10 Suffer the Children

Mother’s Choices .................................................................................. 2
Children as Breadwinners ................................................................. 3
Children Without Parents .................................................................... 7
Children’s Agency ............................................................................. 13
Over-protection .................................................................................. 58
What Have We Learned? ................................................................. 70
So What Can Be Done? ................................................................. 71
Mother’s Choices
Children as Breadwinners

Suitcase Makers in Kashgar


“Many labeled “street” children actually move in and out of homelessness, or work on the street during the day or on weekends, but are “attached” to families in some way…Fierce loyalty to family is often coupled with brutal consequences for not
earning their keep. I often wondered why they did not just leave, or keep what they earned for themselves.” (p. 3)


“In many households in low-income communities or urban Brazil it is children who “put the food on the table,” as Bete opined. They are the primary income earners where regular, lucrative employment for unskilled adults is scarce or absent. In families with several children, the income they generate can be significant. Despite Bete’s comment, however, the economic contributions of children yield no power or authority over resources, and in practice they are never really looked upon as the “head of household.” The social category of “child” means they have no jural rights over others nor are they called upon as sources of information about the family and household. They are described as assets, or spectators of the adult world (p. 375)…The children are well aware of the limits of their “freedom” and exercise very little real control or individual “choice” about how earnings are spent or distributed…The social and material pressure to provide an ideal childhood obligates parents to frame their children’s work as temporary despite the fact that they are chronically dependent on the income they produce.” (p. 379)

“Fofão was “given” to his aunt as an able-bodied worker for waged and domestic work after his mother remarried and his uncle died…Many poor children are not too far afield from shifting to the street as a permanent home. Street children can actually eat
more and better than they would at home (p. 381)…It is naïve to assume that if children are not working on the street, than they are home or in school, where they are quarantined from the “depravity” of urban, adult life (p. 382)…Living with one’s family can be one of the riskiest locations for a child…where abuse is more abundant than food (p. 384)

“Sometimes more than their parents, they acquire a certain amount of power or confidence in identifying and navigating the social world beyond the domain of the home or the employer’s home. One mother felt paralyzed when confronted with the bureaucracy of the local health clinic or municipal office, was unaware where things were located, and rarely ventured beyond the entrance to the favela, despite its proximity to local public institutions. These children hop on buses and ride them for free, know that hustling counts and is rewarded economically, and spend the better part of the day in urban, informal labor market, amid the dangers, excitement, sights, sounds, and stimuli of life.” (p. 379)


“Few of the children working on the street in Port-au-Prince were actually born there. Most have made their way to the capital from the countryside…Few street children in Port-au-Prince are orphans. Most have living kin, often in the capital, and some even maintain a certain degree of contact with those relatives…Most of my street-child informants have siblings who continue to live at home, and these siblings are almost always enrolled in school. Ancillary school fees (for books, uniforms, and other supplies) are
sufficiently high as to prohibit most poor households from sending all of the family’s children to school, despite the fact that primary education is free and compulsory for all children in Haiti. As a result poor families are compelled to make painful decisions about which children will attend school and which will be turned out onto the street to work and thus contribute to the household income…Customarily making over three times the national daily wage through street labor, children who are displaced from the household are relied upon by kin to act not only as their own breadwinners but as breadwinners for the rest of the family as well. Once on the street, children experience a sense of freedom that they do not enjoy in the home, and increasingly spend less and less time within the fold of the family (p. 108)…Street children in Port-au-Prince continue to maintain many of their familial bonds, most often through continued, albeit sporadic, economic support of their natal households….Jean-Paul, personally carries gifts of money to relatives in his natal home of Montruis several times a year, so that he can maintain his right to return home should he ever wish to do so.” (p. 109)
Children Without Parents

Siblings in Srinigar


“The Tibetan Children’s Village has been active for over thirty years and has branches throughout the Tibetan refugee settlements. It houses and educates more than six thousand children…This efficient school for refugee orphans…Children stay in bunk rooms
and are looked after by houseparents. The children have relationships with people of all ages, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters: it’s truly like a big family. The Tibetan Children’s Village is an inspiring model for other refugee communities that are trying to provide sound education and care for their children.” (p. 152)


In this young woman’s short lifetime she has lived thus far with her family of origin – a mother and father with a brood of eight children. She has also resided at different times with various elder siblings and their children. She later lived in Ayacucho’s main orphanage, Puericultorio…(p. 377)… Paty’s movements within the Ayacuchano context reflect an understanding of childhood where children are indeed agents…many of the young people with whom I spoke during my fieldwork had a conception of themselves as either engineering or actively consenting to their relocations (p. 378).

Child orphaned at age 8….luckily she and her unmarried siblings were taken in by adult married siblings. However, a new orphanage was built so some of the children were shifted to the institution. Paty was shifted from sibling to sibling, was neglected so she chose to move to the orphanage…Paty enters the orphanage, where, she recalls, she is immediately and generously fed – ‘When I was little I ate a lot and my siblings didn’t want me in their houses because I ate so much, they had their own kids, and they didn’t have money to cook any more.’ (p. 385)… Why might a
young person choose to move to an orphanage when other possibilities were available? Paty’s evaluation points to her own desire for material comforts. (p. 388)


“While Lucas recognizes that his mother did not have many options, he also recognizes that she, because of the trauma she had suffered, was not able to make effective decisions or care for her children as well as she needed to under the circumstances. All the young adults expressed this feeling of greater responsibility for their older and traumatized caretakers, as well as some resentment over the adult responsibilities that they were obliged to assume too early in their lives. Many youths in their descriptions of why they chose to join the guerrilla seemed to reverse roles with the adults in their families as they took on the adult responsibilities of protecting their families and providing economically for them.” (p. 335)


*Goals and sense of power and competence.* In their respective focus groups, the child heads of households (CHHs) and the eldest children in AHHs drew and discussed what they supposed they would be doing in five years’ time and the things they saw as
helping or hindering that. In the CHH group, the children were slow to respond as if they had not thought about long-term goals. Apart from one who said ‘I will be in the grave’, others eventually gave such largely unattainable goals as:

‘I will be in Parliament.’

‘I will be having my own home...’

By contrast, children in the AHH group responded quickly with the following more attainable sorts of goal:

‘I want to be a soldier.’

‘I want to be a policeman.’

‘I want to be a teacher.’ p. 26

…the child heads of households…gave a personal response to scenarios designed to reveal their role and approach to giving/receiving emotional support and conflict resolution within the family…Their responses generally showed both emotional sensitivity and maturity in terms of recognizing distress and dealing with it…Conflict resolution: In a food-sharing scenario (as a possible source of conflict), [they] were unanimous in saying that no matter how little food was available, it was shared. In fact, two child heads of households described going without food so that younger ones could eat.” (p. 27)

The social networking strategies that children in CHHs demonstrate with both adults and peers constitute important elements of resilience: materially, emotionally, and
scholastically…. Particularly for heads of CHHs, the strengths of empathy, sensitivity to the needs of others, effective conflict resolution and emotional support are critical in their circumstances. (p. 28)


“One boy interviewed was told by his father that he was not allowed to spend the night at home if he did not return with a bottle of vodka. Suffering due to their parents’ addictions, many children simply run away.” (X)

“When not confronted by the powerlessness he feels at the loss of a loved one, Kolya (*12 years old*) feels strong and intelligent. He feels he is the man with the solutions for his family. In describing his life before Moscow, when he lived in a shack with no running water and no heat, he is adamant that he understands how to save money and live better than his mother.” (p. X)


“Each year, over 10,000 children are apprehended entering the United States unaccompanied by parents or legal guardians and without valid immigration documents, according to the Department of Justice…The 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child, signed but not ratified by the United States, recognized that all children under the age of 18 require special care and protection. Most importantly, it requires states to address the needs of
unaccompanied children the same extent that is satisfies the need of native children.” (p. 8)


“Unaccompanied children have existed in virtually every past war, famine refugee situation, and natural disaster. Unaccompanied children are also present in present-day emergencies. (p. 3)…Unless special assistance is provided, unaccompanied children are dependent upon the charity of others, which can fall short of even minimal care and protection…When an unaccompanied child has been located, his identity may be uncertain, the whereabouts of his family and their intentions at the time of separation may be unknown, and the current responsibility for the child may be ambiguous…Administrators or agency staff must choose what care should be provided for the child and by whom.” (p. 4)
Children’s Agency

**Children's agency**


**Kenny describes a veritable flood of foreign researchers studying street children.**

“Although the intent may be to “give them a voice” (as if the kids are waiting patiently for the researchers to come), the returns, according to them, are grossly unequal (p. 16)...My initial intention to carry out what I believed to be “action-research” (to deliver appropriate public health information) was quickly reconfigured by the children I met. AIDS, for them, was the least of their worries. Acquiring food, money, and immediate safety were their primary concerns. Even providing condoms proved to be problematic. One evening I accompanied outreach workers to distribute US-donated condoms to street kids. Before leaving, we decided to test a few. Our fingers penetrated all them easily, and the rubber disintegrated in our hands. When we checked the fine print on the box, we noticed an expiration date of three years earlier...What kind of “meaning” or action could I take that would effectively minimize their suffering or change their situation, besides band-aids of food and money?” (p. 17)
In spite of their economic success and contributions to the household economy, children—within the family—remain low status, lacking agency.

