Introduction

This section is aimed at students. It provides “Cliff Notes” or convenient summaries of the main points in each chapter.
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There is a decided Euroamerican bias in the methods used to analyze children and childrearing. Western psychology tends to view childrearing methods outside of the social norm of First World countries as deviant and harmful to the development of children. The studies of LeVine (the East African Gusii) and Fouts (the Central African Bofí) contradict the prevailing theories of modern psychology, and show that children are not harmed by the childrearing methods of their cultures.
Is there such a thing as childhood?

Philippe Aries, a French philosopher/historian, challenged the view that childhood is universal, and argued that childhood is a construct that has developed within the past few hundred years. He based his theory on the depiction of children in art throughout the ages. This claim prompted scholars to find historical evidence of childhood as a part of human development.
But why bother with childhood?

Many textbooks argue that the stage of childhood resulted from children’s need for an extended training period to acquire the knowledge, skills, and strengths that are necessary for them to function in an adult world. This theory of childhood is known as culture acquisition. This book posits that while modern Euroamerican culture may require such a training period, this theory does not hold true for most other times and cultures, where the number of tasks and skills that must be mastered by children is much smaller.
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Life in a neontocracy

In modern Western society, a neontocracy has become the norm, with children seen as precious cherubs. This view means that children are not expected to contribute economically to their households, but have instead become beneficiaries of the time and resources of their parents. Having a neontocracy has also served to lengthen childhood, with fetuses seen as children shortly after conception, and adults staying in a state of childhood much longer, often delaying having children until they are financially secure.

Examples from the West African Ashanti, ancient Sparta and Rome, East Asia, and Ethiopia illustrate the universal desire for fertility, contrasted with a lack of concern for the children produced.
Current views in science suggest men, women and children have evolved very different reproductive strategies, which will lead to conflict as each tries to further their own agenda. Men will ideally want to impregnate as many women as possible, while women will want to have fewer children. Men will show-off to attract mates by hunting, preferring to hunt the most impressive game, and by baby-parading. Both activities advertise their fitness as potential mates.

Access to women is an issue for most young men, and mating opportunities are often monopolized by the older, more powerful members of society through polygyny. While societies will try to regulate mating through institutions such as marriage, this is not always successful, and does not eliminate conflict. Many societies will also try to control the sexual activity and fidelity of women through extreme measures. Women are more likely to be restricted when they do not contribute economically to the household.

Weaning a child to make way for a younger sibling highlights the conflict between the interests of the child and the interests of the mother. Humans are willing to watch each others’ children, and to share food, which probably led to the development of the family unit.
Love the one you’re with

Women will use their physical attractiveness to secure a mate, and male-female pair bonding may have been developed so that men could have more access to women. Women among the Kpelle, Bari and Ache (South America) will seduce men to act as secondary fathers to their children, giving the offspring a better chance of survival than if they had only one father. It is not always in a woman’s best interest to have as many children as her mate wants, as this may decrease her physical appeal. Women will use various means of contraception to prevent or abort pregnancy to maintain their health.
Polygyny as the great compromise

While contemporary Euroamericans place a high value on monogamy, polygyny has historically been much more common. Polygyny allows men to translate their power and wealth into increased mating opportunities. It allows women to have more reliable providers, and increased help in childcare, but also brings the disadvantage of having to share resources with other wives. Polygyny can create more stable relationships than monogamy.

Older wives are usually guaranteed a place in the house even as their fertility decreases, and wives can gain authority in the household. In monogamy, divorce is common, and women who are abandoned by their husbands and left pregnant, or with children, may have trouble finding a new spouse. Abortion or infanticide is often used to give the woman a better chance at remarriage.
Pregnancy and childbirth

In many cultures, pregnancy is viewed as a dangerous time for both mother and fetus, and taboos are imposed on certain foods and activities to produce a healthy baby. Things that are prohibited are usually believed to have a connection with something that would harm the baby through sympathetic magic. These taboos may actually harm the mother and baby by denying them access to important food groups and nutrients.

