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COVER: James D. Watson and Francis Crick with a demonstration model of DNA built in 1953. Last month biologists commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the model with a symposium on current DNA research. See story p. 25. (Photo from *The Double Helix* by J. D. Watson, p. 215, Atheneum, New York, 1968, copyright 1968 by J. D. Watson.)

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Editorial and Business Offices
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street
Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$12.50; 2 yrs., \$22; 3 yrs., \$30. (Add \$2 a year for Canada and Mexico, \$3 for all other countries.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be addressed. Include zip code.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices.

Published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255) TWX 710-822-9433 SCIEN NEWS. ISSN 0036-8423

LETTERS

Interdependence vs. overdependence

In an article which begins with a quotation from William James about the dependence on others of a "social 'me'" (SN: 6/10/78, p. 378, the good health of the people of Roseto, Pa., is ascribed to their adherence to Old World traditions, closely knit families, and mutual supportiveness in a mini-community where "no one is ever abandoned." There's a prediction, and evidence that it's being verified, of a downslide, with "Americanization," in their good health record. The report ends with: "American society emphasizes 'standing on one's own feet' and 'being independent,'" Wolf says. "We just went too far with it."

I hope a number of readers will join me in offering a very different explanation. We know now how *interdependent* all of us on this planet are. We should know that *overdependence* on others can prevent us from finding out what we can do, and gaining competence in making our own decisions and confidence in our ability to manage our own lives. Such lack of preparation for a time when there's no one to give support or protection can leave people unaware of their inner resources and extra vulnerable to shock, disappointment, failure, loss, grief.

Democratic ways of living and government can be initiated, maintained and managed only by people who have gained the independence to be competent in self-management. The Roseto young man's misfortunes in choosing pursuit of material wealth, his early death and the many from heart attack, may have come not from "Americanization" but from lack of it.

An infant doesn't find out until after some brain-development time that he is a separate "I." Since the emergence of major changes in people-studies and the name "social sciences" for a widening range of them, there have been big changes affecting most of us. Do some of us fail to find the "myself" in themselves, or only in others? Get no farther along in their growth than recognition of a "social 'me'"? From overdependence? If so, perhaps some of the changes are traceable to some of them who try to function and prescribe for others in spite of that handicap?

Zoe Cloak
Appleton, Wis.

Ticked off

Ticks are *not* insects; they are arachnids (SN: 6/10/78, p. 375). Does this correction seem petty? Try lumping all subatomic particles under the general heading *electrons* and see how many physicists get annoyed. SCIENCE NEWS, after all, is a science magazine.

Bruce Grant
Williamsburg, Va.

Gay parenting: Two views

In an article, "Children of gays: Sexually 'normal'" (SN: 6/17/78, p. 389), an experiment (to use the term loosely) is reported to be proof that the sexual orientation of teachers (indirectly) and parents has no effect on the normality of their charges. Yet the only type of homosexual that poses a threat in many people's minds, the male homosexual, was apparently excluded from the group of homosexual parents. Also absent, apparently, were transsexuals who became male by surgery, sado-masochistic parents, rapist parents and, strangest of all, *normal* parents.

One of the first tenets of science is that experiments must have controls that are put through the *same tests*, at the *same time*, under the *same conditions*. In the psychological areas, where individuals may subconsciously pick up clues to the role they are playing, it is necessary to perform the tests in a double-blind situation. (The tester does not know whether the subject is part of the group.) It is imperative that the subject never know or guess the purpose of the tests.

Another problem is the small sample size. A sample of 37 to represent the four combinations of subjects admitted (boy-girl subject and lesbian-transsexual parents) is spread terribly thin.

This is a poignant example of the operations of the pseudo-science called psychiatry.

Charles R. Watson
Concord, Calif.

Thank you for your article. Gay people suffer from so much hostility in our culture that this type of educational article is much needed.

As a scientist familiar with the gay lifestyle, I find my own personal observations entirely concordant with the findings of Dr. Green. An almost surprising number of gay men and lesbian women are parents and their children seem to adapt well. I know of one case where a gay man, his lover, his son, his son's wife and their child live happily together in the same large house.

Gay people sometimes marry and have children because of societal pressure to conform to the heterosexual lifestyle. In many cases, these marriages are troubled. The gay partner often continues to seek homosexual outlets, usually surreptitiously. In such cases, the marriage easily ends in divorce, with considerable suffering for both the partners and their children.

With greater acceptance of the gay lifestyle as a reasonable option for those drawn to it, there would be much less pressure for gay people to enter into marriages where the chances of success were low. Consequently, I think that much unhappiness would be avoided. Society and family life would be healthier as a result.

(Name withheld)

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