“Dalva came into the house from outside, where she had just taken a bath. Her mother began to tease her about her budding breasts…She’s becoming a *moça* now. I have to take her off the street and keep her home with me. Maybe I can get her a job working as a maid…Regardless of her work and responsibilities, Dalva seemed to have little authority or rights.” (p. 71)… “Dalva’s sexualized status increases the possibility of pregnancy, which would redirect her earnings toward her own offspring. Her mother frames this dilemma by saying, “Dalva does not want to work anymore,” meaning Dalva is gradually keeping more of her own earnings for herself…According to Dalva, she started to have “more of a say in things,” undermining her mother’s authority and decisions making concerning how money was spent…A few months later, she announced, “My life is better now. No one tampers with my stuff.” (p. 72)

“Reinaldo, 12, started working at age 6, “*tomando conta dos carros*” (taking care of or watching cars) outside restaurants and bars in the Cidade Alta and on the main road along the coast. His earnings helped support his infirm mother and six siblings. His father was in prison for murder.” (p. 76)

“It was unclear to me what “rites of passage,” social markers, or milestones would mark her transition to adulthood (p. 71)…Their earnings did not seem to provide them with any special status or increased access to resources…Many parents were unsatisfied with
their children’s earnings. Bete would complain that the money her son earned selling newspapers was insufficient. “It does not help much. He doesn’t have to pay rent here, you know,” and she often thought he lied about his earnings in order to keep more for himself (p. 73)…Although the kids referred to themselves as “heads of the household,” in practice there appeared to be little increase in autonomy, power, or decision making. Food was given for good behavior and withheld as punishment, and more and better food was systematically directed toward adult males.” (p. 74)

“‘The best thing that ever happened to me is to become an adult and manage my own life.’ –Jorge, age 12” (p. 63)

In bourgeoisie society, children granted agency…

“In the US, it is generally considered “healthy” for children to have their own bedroom, or share a bedroom with another sibling. Privacy is normal and expected. In the favelas, privacy is an aberration. Dwellings are crowded and indoor space is scarce. Houses are close together, windows are low, and anyone passing by can look in. Domestic arguments can be overheard by everyone.” (p. 57)

Pastimes…

“On Sundays, poor youth from the surrounding area flock to the Cidad Alta to dance, flirt, and drink. There is also a large market for loló on Sundays, as it is a cheap, effective, and readily available intoxicant. The night would often start with youth sniffing loló and slam dancing to Brazilian rap music, until a fight
would break out. This would send everyone scattering, for fear of being shot, which would result in airborne tables and chairs. Beer bottles would be broken and used as makeshift weapons. Rocks and bricks would also start flying. The police would then descend, throw all the young men up against the wall, lift their shirts to see if they were armed., hit a few of them, check their documents, and haul a few away. After the police had left, the music, dancing and loló-sniffing would continue.” (p. 83)

“The young women who have sexual relationships with foreign tourists do not have fixed prices for “services,” do not identify as sex workers, and do not describe what they do as an “occupation.” Sexual relationships with foreigners are just one strategy among many for dealing with poverty, as well as the desire for travel and other material goods. It is often one of the only available economic niches open to poor females…As one young woman said, “I don’t have anything else to lose, and besides, I earn more than a teachers does here…When I provided disposable cameras to some of the young girls I know and asked them to take photographs of daily life in the favela, they took photographs of each other naked instead,..The girls were puzzled and disappointed when I refused to show the photographs to foreign males looking for a Brazilian “girlfriend.” (p. 85)

“The young women …insisted they were treated better by foreign males, as local men were “machistas” and expected them to be servile and feminine, without any financial benefit. In many ways, these girls/women were using the global process of tourism to garner resources in the short term, with the hope that additional
opportunities, such as travel, education, and work, would be forthcoming.” (p. 86)

**Paradox of agency:** granting street kids “agency” means they can steal, gang warfare, fail to pay bus fares, mugging, breaking and entering, prostitution, glue sniffing, loitering, “harassing” passersby, with impunity. Withdrawing agency means confining them to the domestic domain of families that have failed them. **Local solution:** kill them.

“Merchants feel that (p. 102) street youth are a nuisance, that their presence interferes with business, and wish that they would just “disappear”; “Business is slow, because of them. They are all thieves. They make violence. They rob and kill. That is why you should take every one of them and kill them, one by one.” They are outraged that Brazilian law protects minors from being tried as adults: “They just get away with crimes.” These kids need to be taught about law and order,” a police officer told me….According to one shop owner, “Nobody wants kids to get killed. The problem is that there is no other solution. If they are arrested, the courts just let them go and they are free to steal again…Those who defend the position of minors are portrayed as attacking the rights of “decent” people.” (p. 103)

**Non-functional families…**

“Hecht (1998) found that young street dwellers in urban Northeast Brazil do not adopt the label “street kid” until they sever all ties—emotional, physical, and economic—with their *mothers*. Cutting ties with one’s mother means they have adopted “bad” (street) behaviors and have failed to live a righteous life. Even then,
identity as a street child shifts based on the context, usually the “street kid” label primarily with adults and social welfare agents, and “wild one” with one another.” (p. 99)


“When I asked kids why they were living on the street, they inevitably said things were “bad at home, so I left.” (p. 100)

“The Brazilian Constitution (Article 227) states that “it is the duty of the family, society, and state to assure children and adolescents, with absolute priority, of the rights to life, health, food, education, recreation, and professional training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community life, in addition to safeguarding them from all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty and oppression.” (p. 109)

“Interventions that have been less successful are those whose primary goal is to reinsert a “lost” or “stolen” childhood, a notion based on an idealized image of family and home as nurturing environments underpinned by stable relationships.” (p. 110)

**Paradox of children’s agency…**

“Open discussion on children’s rights as workers is difficult because it nervously leans toward condoning the exploitation of children. Policies that would mandate benefits for child workers would effectively abolish the distinction between adult and child workers. Yet at a March 1997 meeting on child labor sponsored by the International Labor Organization (ILO), a number of children
challenged the ILO representative during a panel discussion. While the sponsors advocated for the elimination of child labor, the children advocated for transformation, not abolishment. Policies that prohibit children from working in one arena usually mean that they have to search for work somewhere else anyway. The children said they wanted better wages and hours, jobs with health and accident insurance, and unemployment compensation. Like other workers, they are tired and want paid leaves. They want vehicles for channeling grievances about their work, someone to complain to if people do not pay, or if they are harassed. They want to be recognized as laborers and expose exploitation. They want to be invited to conferences, and participate in the planning and policies that are made on their behalf.” (p. 112)

**Again, a catch 22. Why should manufacturers provide these benefits to children when they don’t provide them to their adult employers? The primary advantage of hiring children, who have distinct liabilities as employees, is that they are willing to work for very low wages. Providing children with benefits nullifies this advantage.**


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Despite Bete’s comment, however, the economic contributions of children yield no power or authority over resources, and in practice they are never really looked upon as the “head of household.” The social category of “child” means they have no jural rights over others nor are they called upon as sources of information about the family and household. They are described as assets, or spectators of the adult world.” (375)

“The children are well aware of the limits of their “freedom” and exercise very little real control or individual “choice” about how earnings are spent or distributed.” (379)

“The social and material pressure to provide an ideal childhood obligates parents to frame their children’s work as temporary despite the fact that they are chronically dependent on the income they produce.” (379)

“Sometimes more than their parents, they acquire a certain amount of power or confidence in identifying and navigating the social world beyond the domain of the home or the employer’s home. One mother felt paralyzed when confronted with the bureaucracy of the local health clinic or municipal office, was unaware where things were located, and rarely ventured beyond the entrance to the favela, despite its proximity to local public institutions. These children hop on buses and ride them for free, know that hustling counts and is rewarded economically, and spend the better part of the day in urban, informal labor market, amid the dangers, excitement, sights, sounds, and stimuli of life.” (379)
Fofao was “given” to his aunt as an able-bodied worker for waged and domestic work after his mother remarried and his uncle died.” (381)

“Many poor children are not too far afield from shifting to the street as a permanent home. Street children can actually eat more and better than they would at home.” (381)

“It is naïve to assume that if children are not working on the street, than they are home or in school, where they are quarantined from the “depravity” of urban, adult life.” (382)

“Living with one’s family can be one of the riskiest locations for a child…where abuse is more abundant than food.” (384)


“While homeless children are aware of the consequences of crime, they are also aware that, by playing into the hands of adults, by allowing themselves to be committed to shelters and orphanages, their quality of life is diminished to the extent that it is it worth taking the risk and joining those living on the streets. Many homeless children are not willing to accept help from shelters, which offer little to no emotional comfort and little more than a roof, bedding, and mediocre food: “I earn more on the streets, get better stuff…” Instead, they use the shelters in times of dire need, returning many times, but always leaving again.” (X)
“Thus, one may come to see these children’s lives not as “pathological,” but as signs of resiliency. Until we recognize the hidden power of homeless children, they will remain, in a sense, at war with the adult world in which they live. Adults, whether from western charity organization or hired by the Russian government, nurture this war, by rounding up homeless children and trying to force them to grow up in prison-like institutions (p. X)…They need to be seen as extremely able and empowered by their experiences, while simultaneously being marginalized by the world in which they live.’ (X)

**Failure to relinquish agency to authorities can lead to incarceration…**

“If a prisoner is at the low end of the totem pole, he becomes the “girl” for those higher in rank. Youths are thus likely to be raped in prison.” (X)


Ayacucho…highland town in Peru

Among rural-to-urban migrants in Peru, the concept of “improving oneself” (*superar*) refers to the process of overcoming poverty through dedicated efforts at self-improvement. This individual effort is situated as a moral act, occurring within a relational web of persons who should also benefit. It is described as a family project and a moral imperative for young people, and they
internalize their role in this group effort. The concept is the economic, social, and moral foundation of the kinship strategy of child circulation, a practice in which children grow up outside of their natal homes. “Improving oneself” is a reason for relocating children into the homes of better-off urban relatives, as well as the justification for placing children with less-well-off rural relatives so that a parent can pursue the same goal…. In child circulation, young people (ranging from approximately 4 to 18 years old) from small villages and towns are sent to live with city-based relatives. In this migration of the young, children provide assistance in the home of the receiving family, who in turn provide for their care and upbringing (p. 60).