Witches are often blamed for an unfavorable delivery, and a woman will often go to great lengths to convince potentially jealous witches that the baby will be a girl, or that she is not really pregnant. Women often will deliver away from the community, including in the homes of their parents, and some cultures will sequester women and their infants for varying amounts of time after the birth. Reasons for this vary, including protection from outside influences, and concerns about the polluting nature of the mother and new baby.
Gene roulette

People are much more likely to care for children that are related to them. Even in our modern society, statistics show children are better off without step parents, who are more likely to neglect or abuse them. The Yuqui (South America), the Eipo (New Guinea), the Masaai (Africa), and the Inuit (North America) are only a few of the peoples that regularly abort or kill infants soon after birth. In many cultures, if twins are born one or both are usually killed. Many cultures do not consider infants people until they are formally introduced into society, making infanticide much more acceptable. Another method of disposing of unwanted children is abandonment, which allows the child to be adopted if anyone wants it.
Pink ribbons of blue, many or few?

The decision to abort or kill a baby is often based on the gender of the infant. In many cultures, boys are valued and unwanted girls are regularly killed soon after birth. In places where women do not contribute to the household economically, infanticide of girls is more prevalent. In contrast, in the places where women are responsible for much of the work or can demand a high bride price, girls are preferred. Whichever gender is more valued will be breast-fed for a longer period, and receive preferential treatment, leading to higher survival rates.

The type of society (foraging, farming) also influences the number of children that are acceptable, and the inter-birth interval is longer for societies that can not afford to feed and care for as many children. In the survivorship vs. production model, foraging societies tend to produce fewer children and care for them very well, while farming societies will produce many children, treat them with relative indifference, and some will survive to adulthood.
Breastfeeding is a safe and nutritious food source for infants, and inter-birth intervals of three or four years are best for the health of the mother and infant. While nursing may help prevent pregnancy, many cultures also help mothers maintain a lengthened inter-birth interval by imposing a taboo on intercourse. It is commonly feared that sexual relations will negatively effect the milk, and the prohibition usually lasts until the infant is weaned, usually at around three years.

Infants are often viewed as fragile and not well connected to their bodies. Many rituals and practices have developed to ensure that parents are taking “proper” care of their child, including village censure of the parents, superstitions, and infant massage.
Illness and death

Many of the treatments that are traditionally used to keep an infant healthy are in direct apposition to the wellbeing of the child. Family problems are often blamed as the root cause of an illness, leading to little or no actual treatment for the infant. Malnourishment is often a problem since children do not receive adequate food as they are being weaned. Infant mortality rates have historically been between 30 and 50 percent for most ancient urban centers. In response to this, most cultures do not publicly acknowledge the child until it seems likely that it will survive. While the ability to limit infant mortality has increased, fatalistic attitudes and apathy have kept implementation of lifesaving measures low.
The extremes of high and low fertility

A move to agriculture will generally lead a society to have more children, shorter inter-birth intervals, and higher infant mortality rates, as well as poorly nourished mothers and malnourished children. Many cultures developed controls, such as the post-partum sex taboo, abortion and infanticide, to keep the population at a sustainable level. As the influence of western culture has grown, these traditional practices have been discouraged, resulting in exploding populations and overused land.

Western society has begun to care for its children relatively recently, following the example of the Netherlands, which was one of the first countries to advocate the humane treatment of children, starting in the 1600s. While children are still viewed as necessary, the prohibitive cost of raising a child has curtailed the number of children most Westerners are choosing to have. In contrast, many of the poorest countries of the world have continued to produce children at a high rate, refusing to see a need for contraceptives, and are often unable to even feed the children they have.
Two exceptions

In inner-city African-American culture, and the culture of Utah Mormons, early breeding, short inter-birth intervals and high fertility are the norm. In the inner-city, girls tend to physically mature at an early age, and producing babies soon after increases the likelihood of aid from mothers and extended family, as well as the fathers of the children. Infant mortality rates are on the rise for this group, as opposed to the country as a whole.

