. See JACK C. DOPPELT & ELLEN SHEARER, NON VOTERS 22 (1999) at 22.
134. See id. at 9-12.
135. If only seventeen percent of young people eighteen to twenty-four cast ballots in 1998, and if forces for mobilization are not strong, I can understand real concern. See Peter Levine & Mark Hugo Lopez, THE CENTER FOR INFORMATION & RESEARCH ON CIVIC LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT, YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT HAS DECLINED, BY ANY MEASURE 9 (2002).
spectators of contending sides.\footnote{See, e.g., ANGUS CAMPBELL ET AL., THE AMERICAN VOTER 125 (1960).} A grim view has it that electoral competition in America has replaced religious controversy as a species of entertainment,\footnote{Compare Arthur N. Eisenberg, The Privatization of Our Public Discourse: Civic Discourse, Campaign Finance Reform, and the Virtues of Moderation, 12 CARDOZO STUD. L & Lit. 141, 141 (2000) (arguing that news information providers have turned democratic governance and politicians into the latest form of entertainment) with R. LAURENCE MOORE, SELLING GOD: AMERICAN RELIGION IN THE MARKETPLACE OF CULTURE 120 (1994) (discussing religious controversy as paid amusement in the antebellum era).} but if so, strong partisans are the voters who do not tune in and out aimlessly. They are regular participants in contrast to those who profess no attachment to a political party and are less likely to participate politically.\footnote{See KEITH ET AL., supra note 76, at 47-49.} Researchers debate whether a reply of “no preference” for one party over another in survey research is best classified as “apolitical,” or as a separate classification of “no-preference nonpartisans,”\footnote{See MARTIN P. WATTENBERG, THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES, 1952-1996 43 (enlarged ed. 1998).} or as politically apathetic. (Apathy itself refers variously to sheer passivity, to deliberate nonparticipation, or to movement from participation to disengagement.) “Far from being more attentive, interested, and informed, [I]ndependents tend as a group to . . . have somewhat poorer knowledge of the issues, their image of the candidates is fainter, their interest in the campaign is less, their concern over the outcome is relatively slight.”\footnote{See id. at 41-49.} This forty-year-old assessment continues to hold. The authors of *Myth of the Independent Voter* see “pure Independents” (in contrast to “party leaners” or “closet partisans”) as those most politically ignorant and apathetic.\footnote{See CAMPBELL, supra note 136, at 143.} “Pure Independents” are the least interested in politics, the most politically ignorant, the lightest voters.\footnote{See id. at 42.} In contrast, regular partisans have the level of basic knowledge many political scientists now judge necessary.\footnote{See id. at 24.} “In the era before survey research, independence was the mark of the ideal citizen,” one group of political scientists observes.\footnote{See id. at 41-49.} But independence loses its luster if it is the same as no preference or nonpartisanship and is associated with an array of nonpolitical attitudes and patent political indifference. More luster is lost if it is shown that independence is
associated with alienation from the family ties that typically generate “party id.”

The origin of partisan political identity in the family is unreflective by stringent standards of autonomous decision-making or decision-making as the result of democratic deliberation. It is an identification developed early. In fact, many stern democratic theorists are averse to partisanship per se, based on the belief that it is unreflective. They believe that partisanship is less coherent and publicly reasoned than ideology, and that it does not rest firmly on articulable political values. Literally, it is the antithesis of impartiality. It is cast as an inhibition rather than contributor to deliberation, especially if partisanship is inherited. This assumption needs rethinking, and with it this confirmed element of democratic education at home.

IV. CONCLUSION

This essay comprises critical reflections on a set of assumptions that fashion discussion of the family in contemporary democratic theory. A summary catalogue of these skeptical challenges includes:

- The eclipse of political theory’s traditional emphasis on the affective and irrational formative effects of family in favor of the family as a principled school of justice.
- The assumption that congruence between the organization of family life and the organization of public institutions is morally desirable and politically necessary.
- Unwarranted assumptions about the dynamic of “the logic of congruence,” particularly when it comes to moral and civic development in children.
- Disinterest or disapproval of the aspect of political identity known to be shaped in the family: “party id.”

145. See WATTENBERG, supra note 139, at 10. I should add that the same motivation and dynamic of imitation, the same “black box” of political socialization operates when it comes to seeking political office, as well. See generally Donn M. Kurtz II, The Political Family: A Contemporary View, 32 SOC. PERSPS. 331 (1989).
146. See, e.g., WATTENBERG, supra note 139, at 11-12.
147. See, e.g., id. at 12-13.
148. See, e.g., id. at 13.
149. See, e.g., id. at 10, 13.