Becoming educated is perhaps the heart of improving oneself; Sarita told me that she moved to Ayacucho from her small community “because of my studies, so I could improve myself (superarme), in search of la superación.” The kind of education referred to here is a superior public-school education; small towns have significantly inferior schools or none at all. Such an education will ideally set young people on the road to acceptance into university (a cutthroat and competitive process) and a coveted contract as a (p. 63) public employee. (p. 64)

…the morality of improving oneself…though worded in terms of self, is clearly a family project, and…young people…come to realize that their own potential is often all the family can depend on to get ahead. This realization, or coming of age, shapes their life experience. As they act upon this realization, their agency, often so elusive, can be recognized and documented. (p. 72)
“Widespread similarities among street children prompt one to ask “Why so?” Without doubt the phenomenal growth of the international economy with demands of the global economy for competitive prices has served to pressure local markets for cheap labor, often including children as laborers.” (p. 3)

Not sure I buy this explanation entirely. It may apply in China but Kenyan street kids aren't employed in the "global economy," they are employed in a pick-up local economy guarding cars, carrying groceries, selling candies, sex work. Aside from tourism, not a large employer of children, Kenya is not a major player in the global economy. What HAS changed in Kenya in the last 2-3 decades has been a massive increase in the population. Indeed, Kenya's population growth is the highest in the world. There are just too many kids to feed and employ in the village economy.

“Street children and their families are by and large products of massive urban migration into Nairobi...Just as it is useful for street children as members of the working poor, it is also insightful to conceive of them as a component of the growing numbers of the world’s homeless population (p. 6)...Virtually all writers concerned with African children report family breakdown as the
immediate precipitating push factor that prompts a child to leave home directly for the streets.” (p. 5)

Multi-step process…overpopulation and environmental degradation in rural areas forces urban migration…squalid living conditions in city undermine family cohesiveness …and children go into the streets. Sometimes the process skips the middle step…children go directly from rural village to urban streets.

Social structure

“The idiom of marriage is used to characterize long-term, committed relationships between street children and their mates. The term “husband and wife” is used frequently by partners (p. 79). Some children, while not being in any way biologically related, established themselves as sibling pairs on the streets (p. 82). The use of “fictive” sibling kin terms socially constructed among street children serves to resemble biologically based interdependent family relationships.” (p. 83)

Girls are more useful in village.

There are currently many more programs for boys than girls. This is not surprising since there are many more street boys than street girls.” (p. 138)

Economic activity…

“Many of the street children in our study were extreme resourceful in their adaptive strategies such that their lives and attitudes were seemingly mature beyond their chronological years. We were
stuck by the sense in which many street children were psychologically “invulnerable.”…Begging styles typically include not only verbal requests but also holding a hand out, pouting, exaggerated smiling, and less frequently, threatening gestures with the face and hands…Our observations have revealed that street children successfully beg from a full range of givers…Street boys report that children can beg up to the age of 14 years, when they no longer look “innocent (p. 70)…Many people no longer give money but only food, since it is now known, as we shall see, to be common for street (70) boys to exchange money for glue instead of using the requested money for food of clothing.” (p. 71)

**Pastimes…**

“Nairobi street boys and girls inhale glue, but in the present context it is significant that the reasons they gave us were similar to what street children reported in Brazil, including making life better by dulling hunger, by helping to forget problems, and by giving courage to face danger (p. 4)…Kenyan street children are preoccupied as much if not more with fears of police harassment and negative reactions to them from the public as they are from any sense of being “homeless” or without food.” (p. 7)

**Public attitudes…**

“Some people told Michael that street children should be arrested, having in their view mainly escaped from jails as criminals. One man told him, “The street children are the most dangerous people in the society as they take a lot of drubs. They can steal from or even kill innocent people….Overall, however, the prevailing public view is one of fear, stigma, and avoidance.” (p. 79)

**Pushed out by families…pulled by street culture…**

“Children looked to the street for fulfillment of needs that were unmet in the home. For the children, managing for themselves was an escape from home, where the parents were unable to provide for all. Street children also encountered less regular abuse and a greater variety of food to be gained from the street, strong friendships, and the satisfaction they got from being able to manage for themselves without having to put up with strict parental discipline…While the children’s accounts have been taken at face value in this study, they can also be seen as part of the children’s retrospective attempt to rationalize why they came to live and work on the street rather than live within the family home.” (p. 70)

**Two aspects in rejecting adult norms and supervision. 1) The lure of the peer culture 2) Pragmatic benefits in**

“‘Home,’ for Peter, was characterized by a lack of food, clothing, opportunities for education, love or care, and indeed, familial ties with his alcoholic mother had already become tenuous long before Peter stayed on the street. Thus, spending longer and longer periods of the day on the street with a friend in search of food appeared increasingly attractive and preferable to staying at home…Sixty-nine per cent of the boys and girls who participated
in individual interviews and 60 per cent of the children whose homes I visited cited being beaten by adults as the immediate reason they left home (p. 74)…Most of the children said that they received corporal punishment from members of the immediate household—mothers, fathers, step-parents, grandmothers, older brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins.” (Evans 2004: 75)

**Families economize by ejecting members...**

“Boys are particularly at risk of abuse, neglect and harassment from step-mothers who resent the inheritance rights they have over their own children (p. 81)…Juma’s ‘father’ had four wives, two of whom had left him (including Juma’s mother) and 23 children…When Juma’s father chose to de-emphasise the relationship, due to demands on scarce resources, tensions, and conflicts of interests with his other more favoured wives and children, Juma’s mother and her children were marginalized.” (Evans 2004: 83)

“Tensions around time-use between parents and children begin to surface as soon as children express a preference for recreation (playing) rather than performing jobs assigned to them by adult family members.” (p. 76)


**Urban decay...**

“Sudden increase, over ten years (1983-93), in the number of young people on the streets of Caracas.” (p. 1)
“I focus primarily on approximately fifteen youngsters between the ages of nine and eighteen who I had met on the boulevard. I soon realized that I needed to move beyond the boundaries of the boulevard, for these young people were constantly traveling all over the city. Several of the younger ones, who were known as *chupapegas* (glue sniffers), spent time with their families in the barrios, bathed in Bellas Artes area (on the west side), looked for glue and money in places such as Catia (p. 9) boulevard in the industrial western section, wee invited twice a week to the house of a wealthy philanthropist, and were arrested and taken to police headquarters or to the facilities of the National Institute for the Welfare of the Minor (INAM).” (p. 10)

“In many ways my fieldwork was structured by my own fear and by what risks I was willing to take.” (p. 12)

“Popularly known as la Calle Real de Sabana Grande, my sisters and I, sitting in the back seat, looked out at the plethora of jewelry, clothes, and shoe shops. When I was in high school in the early 1980s, Sabana Grande was transformed into a boulevard.” (p. 35) But unfortunately, the boulevard is now overcrowded and dirty, and visitors, merchants, and police call it “out of control.”…Crime has moved to all the commercial establishments in the area. Not one business has been able to escape the group of undesirables called hampa…The shop owners feel unprotected, since many consider the police to be accomplices of (p. 37) the situation and say that when the police are around it is “only to rip us off” (es para matraquear)…The media portray Sabana Grande as filled with garbage, criminals, prostitutes, street children…” (p. 38)
Younger cohort

“It appears that those ragged-looking youths are drinking soda from the cans, but frequently visitors and locals know they are actually breathing shoe glue. They are also conspicuous for their dirty clothes, which are often too big for them. On the boulevard they are known as the chupapegas (they are sometimes called huelepegas, which also means glue sniffer) (p. 39)…The chupapegas are the youngest people living on the boulevard. Most of the ones I met were between the ages of ten and fifteen, but there are even younger ones…They are looked upon as very young marginals and delinquents—too young to be so terrible, to have so much freedom to “do as they please.”…In some ways the youngest street people on the boulevard embody innocence, vulnerability, and dependency, traditional Western ideals of childhood.” (p. 40)

“The places where chupapegas sleep are called caletas. Caletas are often more enclosed than a bench or the open streets—a corner in an empty lot, an abandoned house, or some odd area in a metro station that offers a bit of privacy.” (p. 44)

“Glue is a child’s drug, whereas adolescents move on to harder drugs and consequently harsher drug effects, as well as more problems related to drug distribution and violence.” (p. 41)…He was ten years old, always dirty and high on glue. Gomita experienced sudden mood swings: one moment he was talkative and smiling and the next he was quiet or aggressive…He was also very clever at playing the “poor child” when confronted by an adult…They were always hanging out together, playing video games and sniffing glue. The boys’ addiction to glue was very
strong…Shoe glue is very easy to obtain, for it is sold cheaply in hardware stores or by shoe repairmen on the streets.” (p. 42)