In Utah, Mormons who settled the state focused on producing many children, through polygyny, and as polygyny was outlawed by the mainstream church, high fertility was still seen as necessary for salvation. Faithful Mormon couples continue to place having children as one of the highest priorities in their lives.
The next transition

Elective infertility has become increasingly common in modern societies, but in America the view that having a biological child is worth any price has also become culturally acceptable. Many Americans are willing to spend vast amounts of money in order to conceive a child, or to keep one alive that was born prematurely. However, little money is spent on preventative measures, and the plight of children in Third World countries is usually completely ignored.

Reproduction and sex have become separated and parenting has become entirely optional for many people. While historically reproduction has been a matter of choice, and sex has been regulated by governmental or religious institutions, this situation has been reversed in recent years. Few restrictions placed on sex, and reproduction is being either encouraged or discouraged strongly by the government, as in China, Russia, and Singapore.
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Expensive little cherubs

In the USA, spending on children and a focus on the importance of children has increased dramatically in recent years. Parents will often spare no cost to ensure that the lives of their children are documented, and that children are provided with the best that their parents can afford to purchase for them. In Japan, a similar attitude has developed, with the needs of even an unborn child placed as a top priority for the mother. These attitudes are taken as the norm, and extend to the elaborate way that infants are mourned when they die. This is in marked contrast to most traditional societies, where unwanted or female infants are often killed or abandoned. The high value that is placed on infant life in some societies today has by no means always been common.
Calculating the costs

Among the Ache and other foragers, the availability of resources often determines whether or not a child will be kept by its parents. Children that the parents are not able or willing to support are often abandoned without hesitation. In Brazil and South Africa, mothers often develop a fatalistic attitude towards the death of an infant, neglecting children and withdrawing access to breast milk in order to preserve their own health. A mother may abandon or ignore a child that is less likely to survive, thus saving resources that she can offer to a new child or use herself. These strategies are adaptive measures that help women to cope with the loss of children and better care for viable infants.
The value attached to infants in antiquity

The societies of ancient Greece routinely exposed defective or unwanted infants, with the famous philosophers Plato and Aristotle arguing for measures that would limit the size of poor families.

Infanticide, especially of female infants, was common, increasing and decreasing during some periods. However, those infants that were kept were cared for and named. The societies of ancient Rome and China had similar views on infanticide, and also used abortion to dispose of unwanted infants. Even now, several studies show that infanticide is practiced by two thirds of the societies studied by ethnographers. While infanticide is penalized in most modern societies, it is still not an uncommon practice.
Little angels

The Aztecs, Maya and Inca all sacrificed children, believing that the purity of children made them better intermediaries with the gods. The Tongans and the Phoenicians of ancient Carthage also sacrificed children, as did the Jews until the 6th century B.C.E. Some cultures also sacrificed children to accompany adults in the afterlife.

Children can serve a religious purpose without being sacrificed. Egyptian tomb paintings depict children serving their parents, and children can be donated to the service of a particular god, often gaining favor for their parents. Some cultures believe that children are reincarnations of the ancestors, or semi-divine. Children are viewed according to the needs of their parents and culture.
The emperors Augustus and Hadrian, and later, the early Christian church, tried to stop the practice of infanticide, but the official policies that would have protected children and prohibited infanticide were not easily enforceable. When brought to court, infanticide was tried in church courts, rather than civil courts, as it was considered a less serious crime. During the early medieval period parents were encouraged to give their unwanted children to the church as oblates, but the amount of children that they received forced the church to set up homes for the excess children. These houses continued to receive many children, even with appallingly high mortality rates, and were sometimes supported by monarchs. In China the situation was much the same. The children who were abandoned to the care of church or state often died, or were farmed out to work as servants.
Little demons

As Christianity became more widespread, native cultures had trouble complying with the ban on infanticide. Infanticide was often justified by claiming that the child was a changeling, brought by goblins. If a child was left outside, tortured or neglected, and died as a result, the parents were not considered to have killed a human child. Many other cultures used the same justification of changeling to neglect or kill their children. The Korowai of New Guinea would also use the stigma of witchcraft to justify killing children. Even if a child is not killed outright, it may die because of neglect.


*Children as chattel*

Throughout history, children have often been treated as chattel, or slaves, with parents able to sell them. In Rome, children were often sold into slavery. In India, lower-caste girls were often sold as child brides, and the Ottoman Empire demanded a child from each family to serve the emperor. Slavery was also present in Europe, and in rural Japan the daughters of poor families would be regularly sold as prostitutes. During the Revolutionary War, boys were sometimes sold as substitute soldiers for older men. Slavery continues in some areas of the world, especially Africa, but with instances of child trafficking and exploitation found in more developed countries, such as the US, as well.
In most cultures, children are expected to work as soon as they are able to be useful. Among the Kpelle, good children are those that work well and without complaint. As opportunities for children to work and provide their parents with money arise, more parents send their children to work. While they will be put to work, useful children are more likely to be nurtured and to survive. The Industrial Revolution led parents to place their children in factories as soon as they were able to work. Child labor laws were often vehemently opposed by parents who wanted a child to bring home wages and “begin to pay back for its keep”.

Child workers
Children in paradise

In many foraging societies, children enjoy almost unparalleled freedom and nurturing. Some traits commonly displayed by foraging peoples include a lack of physical discipline for the child, cuddling of infants, postpartum sex taboos, long birth spacing, tolerance for the behavior of children, communal care, and respect for a child’s individuality. The low birth rate in foraging societies increases the value of those children that are born, and they either learn the skills that they need to learn and survive, or die. Foraging has become much less common as a lifestyle in recent years.
In the USA, most children work only for personal gain, and parents often incur great expense in raising children, but expect no monetary return from their offspring. The modern Western attitude towards children was evidenced in England during the eighteenth century, and the idea of using children as a means of personal fulfillment and comfort has only increased since then. The death of children has become a matter of public concern. Many people adopt children not related to them in any way, and parenting has become a fulfilling personal hobby, something to be desired, and a chance to shape a child in one’s own image. This recent change has little in common with the way that children have been viewed in most cultures throughout history.
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Introduction

Women’s roles are not specialized to child minding only in most cultures. “It takes a village” to raise a child has become “national folk wisdom” and is often diverse in practice. Those who can be spared are most likely to care for children, often relieving the mother of child minding tasks.
Who’s your mommy?

Children often spend more time with grandmothers or aunts than with their mothers and in the majority of cultures, a father’s role is non-existent.

The “whole village” notion is supported by early infant care shared among extended family and neighbors. Infant care is often shared with entire villages, individual sponsors designated at birth (Inuit), and wet-nurses.
Infant care

Energy costs greatly increase for mothers when breastfeeding. Taboos are often associated with breastfeeding and strict weaning is encouraged in many societies. Undernutrition is a problem in less-developed countries where parents often invest the minimum to keep a child alive in contrast to developed societies or neontocracies that view children as “cherubs.”
**Peek-a-boo**

Euro-American adults engage face-to-face and talk to their infants, which is rare in other societies. Many societies believe children develop and learn best without adult intervention (!Kung, Kpelle).
Playing with dolls

Primatologists refer to juvenile females’ eagerness to care for children as “baby lust.” Many primates assign infant care responsibilities to daughters which increases their reproductive success. Allomothering daughters learn how to care for their own infants, a benefit largely unknown to our own society where sibling-care is absent.
Toddler rejection

In societies with long-birth intervals (IBI) toddlers are indulged, but the IBI is short in most sedentary societies and toddlers are weaned and “rejected” by their mothers, sent off to play with peers. Not only do mothers “lose interest,” but other adults as well; older siblings are often involved in toddler care.
Older siblings, especially female, are expected to care for and are often more tolerant with toddlers than adults. Toddlers learn expectations and responsibilities through interaction with older peers who can usually discipline them.
Playing on the mother ground

Many societies have an area, or *mother ground*, for mixed-age playgroups where adults can casually oversee activity, which is also common among many primates. This *mother ground* can be a designated area in a village, or a general idea that adults will discreetly supervise children and inform parents if their child misbehaves. Modern societies most likely do not have a *mother ground* where adults would be reluctant to inform parent of misbehavior.
Going to grandma’s place

The presence of grandparents increases the likelihood of more offspring. Grandmothers are often seen as wise and help with childcare. The “taking-in” of children by relatives is very common in many societies, especially between poorer and wealthier relations. In more contemporary societies, grandparents providing childcare may fade, contemporary Japanese grandmothers now express resentment if asked to be their grandchildren’s caretaker.
Life with(out) father

What we view as normal, a nuclear family with a father as the head of household, is actually rare. Males are often absent for long periods herding livestock, military service, etc., and uncertain paternity is common. Fathers are rarely expected to assist in childcare, if they do care for children, maternal behavior is seldom exhibited.