“Chupapegas experience a normal, congenial erotic attachment that they do not view as homosexuality. Both physical intimacy and sexual exploration are common among them (p. 44)…The youngsters often fight among themselves—they can fight ferociously over a pair of shoes or a sleeping space, for example—but they also share food and in other ways take care of one another (p. 45)…The chupapegas’ favorite activity, other than sniffing glue, is playing video games.” (p. 46)

Street appearance and identity

“It is not good strategy to be too clean; the chupapegas think people give them more money or food when they look dirty. They also believe that being dirty can save them from being taken to police headquarters, because when they smell horrible the police do not want them in their patrol cars…in front of a pizzeria. They would go in groups and first ask for soup. If they did not get it, they would start jumping around and screaming. The waiters would grow tired of this and finally give them food.” (p. 47)

“On the boulevard when the young person is known to be involved with drugs, to be a troublemaker, or to interact aggressively with others, he is considered a malandro…They are usually clean and try hard to wear brand-name clothes, such as fancy Nike sneakers… Wanting to look good or “tener plata para levantar jevas” (to have money for women) are powerful motivations for stealing. If malandros or monos get into trouble, they are not treated as lightly as the chupapegas are. Police are rougher on them
and do not let the go as easily. If they are over eighteen, they may be sent to jail…They would not be seen as “street children” causing mischief, but as malandros committing serious transgressions. They have outgrown their cute rascal image.” (p. 53)

**Rejecting legal but insufficiently rewarding pursuits**

“He quit a job at a bakery after only a few days, because he had to work ten hours a day to make the equivalent of 25 dollars a week, when he could make that or more in one day on the streets…He also worked with an NGO for a brief time but found the routine of picking up paper for recycling very boring and skipped work whenever he felt like it.” (p. 56)

“Philippe Bourgois argues that many of the men in East Harlem he studied enter the legal market at a young age, but before reaching age 21 years of age, almost none of them fulfill their childhood dreams of finding stable, well-paid legal work (1995:144).” (p. 57)


“The reason for abandoning their jobs in the formal economy is related …to their inability to cope with tedious routines, rules, and schedules…From an economic point of view it does not make much sense to them—as it does not for many youngsters in Spanish Harlem—to work hard and regularly for the same amount of money they could make in a few hours stealing (p. 57)…Wilson had attended school until the third grade, but unlike Edison, he was not interested in further schooling. He seemed mainly interested in
“Learning to hustle”

“I have met several older people (twenty to forty years old) who, though they do not live on the boulevard anymore, still go there to organize illegal activities. Many of these older people play the role of a teacher. They interact with the younger boys on the boulevard or in a shared caleta, and they teach the chupapegas the tricks of the streets: how to get more money while begging, how to break into cars, how to make master keys…Often men who are too old to be protected by juvenile laws recruit youngsters to do their dirty work for them.” (p. 64)…What happened after you joined the group? Well, Pechundio and Leroy taught us how to do things. Leroy was great at stealing caletas, breaking into cars with fake keys, and injecting water into security systems of expensive cars.” (p. 67)

“Children pushed out into the streets:

“Mothers are generally the focal point in family relations…One of the major transformations of family dynamics occurs when the mother (p. 97) either dies or for other reasons is unable to care for the children…In other cases the mother lives with her children but is unable to take care of them because of drug and alcohol addiction or because of work. These young people realize that in order to survive they must leave…For most of the youngsters I met, the move to the streets came when their mother lived with a man different from their biological father. In those situations, the child’s relationship with his new stepfather becomes progressively
unbearable, so that he is, at best, made to feel he is a burden to the family (p. 98)…After Edison stole an electric piano to buy drugs, his father kicked him out (p. 101)…Prince came to the boulevard one day by chance and ended up staying. Life there appeared more promising than at home in the barrio with his grandmother.” (p. 64)

Paradox of children’s agency. Granting them “agency” means they are legally responsible for the crimes they commit, in which case, they are confined to prison, e.g. with zero agency. Denying them agency means treating them as irresponsible children needing adult protection. However, in these care facilities they feel they lack the freedom they deserve.

“This discussion shows that the youngsters are fully aware of the sanctioned opinion that defines them as minors not entirely capable of being responsible for their actions…They know that being younger than eighteen gives them, if nothing else, a certain impunity; they know that regardless of the nature of their crime, most often they will not be treated as adult prisoners. After they turn eighteen, whatever their offense, they will no doubt be sent to adult jail, where the conditions are harsher and there is little chance of escape (p. 111)…focusing on practical preventive solutions—are about the age of responsibly and whether it should be lowered from eighteen to sixteen. Some participants in these debates want to reconsider whether the illegal acts of Caracas children and adolescents should continue to be called transgressions instead of crimes, whether children who kill should be considered delinquents.” (p. 117)
“Although Los Chorros is designed as an evaluation and reeducation institution, it does not fulfill either of those functions; the staff there does not even teach the youngsters to read and write. As far as INAM staff is concerned, the young people at Los Chorros do not need more than a bed and food three times a day. In other words, the staff feels it is doing the young a favor by letting them stay there and by protecting them from poverty…The rejection and mistreatment of youngsters at INAM centers is nothing new. These practices are not the product of a recent deterioration of social relations caused by the current socioeconomic crisis.” (p. 156)

“The daily routine is boring, and the youngsters often wish for more interesting things to do…According to the staff, employing the boys in this way is not only good discipline; it also keeps maintenance costs down. Here again the logic seems to be that, after all, they are taking care of young marginals, murderers, and drug addicts whom nobody else wants, so the boys should be grateful for whatever they get (p. 172)…The young people at Carolina watch hours of television, smoke cigarettes, do drugs, drink alcohol, play dominos, produce chucos (homemade weapons), and fight. In their everyday social relations, there is a high degree of physical violence.” (p. 173)

Documents cases where very young children are horribly abused and family members turn a blind eye. Cites studies in India where every second child is abused in some fashion—usually by parents.


**Much less criminal activity in small town.**

“Contact with the street children was at first problematic. Attempting to engage them in the centre of town was difficult as I was soon mobbed by children and crowds of onlookers. As such I came to the stadium on the fringes of town as a quiet, sheltered place to meet and talk to the children.” (p. 311)

“The *chokrra* of Makutano are a well-defined group. The public as well as the children themselves have clear ideas of who the *chokrra* are, and what defines them as *chokrra*; they do not attend school, they scavenge, beg, steal or work for their food, they sniff glue, and they are dirty and unclean.” (p. 314)

**Loss of culture…**

“The children come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, most notable Turkana (17), Luyia (12) and Pokot (8). As far as I have been able to ascertain, these ethnolinguistic identities do not play a significant role in the formation of the children’s identities. Rather, the children argue that the group is for them their ‘family.’ Most of the children only have very partial knowledge of their ‘ethnic’ languages and traditional customs (particularly as the urban and
refugee families from which they primarily come have also been isolated from these traditional customs). The languages and practices of the group itself thus form the primary mode of socialization.” (p. 315)

**Street social structure and socialization…**

“The street children in Makutano recognize a single leader *kichwa* (a Swahili term meaning ‘head’)...The *kichwa* regularly arranges small jobs for the other children, doing things such as fetching water, sweeping shops and verandas, and running errands. In this way, most of the children have built up a network of relations with local employers and perform certain tasks for them on a regular basis. The *kichwa* further acts as an arbitrator and an organizer in a variety of situations. He possesses contact with the local police and is able to argue for a certain degree of respite from police harassment…The principle of ‘chumship,’ … dyadic relationships are essential to becoming a *chokrra*. The dyad aids the process of integration into the group.” (p. 316)...These dyadic friendships involve a younger child forming a close personal attachment to an older, more established street child.” (p. 317)

“Often younger children are more able to earn money through begging or being given jobs as they are seen as more innocent and less threatening, while older children have more contacts and provide jobs, knowledge and protection. The dyads also involve the mutual sharing of foodstuffs, sleeping together and playing games together. There appears to be a strong degree of affection between pairs including hugging and holding hands and a recognition by both parties of a special relationship. They are also
essential at times of illness as the group, and particularly peers, regularly provide and care for each other when sick.” (p. 317)

“There are enjoyable activities (sharing of food, games, etc.) through which children gradually learn the ways of the group and become part of it. Given the parental/home status of many of the children (i.e. few are ‘truly’ homeless or completely orphaned), this likely often occurs over a period of time in which the children ‘test the waters’ before becoming fully integrated. Moreover, as the older child may benefit both materially and psychologically from these dyadic relationships, they may actively participate in the creation of new street children.” (p. 317)

**Economic activity…**

“There is a market for very basic informal labour in Makutano, which the street children appear to have cornered…Further sources of income include scavenging, particularly for discarded plastic bottles and charcoal, which can be sold, and for foodstuffs on market days (Monday and Friday). At the matatu (taxi/bus) stop, and at the market, money or gifts of food can also be obtained in return for carrying luggage. Furthermore, market days lead to a massive increase in demand for errand boys and many enterprising children are able to obtain a fair wage (20-30 Ksh) on these days (p. 318)...Begging is very rarely utilized as a source of income as few townspeople are willing to hand out money.” (p. 319)

“Children know the restaurant employees well and have formed special relationships with them, ensuring that leftovers are reserved for them and that they come at the right time each day to pick them up. Attending church each Sunday is a further resource of a good
meal (p. 318)...Food bought with money is also considered private and, though often shared it is distributed at the discretion of the owner. On the other hand, food scavenged, in particular restaurant leftovers, are considered communal property and will be shared with whoever is around and wants to help themselves.” (p. 319)