Minding’ is practiced in the Caribbean when a child could potentially be a man’s offspring and he provides indirect rather than direct care of the child. Similar practices are seen among many cultures in relation to paternity where fathers often invest more in a biological child than a step-child or where the paternity is uncertain.

Also, negative impacts may be lessened in societies where divorce is common if there is less paternal involvement.

A consistent role of fathers is that of a disciplinarian. Those without fathers are often stigmatized as maladjusted because of a lack of disciplinary action.
Professional child-minders

Wealth often promotes a hiring-out of childcare responsibilities. In ancient Greek and Roman society, many professions were dedicated to the upbringing of children. During the Middle Ages, many hired wet-nurses or sent their child to be apprenticed at an early age.
New metaphors for childrearing

The Reformation introduced new ideas on the upbringing of children. Puritans argued that it was the parents’ responsibility, not professionals, to effectively raise righteous individuals. Industrialization also shrunk the childcare available, resulting in a more modern view of parenthood.
The “Great” transition

The “Great” or “demographic” transition refers to successful adults’ decision to have few children. In modern society, the burdens of childcare are not dispersed among kin and entire villages, but belong solely to the parents.

Earning income from child labor has been outlawed which has resulted in decreased fertility. Women’s work has moved to the public sphere but domestic responsibilities have not decreased, which can explain the “great” transition along with greater expenses to provide for children.
Raising children in the 21st century

A village model does not translate to modern society and parents are now solely responsible for their children.

Contrasting views on child indulgence has little merit, but family income and mother’s education seem to impact children a great deal. Higher income results in the ability to provide labor-saving resources and a wider variety of childhood activities. Educated mothers generally postpone childbearing until they are emotionally and financially stable.

Modern parents use various modes of teaching which is rarely found in non-mainstream modern parenting. Teaching parents develop relationships with their children which insures success for both themselves and their children in modern society.
# Making Sense

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Children are keen observers. Their observations are often incorporated in their play, showing that they are learning the culture. Children also learn through exploration and the handling of objects, or tools.

In modern society, children are seen as capable of obtaining knowledge from birth. Whereas, in the village, young children are often perceived as “unable to benefit from direct teaching.”
Children as spectators

Most societies are aware of children’s ability to learn through observation. Public ceremonies often display expected behavior, such as the display of post-nuptial blood-stained sheets in the Middle East so children can observe and learn the meaning of this rite.

Culture is not reserved to humans; research has shown that chimpanzees pass on information or practices from generation to generation.

Culture is often explained as information, with humans as the storage units. Social learning, from more mature individuals, combined with a desire to “fit in,” enables the establishment of cultural traditions.
**Exploration and play with objects**

A correlation between play and routine tool use exists; humans and chimpanzees are the only species where both are present. According to Jean Piaget’s theory, object play is considered essential to cognitive development. Object play exists, yet varies, in all societies.

Our society focuses on access to a wide variety of toys, de-emphasizing the need for space to explore, unlike traditional village societies. Children in villages are often left to explore any and all objects around them, sometimes resulting in harm, but emphasizing the importance of learning without parental intervention. Other societies may restrain infants and toddlers, denying access to objects that may cause harm. Some societies prevent crawling because it is perceived as animalistic behavior. However, once ambulatory, most children are allowed to play and explore, with some supervision.
It’s only make believe

Make-believe is critical in practicing culture. Children imitate what they see, even rare events, in make-believe play. Although make-believe play is prevalent in all societies, it seems to be more conservative in other cultures in comparison to ours; social relationships and routines are often repeated.

Contrary to village societies, where children are less concerned with their own lives as displayed through make-believe, contemporary societies expect children to evaluate emotional problems through make believe. Further, middle-class parents while engaging in fantasy play with their children prepare them child for academic success.
The age of reason

Modern society believes intellectual development begins in infancy, perhaps even in the womb. However, these expectations seem to be rare. Children are often seen as incapable of “getting sense” until about 5.

Definitions of intelligence and similar qualities differ from culture to culture; independent or creative thought, as valued in our society, would be looked down on by villagers. Instead they look for obedience, initiative, accepting responsibility and, paying attention.
The decision to teach our children

“Active teaching” is uncommon but “facilitation” may be observed, even in chimpanzees. Learning depends on observation and practice. In most societies, teaching in even a limited degree is put off until mature behavioral patterns are acquired. Active teaching, often through myths, is often used to direct children away from harmful situations but it is rare and is often seen as intrusive.

Active teaching is more prevalent in modern, western society. Cultural expectations dictate what is actively taught, for example, toilet-training. Active teaching is accentuated by the need to meet these expectations for the transition to a student-role.
The importance of good manners

Although active teaching is rare in pre-modern society, etiquette and social relations are taught at an early age. Knowledge of kin structure and relationships are emphasized in order to show proper respect. Bad behavior is quickly corrected, especially because it reflects poorly on the parents.

Unlike traditional society, where active teaching is more prevalent, U.S. society places less emphasis on instruction of etiquette and kin terminology. Assigning almost full responsibility to the mother for childrearing, and teaching, may explain this lack of instruction. That is mothers don’t have to worry as much about socializing their children to be pleasant and conforming to the expectation of others—who may function as substitute caretakers. Rather contemporary, urban mothers seek to “establish bonds of friendship” that may not be aided by etiquette and kin term instruction.
Fostering conformity and altruism

Belonging to a social group offers benefits that promote altruism. “Reciprocal altruism,” or the golden rule, serves as a universal motivation. Language allows for mutual dependency and teaching of altruistic acts.

Anti-social acts are rejected in both upper and lower classes in developed nations. Many strategies are used to promote proper behavior including: proverbs, shaming, teasing, threats, and corporal punishment in many societies. Physical punishment is more common in societies where violence is common.

Euroamericans prefer the rarest strategy of enforcing good behavior: reasoning with children. Although this strategy may not be as effective as others, it promotes negotiation and complex skills, while fostering the (parent-as) teacher-pupil relationship that has become the norm in modern society.
Fostering aggression

Aggression is encouraged among males by both female and male adults in societies where inter-village and inter-sexual conflict is prevalent. Historically, socialization for aggression was more common, but has decreased with European contact and pacification ideals.
**Socializing gender**

Gender differences are rarely unimportant in most societies, and are often prescribed at birth. Males are frequently weaned later and fed more than females. Gender differences are also accentuated through rituals.

Limits and expectations differ with boys and girls. Boys often experience more freedom, and girls have more restrictions imposed on them. Gender differences imposed by adults are amplified by peers. Hazing is a strategy used by peer groups to enforce gender socialization.

Assigned chores also amplify gender differences and seem to be universal. Culturally ascribed gender roles have come under more scrutiny since the Women’s Liberation Movement and many have attempted to eliminate gender stereotypes without success.
Parent-child conversation

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Of Marbles and Morals

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Introduction

Children’s rapid transition from dependence to semi-dependence perpetuates high human fertility. Play activity not only keeps children busy, but plays a role in development. Play is affected by culture and environment, and aids in cultural transmission. Contemporary society uses parent-directed play as a learning medium.
Marbles

Through playing games, specifically marbles, a child develops motor skills, gamesmanship, social understanding, and an appreciation of rules. Children largely replicate what they observe and attempt to join in. When accepted, games and rules are often slightly altered for novices, but experts are expected to adhere to official rules.
*Play with objects*

Specific play objects, toys, are generally absent from village society. In contrast, modern societies place importance on a variety of toys to “nurture the child’s development.”