When considered alongside the lives of other, family-based, poor urban children, it may be clear that the street children’s standard of living is significantly better.” (p. 326)

**Street Children’s territory....**

[The children’s “territory”] “…consists of Makutano’s central mud road, lined by the backs of the town’s central commercial buildings…The area is hidden, private fact of Makutano, characterized by rubbish, open sewers, mud, and crime. This area is in every way a dirty, polluting, even dangerous area to most inhabitants. To the children, however, the value of this territory is reversed. To them it is their home, it is a safe, reassuring area buffered away from the dangers of (p. 320) the adult world…The children of Makutano have actively and creatively used space to construct a world, which is partially beyond the adult ‘gaze,’ beyond adult supervision…The townspeople have conceded this area to the children and seem unconcerned about taking is back. They have created for themselves an uncontested space. The orientation of the commercial buildings within the town ensures that private business and the disposal of waste will be conducted in this area and therefore that it is a liminal space, both public and private. Adults could take this space back but to do so would result
in moving the children to a more visible spot and precipitate a need to actively engage with their problems.” (p. 321)

Street culture…language

“The children utilize a distinct range of sheng (slang) terms that are not commonly understood by the general public, including other local teenagers and children. The terms naturally relate to subjects of particular interest to the children such as: gaga or biere (glue), tenje (radio), fogo (to be overly intoxicated), tungi (to box or beat), beba (former street children), and bondo (new street children).” (p. 323)

Street culture…dress

“The street children also generally conform to a certain style of dress…The children often appear dirty because most tend to wear large coats that are more difficult to clean…They allow the children to conceal belongings such as money, radios, dice, cards, pots of glue, and even food…The coats further act as a symbol of identity and cohesion. The street children do not look like normal children.” (p. 323)…Shorts, sandals and jumpers (rather than coats) are the normal attire for other children.” (p. 324)

Pastimes…

Gambling games are both the children’s favorite pastime and one of their strongest incorporative elements…The games are actually organized so that no child ever loses much money.” (p. 324)
“Sniffing glue is an integral part of the lives of the children.” (p. 324)…Those who indulge too frequently or who become overly intoxicated are regularly ridiculed by the other children and often have their glue removed from them…Individuals do not go so far as to create overt conflict with mainstream society.” (p. 325)


**Economic activity…**

“Young men cluster in groups according to distinctions in the work they are doing, forming discrete occupational geographies that make up the nodal points in the networks of the urban economy…a group of unlicensed hawkers trying to flog anything from razor blades to children’s toys. Just on from them may be a group of money changers, a clutch of young men with bundles of bank notes who make their money by breaking down their customer’s larger notes into smaller bills for a commission. This is the territorialized world of the bayaye, spaced out by different occupations, each with their own variations and crossovers, but each with their own piece of the street. Each individual has wider networks of social relations beyond and along the street, but it is at these congregational points that a loose affinity is created…One such demarcated zone is Nakasero market, a popular fruit market in central Kampala that has a long history of young men acting as guides for buzungu (white people)…Simply described, the bayaye act as intermediaries between the customer and the vendor, leading
the way to the market stalls and the surrounding shops and kiosks…There is a history in Africa of ‘pilots’ …delinquents fending for themselves by stealing, gambling, acting as guides to sightseers, or directing European sailors and soldiers to prostitutes.” (p. 43)

**Street aristocrat…**

“One of the more successful of the Nakasero bayaye, Peter, still carried the shopping bags for one particular expatriate family…But the most important part of his relationship with this family, and the reason why he did many of the other things, was the pusher-punter arrangement he had with the son. This young expat was a heroin user and it was through the dealing of ‘brown sugar’ that large sums of money could be made. Through this and his other drug related ‘friendships’, Peter had been able to buy a house in a relatively comfortable suburb of the city as well as a motorbike.” (p. 45)


**Social ties…**

“The feeling of being part of a street group can be so emotionally deep that some children simply refuse to accept opportunities to leave the street for fear of losing their friends. Children are more likely to leave the street when this process is a planned strategy that involves friends and peers.” (p. 83)
Economic activity…

“Children involved in the sex market were likely to earn from 150 to 400 Taka per night, while beggars often reported earning less that 30 Taka per day. Well-established porters reported a salary between 50 to 70 Taka per day while newcomer porters did not earn more than 30. These differences in earned income were significant because of the taxes/bribes that street children have to pay. These taxes/bribes are usually levied by mastaans ( mafia members), matabbars (community leaders), police (p. 85)…’Money-guards’ were friends, elder brothers/sisters, shopkeepers, social workers, NGOs, protectors and relatives. As insurance for reducing the risk of losing all their savings, it was common to find children depositing their money with two or three people at the same time.” (p. 86)…When children are ‘addicted’ to street life—meaning they cannot conceive of themselves out of the street—they do not save and tend to spend all of their earnings, living on a day-to-day basis.” (p. 87)

Maintaining ties with natal community…

“Remittances to their original household are also an important aspect of financial management. Particularly at the beginning of their street life some children will send a considerable part of their savings home and in many cases this money represents an important source of additional income for the family. Remittances from working children can contribute up to 34% of the household income…Remittances were used as a form of informal ‘health insurance’ and when seriously sick some children would return home to get medical treatment. Other reasons for sending money
were mainly linked to a feeling of guilt for having left their household and a sense of responsibility to contribute to the (p. 87) household’s income, especially when there were younger siblings in the family.” (p. 88)

**Pastimes…**

“Despite long working hours, participant children valued playtime as a very important part of their daily activities….Sexual activity and drug consumption which, in many cases, are deemed game activities.” (p. 88)

**Push-pull of family vs street society…**


“During in-depth interviews, informants were asked to describe a typical day for a working street youth (*menino trabalhador*) and a homeless street youth (*menino de rua*). A 15-year-old boy described a working street youth's day as follows: ‘If he's in school, he goes to school and when classes end, he buys peanuts and asks his mother to roast them. Then, he goes to the soccer field or plays cards until 5:30, when he goes out to sell [the peanuts] and gets home at 4:00 A.M.’…Homeless youth spend their days very differently: ‘When we go to sleep it's about 5 in the morning; we wake up around 2 or 3 in the afternoon. You wake up, get up, wash your face, if you have (p. 321) money you have breakfast, go out to steal, then you start to sell the stuff and the money all goes on
drugs, because in the street it's all drugs! …Then, you get high, you're all set, then you come down and sleep.’ [Male, 16] (p. 322)

I myself came to the street when I was 6, when my mother died. I would walk around the street; then I met up with the boys and stayed with them. [Male, 17] …I couldn't stand to live at home anymore. My mother liked to hit us, she wouldn't let us go out, we didn't have any freedom…my mother wouldn't let us stay home one single day, we had to work. She was alone, she had separated from my father. [F., female, 22] (p. 323)

**Social structure and socialization…**

“Nearly two thirds of the street-based youth belonged to a *turma* (group or gang), with more street- than home-based boys belonging. The qualitative materials reveal that the *turma* is a close-knit group that provides youngsters with support, companionship, and protection. Group solidarity is enforced by various mechanisms. Members of a *turma* create a private language using code words, gestures, and letter substitutions. New members have to steal and prove their willingness to abide by group norms, and norm breakers are punished, with the ultimate punishment being (p. 323) the *ronda* ("circle"), a ritual involving violence, torture, and gang rape (p. 324)…The *turma* is an important survival mechanism; untempered by adult controls, however, gangs set up a strict code of loyalty and honor, punishing norm breakers harshly and allowing no recourse to a higher authority.” (p. 328)
Economic activity and pastimes…

Home-based youth were more likely to be street vendors and street-based youth to engage in work requiring no capital, such as washing cars or collecting paper to sell. Not surprisingly, girls were more likely to work in domestic settings than boys. Most street-based youth (75%) and some home-based youth (14.8%) engaged in illegal survival activities… Street-based youth were more likely than home-based youth to report lifetime and current use of alcohol and drugs, and lifetime injecting drug use.” (p. 325)


“Public primary school education if free and compulsory for children between the ages of seven and thirteen. Despite this constitutional provision however, there are simply too few public schools to make this aspiration a reality for settled children, let alone for street children. Public schools are not obligated to admit “illegitimate” children and few in fact do, effectively barring any child without proper documents (that is, nearly all street children) from matriculating into the school system. Access to primary education through the parochial schools is sharply limited by tuition.” (47)

Over 250,000 children are working as unpaid domestic servants in Haiti, and the number of children on the street is Haiti is on the rise each year. The cost of education is paramount among the primary causes for child displacement in Haiti… Families, often mothers, are forced to work a bitter calculus to determine which children are
to go to school and which are to be sent into the street to labor or beg and ultimately to fend for their own welfare.” (p. 49)

**Social structure…**

“Children living in the street comport themselves one way to the adult citizen-passerby and quite another way to an agent of one of the police quasi militaries (p. 41)…Street kids do think in classificatory categories about the children with whom they share the pavement. The primary distinctions between groups of kids are age and sex—ti timoun [little kids] are distinguished from gwo timoun [older kids] and tifi [little girls] are distinguished from tigason [little boys]. There are also status distinctions that street children make between one another based on lifestyle. There are those children who are known to be sexually active and those who are not…The most observable distinction made between groups of street kids by street kids is between those children who are drug addicts and those who are not.” (p. 42)

**Street culture dominated by males…**

“The street in Haiti is very gendered terrain, with boys outnumbering girls by a ratio of around four to one (p.38)

“The term timoun lari—street child—is one that first relates to a given child’s relationship to the street, not necessarily to their legal age or whether they actually sleep on the street full time (p. 73) …the street…as the primary site of acculturation…Street children relate to the street as the site of their individual physical development (through puberty and adolescence) as well as an
acculturative institution central to their social and cultural development.” (p. 74)

**Family ties…**

“The decision to stay on the street is made even easier when the child’s natal home is physically abusive, which is somewhat common (p. 49)…“Bèl Marie shares what she has generously with other children on the street, especially five-year-old Ti Amos who as adopted her as a surrogate older sister…Each night, Ti Amos follows Bèl Marie and the other girls with whom she sleeps to their meeting place at the entrance to the cemetery. There they gather together the day’s take of food and money so that it may be shared. She tells me they often stiff glue after eating to help them bliye lamizè-nou [forget their misery] and go to sleep.” (p. 65) …At the end of each day, street children convene with their zanmi at their baz fouaye [home base] to pool their money and their food so as to ensure that everyone has something to eat in the evening.” (p. 119)

**Pastimes…**

“By far the most commonly abused drug among them is also the cheapest to acquire: siment, a cobbler’s glue, the vapors of which are inhaled through the mouth and nose (p. 42)…Marijan [marijuana] is both relatively cheap and easily assessable.” (p. 45)

**Economic activities…**

“By and large the day-to-day activities of most street children are wholly consumed with work and their economic well being is far too tied up in social obligations to their peers for most to
participate in addictive self-indulgence (p. 46)…The money that street children make working or begging on the pavement in Port-au-Prince is substantially higher than that paid by a minimum wage job (p. 49) …The considerable wages that they can make through their labor affords many street children the advantage of eating with a degree of regularity that can be almost twice that of the general adult population.” (p. 118)

“When asked the question, “What sorts of things do you have that are your own?” most children begin their list with their clothes, specially their shoes if they own a pair. Food is invariably second if not first on the list, followed in almost all cases by “lajann ‘m” [my money]. Despite the widespread notion of currency ownership, money is almost invariably shared as a collective resource among zanmi. When I asked eight-year-old Ti Amos the questions, “Do you own money?” he replied with the sharp admonition that “m’pa kapab posede lajann ‘m!” Tout lajann se lajann pèp!” [I can’t own my money! All money belongs to the people!].” (p. 118)

**Violence in street kids’ society…**

“It was Blak-Lovli a fifteen-year-old street boy from the Portail Léogâne section of Port-Au-Prince, who first told me about the “sleeping wars,” rather matter-of-factly; when I asked him when he found it most difficult to sleep on the street. He told me that he found sleep difficult when he was preoccupied with the worry that older boys might drop a cinder block on his head while he sleeps. I asked him why an older boy would want to do such a thing and that is when he explained the brutal, ritualized violence of the
sleeping wars. He explained how the best protection from being hurt by an enemy was to hide oneself when sleeping. This was the same conversation in which Blak Lovli instructed me in how important it was to wash one’s mouth before sleeping on the street, otherwise rats and roaches would come to eat from there at night. He pointed to a small scar on his upper lip that he said was a rat bite.” (p. 34)

“Lagè domi, the ritualized sleeping wars in which children exchange plastic burns and rock blows with one another in the dead of night, while the respective participants in the war are sleeping…The lagè domi…is considered by street youths to be a final solution to long-festering animosities that repeatedly emerge in the form of verbal insults and antagonisms and street scuffles…many of the wars end at best in a serious wounding and at worst with the fatality of one of the protagonists involved.” (p. 130)…The final violent act is usually a blow to the feet, knees, or legs while the victim sleeps, though sometime the head or chest will be targeted. The wounds inflicted are intended to be profoundly brutal.” (p. 131)…Nadès received a slash to the bottom of his feet, which he avenged by burning the foot of his tormentor with molten plastic. Gito stomped Samwel’s chest with his foot, but then himself suffered the agony of a large block dropped onto his legs. Blak Lovli suffered plastic burns to his feel during the course of his sleeping war, which he avenged by dropping a chunk of concrete onto the head of his victim.” (p. 135)

“They are maligned as a social menace by Port-au-Prince citizens who are both frustrated and panicked [by] … an intensification of civil crime in the capital—much of it gun and drug violence
perpetrated by youth gangs…The recruitment of street children by gang lieutenants for the commission of violent crimes, though hardly the norm, is not unheard of.” (p. 52)

**One of the very rare cases of collective action by children that led to social change, albeit of short duration…**

“The Lafanmi Selvai orphanage began in the mid-1980s as the nationalist vision of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.” (p. 145)…Over the course of 1990 and 1991, amid tumultuous social and political upheaval, government violence against citizens, and systematic antidemocratic terror, Lafanmi Selavi emerged as a political safe haven for street children who had become active, participatory agents of democratic change in the days leading up to Aristide’s unprecedented election to the Haitian presidency in December 1990.” (p. 147)

“Launched in 1996 Radyo Timoun [Children’s Radio] accelerated the development of Lafanmi’s reputation as a political institution and facilitated a broader dissemination of its agenda throughout the country. A low-frequency, all-children’s radio station broadcast from the main compound in Pacot, the station provided Lafanmi’s street children with a voice in national debate surrounding poverty, literacy, democratization, and children’s issues (p. 154)…By the summer of 1999 Lavanmi Selavi resembled nothing like what is had been during the height of its professionalism and charity in 1995. It was clear that little financial investment was being devoted to educational program and facility upkeep and some children remarked that living in Lafanmi was not much different than living on the street.” (p. 158)…The morning following the
start of the uprising, the cooks and some of the staff arrived at the orphanage compound for work but were barred entry by the youths inside. After successfully turning away the staff, the boys resumed their rock-and bottle-assault on the surrounding neighborhood form within the walls of Lafanmi… On Aristide’s orders the riot troopers fired tear gas into the facility on the afternoon of the siege and stormed the compound wearing gas masks and riot gear and wielding batons and automatic weapons. Over twenty youths were arrested.” (p. 160)…Today Lafanmi Selavi is no longer an orphanage, an outreach, a clinic, or a school. But it does still broadcast both Radyo Timoun and TeleTimoun as media outlets for Aristide’s political propaganda. Though no street children live at the compound, a handful of youths, maybe a dozen all, work at the stations, maintaining the illusion that “Children’s Radio” and “Children’s Television” are still for and by street children.” (p. 162)

An oft-repeated refrain in the literature on Street Kids is that their “agency” is really quite limited…

“While I as much as anyone else would like to see the numbers of street children dramatically reduced, a decade of work with Haitian street children has convinced me of at least one certainty: while few children would choose to live on the street, those who do demand recognition of their power to act, both in their own interests and in (and sometimes against) the interests of others. But the agency of street children in Port-au-Prince has always been and continues to be mitigated by the structural conditions in which they live, and perhaps never before in Haitian history have their rights to self-determination been more threatened than now.” (p. 183)

**No fixed address…**

In many countries, there are street children who travel, but the number in Colombia is particularly high. According to reliable sources, 70% of the street children in Cartagena come from Medellín or Bogotá. Both boys and girls learn to travel when they are very young – very often at the age of 6-7 – and many have been travelling for years. Although they are aware of their environment and understand the politics and ecology of their country, it is very difficult to assist them because they never stay in the same place long enough. Because they fear being kidnapped, middle class Colombians fear travelling by land. The guerrillas and the paramilitaries put up roadblocks and kidnap whomever they are able to. Street children are the only ones who can travel and get to see their beautiful country. I met one boy who travelled from the Amazon River as far as the Caribbean Sea.
**Child soldiers…**


**Long-term psychological impact…**

It will be argued that early war experiences required a developmental adjustment that profoundly changed the personality
and worldview of these young adults... The data reported in this article were gathered between 1996 and 1997 in a "repopulated" community in rural El Salvador and include a series of interviews with young adults who had essentially grown up in the guerrilla camps (p. 328)

“Unresolved grief and fantasies of revenge were experienced by all the young people who lived as children in the guerrilla camps, although these reactions were perhaps more severe in the young people who became soldiers because they spent more years in the camps. Becoming a soldier, however, created additional conflicts not faced by Lucas, who did not join the guerrillas. In acting out revenge, the youths encountered a crisis in identity. As the young man quoted above put it, after joining the guerrillas he was "no longer the same person, but already someone else." (p. 342)

**Social structure and socialization...**

“...these gangs are made up of *ex-guerrilleros* or ex-soldiers... Violence takes a huge toll on gang members, and hundreds are killed or wounded every year... Young people say that they turn to gangs in search of the respect, solidarity, and support that they have been unable to find in family, community, work, or schools. (p. 332)


“The paradoxical combination of child and soldier is unsettling. Children at war find themselves in an unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood. They are still children, but they
are no longer innocent; they perform adult tasks, but they are not yet adults. The possession of guns and a license to kill remove them from childhood. But child soldiers are still physically and psychologically immature; they are not full adults who are responsible for themselves.” (p. 3)

“Children affected by conflict—both girls and boys—do not constitute a homogenous group of helpless victims but exercise an agency of their own.” (p. 4)

“Boy soldiers are both victims and perpetrators. The processes in which they become involved transform them from children into something else—not quite soldiers, but rather child soldier, and oxymoron that generates an ambiguous association of innocence and guilt. Although these boy soldiers cannot be considered fully responsible for their actions, they cannot be seen as entirely deprived of agency either.” (p. 69)

“In Mozambique, girls and young women played a variety of roles in warfare. They served as guards, carriers of ammunition and supplies, messengers, spies, “wives” and sexual partners, and sometimes as fighters on the front lines. They were used to domestic labor and performed (p. 78) tasks such as carrying water, searching for firewood, cooking, cleaning, and other daily chores. Sexual violence and abuse was a fundamental feature of their experience of captivity.” (p. 79)
Over-protection


Comparable sentiment: “Childhood, according to the seventeenth-century French cleric Pierre de Bérulle, ‘is the most vile and abject state of human nature, after that of death.’” (p. 3)


Contrast US vs Japan


“A lot of this play was more unsupervised than many American children enjoy these days. Because of the physical safety of children in Japan and because they are generally welcome in public places, children are free to come and go as they please, without adults feeling they need to know just where the children are at every minute.” (p. 92)

“Sam’s favorite play activity was fireworks, sold in many stores in Japan and intended for children to use—even the school only recommends that they are careful in doing so. These fireworks
include not only sparklers, but also bottle rockets, fountains, and other delights forbidden to nearly all American children. Almost every night of the summer one can hear and see fireworks going off in Japanese neighborhoods.” (p. 93)

**Everyone participates, no exceptions**…

“Sports Day at Okubo Higashi was set for a Sunday with the expectation that many parents would attend. During the month of September, sometime every day at school was spent in preparing for this event, and four full days were scheduled for the whole school to practice together (p. 97)…There was one relay race for the teachers, and all of them participated. There was a tug-of-war for parents.” (p. 101)

“Fighting is another form of misbehavior that Japanese teachers want to stop in the long run, but as a matter of policy they refrain from stopping fights, not because they don’t recognize what’s going on, but because they know that fights between children are about real issues and they feel children can learn to handle them only with experience….When fights and disputes become the subject of class meetings, as they often do, the details of what went on are not glossed over, but described in full. Efforts by classmates to intervene are talked about, the resolution of the fight is commented on.” (p. 179)


“About 1 in 26 children had food allergies last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Wednesday. That’s up
from 1 in 29 kids in 1997…A couple of decades ago, it was not uncommon to have kids sick all the time and we said, ‘They just have weak stomach’ or ‘They’re sickly,’…Parents today are quicker to take their kids to specialists to check out the possibility of food allergies.” (A6)


…welcome a statistic from the UK, where it was shown that whereas in 1971, 1000 children were killed in traffic, in 1990 this figure was reduced to around 300. Indeed, this was the result of conscious efforts to protect children. However, as found in a study from (p. 7) 1970 and replicated in 1990, the number of children who were allowed access to the city without adult company was reduced accordingly. The share of children who were allowed to (1) cross the road alone, (2) go to leisure places alone, and (3) use buses alone had decreased dramatically during the 20 years.” (p. 8)


Original Article:

“I left my 9-year-old at Bloomingdale's…Was I worried? Yes, a tinge. But it didn't strike me as that daring, either. Isn't New York as safe now as it was in 1963? It's not like we're living in downtown Baghdad…Anyway, for weeks my boy had been
begging for me to please leave him somewhere, anywhere, and let him try to figure out how to get home on his own. So on that sunny Sunday I gave him a subway map, a MetroCard, a $20 bill, and several quarters, just in case he had to make a call…No, I did not give him a cell phone. Didn't want to lose it. And no, I didn't trail him, like a mommy private eye. I trusted him to figure out that he should take the Lexington Avenue subway down, and the 34th Street crosstown bus home. If he couldn't do that, I trusted him to ask a stranger. And then I even trusted that stranger not to think, "Gee, I was about to catch my train home, but now I think I'll abduct this adorable child instead."

"Long story short: My son got home, ecstatic with independence… Half the people I've told this episode to now want to turn me in for child abuse. As if keeping kids under lock and key and helmet and cell phone and nanny and surveillance is the right way to rear kids. It's not. It's debilitating — for us and for them."

**Everyone reminds her of/talks to her about the potential danger of child abduction and other dangers to her child.**

"These days, when a kid dies, the world — i.e., cable TV — blames the parents. It's simple as that. And yet, Trevor Butterworth, a spokesman for the research center STATS.org, said, "The statistics show that this is an incredibly rare event, and you can't protect people from very rare events. It would be like trying to create a shield against being struck by lightning."

"The problem with this everything-is-dangerous outlook is that over-protectiveness is a danger in and of itself. A child who thinks he can't do anything on his own eventually can't.”
See also…


http://freerangekids.wordpress.com/


“…North London consisting of mixed rented and owner-occupied state and private housing….There is rarely any presence of children as a group on the street…The ethnographic evidence of Jay Road supports the general contention that contemporary childhood worlds are shifting to the domestic sphere. Parents, wary of the lack of control they can assert over their children who are playing in public, limit or entirely disallow their children’s participation in outdoor play in the immediate area. Unlike the socializing that children take part in at school (beyond the gaze of neighbors and parents), in the locality there is a pronounced fear of children being seen “getting in with the wrong crowd” (p. 255)…Any group of children playing in or around Jay Road is viewed as “alien” and a potential threat to the residents’ safety and comfort.” (p. 256)
“The use of toys as a means of bringing children in “from the street” and managing “extraordinarily powerful [child/parent] discourses” have a strong historical precedent. But it is across the range of housing and social groups on Jay Road that the contradictory expectation of contemporary care giving are experienced (p. 256)

**Unintended consequences: parents cultivate consumerism in their children to prolong their childhood—e.g. buying them stuffed animals at 10 and PJs with innocent characters—Care Bears. But what if the children become crass materialists? See examples...Whack-a-mole.**

“Although the latest merchandizing offshoot might be eagerly sought after as a birthday present at one moment, its appeal quickly wanes as the style and age association becomes a source of social embarrassment within the broader peer group, as described by ten-year-old Shelly, “I got some annoying pajamas for my birthday—I got Care Bear pajamas [laughing] from my aunty! I pretended I liked them when she was there but then I got my mum to take them back [to the shop]...While homemade goods are understood as encapsulating a thoughtful gesture, they are the most likely items to be pilloried as inappropriate gifts...Eleven-year-old Philip was much happier with his Auntie’s (p. 257) gift because he informed her exactly what brand of microscooter to buy: “I wanted a Huffy because they’re the best at the moment and so I gave her the product code number and price and everything in case she got it wrong. (p. 258)
On the other hand, parents stress about buying the “right” things for their children. Even worse is a child who demands gratification with stuff or one who is disdainful of relative’s largess is a child who seems indifferent.

“But the (p. 258) most distraught parents are not those whose children show a preoccupation with consumer goods but rather those whose children express minimal or negligible interest in contemporary toys or games.” (p. 259)

“Even though Helen and Jim live on a limited income, shopping for their children’s ideal gifts remains paramount. Despite financial restriction, they are keen to see their children enjoy the anticipation involved in daydreaming about, and then excitedly opening, their presents in a manner that constitutes a “normal” family Christmas.” (p. 259)

Birthday parties bring peer pressure and censure into the child—consumer culture. The child’s gifts from family members are subject to peer critique. Birthday parties also represent “safe” social gatherings for children and their peers because attendees are screened by parents.

“Birthdays and birthday parties are the most prominent means by which stages of childhood and children (and their mothers) is expressed in British (261) culture.” (p. 262)

“Eight-year-old Andrew, for example, has an extensive collection of samples of designer aftershave ranging from Gucci to Issey Miyake, which he keeps as prized objects, in a miniature papier-mâché portable model of an Egyptian sarcophagus he made or a
school history project (p. 263)…[His mother] Makes frequent excursions to West End shops of London in order to persuade shop assistants in cosmetic departments to hand over free samples.” (p. 263)


“In Wilton—a middle- to upper-middle-class “historic” suburb of a large Midwestern city that has long been a favored residential spot for the area’s professional class. It has a quaint downtown where the Wilton Inn and various hops and restaurants border the Village Green. It also has well-maintained parts and libraries, two country clubs, and an expansive public recreation center. At the time of the study, approximately 60 percent of adult residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher (the U.S. average is 24.4 percent). Of its population of approximately 50,000, nearly half of employed adults were in managerial and professional occupations, and just over a third were in technical, sales, and administrative support… (p. 275).

“Permissive parenting styles, intensive involvement with electronic and commodity culture, and extensive experience in “democratic” classrooms with “student-centered” pedagogies, all share the characteristic of deferring to students’ experience and judgment, and thereby according them significant authority. We mention this here because the authority that students in general attributed to themselves was a prominent theme in the study as a whole.” (p. 275)

“Discourses of “excellence” and “success” imbued the community and school…Various kinds of cultural capital were also visibly displayed in the school. The capacious commons area had flags from nations around the world draped from the ceiling. … Throughout the school’s hallways, framed artwork adorned the walls, and classical music emanated quietly from speakers.” (p. 276)
“The committee that guided that founding of WBHS decided early on in its deliberations that “the achievement of each student is important and should be recognized.” It was this philosophy that led the school to develop so many forms of what we have come to call “technologies of recognition.” In the commons could be seen the WBHS Hall of Fame; framed photos of National Merit Finalists; members of the Socratic Society…” (p. 276)

“The school had another way of recognizing students that bordered on credential fraud: school policy dictated that all students who graduated with a 4.0 GPA or higher were “valedictorians.” The high school class of 2000 had 28 valedictorians, the class of 2001 had 41, the class of 2002 had 42, and the class of 2003 had 47—10 percent of the class…One teacher of both enriched and regular classes said, “Our job is to get these kids into the best college they can possibly get in to.”…Students and parents in WBHS generally evinced a keen awareness of being in competition with others…Parental bragging about children’s accomplishments was commonplace, as was posting AP test results on refrigerators, and discussing the colleges to which children were applying and gaining admission.” (p. 277)

“Students demonstrated fairly sophisticated consumptive identities as early as ninth grade: One had set up a mutual fund from her previous summer’s earnings, and another watched the stock channel regularly to keep up with his investments.” (p. 277)

“One of the striking characteristics of the high-achieving students in the study was the extent to which they saw themselves as ongoing projects. [they evinced] strong beliefs concerning the role of effort in determining life chances, the role of the self in developing confidence, becoming effective self-advocates, and precociously circumscribed aspirations….Throughout the study there were many examples of how students attempted to exert control over their educational experiences, including routinely questioning their teachers’ authority, critiquing how instruction was delivered, judging the utility of what they were learning, and attempting to personalize relationships with their teachers.” (p. 277)

“Some of us, like think really far ahead. You know, like, if I don’t do this assignment, then my grades are going to go down and my GPA’s going to fall,
and then I can’t get into the college I want, or whatever.” …When asked on the
survey what they wanted their “future life to be like,” Most students responded
with great specificity, both in terms of their expectations, and their strategies for
realizing them…Students at WBHS seemed most animated when discussing
evaluative criteria or their own accomplishments.” (p. 282)

“Students seemed aware of the value of developing the sorts of people skills
desired as cultural capital in the corporate world. A notable feature of the
student culture was the degree to which students from different social locations
and groups got along, supported, and even socialized one another in school.
Students seemed to value being able to move fluidly between groups—
proclaiming with pride that they had different kinds of friends…. [their] “adult
handling skills” …enabled some students to develop potentially exploitable
relationships with other people—including their teachers and counselors.” (p.
284)

“An AP social studies teacher characterized the school culture as a “business
culture.” …It would not be an exaggeration to say that most of these high-
achieving students lived hyperscheduled lives.” (p. 285)

“Female students had higher GPA’s than the male students and were more
immersed in the school’s competitive routines.” (p. 285)

Tribune, November 20th, A3.

“Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, which says roughly 1,400 of
its members and supporters have contacted 24 leading toy companies and
retailers to express concern about ads aimed at kids. “Unfortunately, I will
not be able to purchase many of the toys that my sons have asked for; we
simply don’t have the money,” wrote Todd Helmkamp of Hudson, Ind. “By
bombarding them with advertisements…you are placing parents like me in
the unenviable position of having to tell out children that we can’t afford the
toys you promote.” The Toy Industry Association has responded with a firm
defense of current marketing practices, asserting that children “are a vital part of the gift selection process.” “If children are not aware of what is new and available, how will they be able to tell their families what their preferences are?” an industry statement said.” (Cary 2008:A3)

“‘Parents have trouble saying no,’ said Allison Pugh, a University of Virginia sociology professor. She says parents often buy toys to avoid guilt and ensure their children feel in sync with school classmates.”’ (Cary 2008:A3)

Allison Pugh is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, which she joined in January 2007 after completing her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests coalesce around the question of how social inequality shapes cultures of care, including the meanings, processes and experiences of care in families and communities.

Her book Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture is due out in Spring 2009 from the University of California Press. Based on her dissertation, the project seeks to make sense of explosive spending on children in recent decades. Relying on three years of ethnographic research in three communities in Oakland, California, Professor Pugh found that children negotiate with their peers which commodities have the power to confer “dignity,” or social belonging. She documented that affluent and low-income parents alike engage in symbolic buying to reconcile their conflicting feelings, ideals and consumer reach.

Barnard, Jeff 2009. Doctors paying to hear anti-vaccine views in Oregon. USA Today January 10th


Accessed 1/11/09
Roughly one-third of families with young children in this liberal, highly educated, well-to-do community have obtained a vaccination exemption. Parents will be interviewed regarding their decision not to vaccinate. Speculation has focused on fear of autism, even though vaccines have been specifically ruled out in research on the causes of this rapidly proliferating disorder.
What Have We Learned?

Football Stitcher from Ghandi Camp
**So What Can Be Done?**

**Children as commodities…**


“One of the justifications of inter country adoption has been that it solves the ‘Malthusian’ problem of overpopulation in poor countries and meets the need for children by individuals in countries with sub-replacement fertility (p. 268)…Whatever views one may hold about the ethics of intercountry adoption, one thing remains clear—that is can at best provide help for some individual children, never a solution to wider issues of poverty…The amount of money spent by prospective parents in the process of overseas adoption would amount to a huge sum if invested in the improvement of child care services in the states of origin.” (p. 270)

**More wishful thinking…**


“According to the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), there are now a half million NGOs in Brazil. There are high expectations that NGOs will address issues neglected by the state, regardless of their limited capacity to change laws, or
implement policies and reforms that hamper elite interests, minimize inequity, or empower the poor.” (p. 27)

More wishful thinking…


“The best way to assist street children is to come into compliance with the International Labour Organization’s principle 138, which requires that every child in the world be provided with compulsory, free, and universal education. In Kenya this ideal has been frustrated through a reduction of public commitment to universal education in place of reliance on “cost-sharing” strategies. The materials needed for school attendance…in Nairobi show clearly that dropout rates speak for themselves about the failure of present policy to achieve anything remotely approaching universal school attendance once available in Kenya.” (p. 139)

Paradox of high fertility in an environment in which children inevitably suffer.


“This is a place where it is not at all uncommon for children to die of starvation or sores, thirst. Add to this the rampant gun violence and civil terror that has served as the backdrop of everyday life in Haiti for the past half-century, and it becomes immediately
apparent that if there is any place in the world in which children have no business growing up, it is in the Republic of Haiti.” (p. 1)

**Epidemic of gun violence affecting children while courts and legislators continue to rapidly expand opportunities to purchase and carry weapons.**


A man, fearing to be robbed, opened fire on Trick or Treaters with an assault rifle on Halloween. Quickly getting off 30 rounds, he killed a 12-year-old boy and wounded the boy’s father and brother while the boy’s mother waited in their car at the curb.


A game involving toy guns turned tragic Tuesday night when an 11-year-old Iron County girl found a .22-caliber pistol in an unlocked gun cabinet in her home and shot her 14-year-old brother in the neck.


While trying it out at a gun show, accompanied by his father. Recoil so strong the gun—firing—flipped out of his grasp and he took a fatal bullet in the head.

Fon, Felicia 2008. Police: Boy, 8 -- taught by dad to shoot -- kills him. *Chicago Sun Times* November 9th


ST. JOHNS, Ariz. -- A man who police say was shot and killed by his 8-year-old son had consulted a priest about whether the boy should handle guns and had taught him how to use them, the clergyman said Saturday. Also killed male friend of the father.

**Guns and street kids**


“Interest in guns and weapons in general is strong among young barrio people and those living on the streets. The knowledge these youngsters have about weapons is extensive and precise. They know which weapons are the most effective and which are considered most “masculine.” They can tell you what all the different guns cost and how to obtain them, and they also know what types of armaments police and national guards use and what weapons those authorities sell. For young barrio people, having a gun in their hands can represent ideal manhood. Having or using a gun marks a transition from being an insignificant person or the “good boy” into a “real man.” The gun itself provides not just statues but also the possibility of obtaining the commodities
needed to feel important: motorcycles, shoes, clothes, and so on…Especially with guns such as the nine-millimeter, young individuals acquire a sense of power over others (p. 197)…The youngsters I met at the Carolina believed that using guns was the only way for them to gain respect (p. 198)…The young people I studied…had many body scars of all shape and sizes. Most of the scars were the result of gun fights, but some were self-inflicted, partly as a kind of self-protection but also as a reflection of style…Edison has many body scars, which define him, in his own words, as a street warrior, one who has cleverly escaped the police on several occasions.” (p. 203)

**Guns and child soldiers…**


The new generation of inexpensive assault rifles, with their lightweight designs, can be carried, stripped, and reassembled by children aged ten years or younger…(p. 328)

**The gun violence lottery odds have increased, triggered by mass paranoia following the election of Barack Obama.**


Based on a surge in gun purchases and concealed weapon permit applications, authorities now estimate that potentially one in every
25 adults in Utah is carrying a lethal weapon (p. A1). And many of the permits being issued are for “special” weapons such as machine guns, sawed-off (short-barreled) shotguns and silencers—normally the choice of professional assassins and drug lords (p. A5).


“States with lax gun laws had higher rates of handgun killings, fatal shootings of police officers, and sales of weapons that were used in crimes in other states, according to a study underwritten by a group of more than 300 U.S. mayors.” (Thompson 2009:A16)

“States requiring gun owners to report their weapons lost or stolen to law enforcement authorities export crime guns at less than one-third the rate of states that do not mandate reporting. Seven states have such a requirement.” (Thompson 2009:A16)

Alberty, Eri and Whitehurst, Lindsay 2009. Teen shot to death near school. *Salt Lake Tribune*, Jan 22nd, A1

Very common story in US illustrating one consequence of liberal policy on gun sales.