Object play may decrease with environment and the absence of toys; in contrast to middle-class societies, however, village societies, in the absence of toys, may allow for more active play.
Active play is universally more common among males. Just as primates, humans participate in play to promote physical coordination and development that may serve them in adulthood. Among males, skills developed in active play are beneficial in later male-male competition.

Physically active play is common in post-industrialist society, but has decreased in America. Active play in our society, in comparison to other modern societies, is relatively tame.
Constructing the dominance hierarchy

There are clear, yet subtle, distinctions between rough and tumble play and fighting, including verbal and non-verbal signals. Rough and tumble (R&T) play promotes the development of a dominance hierarchy while following codes of social conduct.

Play-fighting is accentuated in societies where adult violence is common. In some societies, play may develop further than just the need to blow off steam, and result in a “war with words” or minor physical violence.

R & T play is seen as a precursor to sports, and in American society, where both exist, serve as a means for establishing ranks among males, or the dominance hierarchy.
Gamesmanship

Proficiency in gamesmanship influences status in many societies. Among many gamesmanship benefits, the development of diplomatic skills, specifically among boys, benefit them in adulthood.

Males’ proficiency in gamesmanship improves with time, unlike girls’. Girls’ status is less influenced by gamesmanship, and therefore, they exhibit less competitiveness.

Play among boys and girls in the U.S. differs. Girls tend to place less emphasis on rules and aggression, which is highly important in males’ play. There are important exceptions to this generalization as a study of Afro-American girls playing hopscotch shows.

Other benefits from R & T include emotional self-control in public; the development of social skills; success in the public school environment; and increased mating opportunities through negotiation, restraint, and cooperation.
The playgroup

Constraints on the composition of the playgroup may affect the nature of play, such as the size of the playgroup. Mixed ages in playgroups generally affects the complexity of play. Girls participate in more mixed-age playgroups, often because they are assigned sib-care duties.

Complex play results from playgroups composed of similar ages. Our society enforces these types of playgroups with daycare, schooling and organized sports, but it is often rare in many other societies.

Gender is a universal constraint on playgroup composition. Girls, often assigned more domestic responsibilities, play closer to home, when boys have greater freedom to explore and play.
Learning One’s Culture

Children are keen observers and culture is commonly displayed in make-believe play. Skills needed in adulthood are practiced and improved in childhood make-believe. Social rank and gender roles are practiced in domestic scenes, which are commonly demonstrated in play, especially among girls.

Wedding ceremonies and other public rites are also often portrayed in make-believe play.
The moral lessons in folklore

Tales, myths, and oral histories are often infused with themes of social norms including moral lessons. Both village and contemporary societies use stories to teach culture and encourage the development of values and good behavior.

Children’s culture has almost disappeared in many societies with the introduction of modern media and it is now unknown how much children learn of their culture through village “lore.”
How culture shapes children’s play

Culture dictates the nature of play. Societies where inherited rank is prevalent value competitive play, whereas, competitiveness is rare in egalitarian societies.

Dolls are the most common toys in most societies, but are found less in villages where girls are expected to be caretakers of siblings. Lower-class girls, who will be responsible for childcare, often take the role of mother in play with dolls. Upper-class girls, whose responsibilities will not include childcare, approach playing with dolls as a means of being introduced to “principles of the culture such as fashion, etiquette, and polite gatherings like housewarmings and tea parties.”

Differences in make-believe are greatest between modern and traditional societies, and poorer and wealthier populations. Children in traditional societies imitate traditional roles, whereas children in modern societies engage in creative make-believe which may foster abstract and symbolic thought. Poorer minorities play less and are less creative than middle-class children. Children in modern societies may copy behavior seen on television more often than behavior around them that is less visible.

In Euroamerican society, sociodramatic play may serve as a means to develop leadership skills. Westerners perceive this play as essential to development and competency.
Suppression of play

Amount of play is affected by food availability and a mother’s presence. A metaphorical tether is associated with juveniles and their mothers. Mothers dictate appropriate play among children, especially infants and toddlers. Mothers are often concerned for their child’s safety, while the public may consider play as disruptive behavior.

Affluence allows for more play. Many communities, agrarian and poorer, demand child labor in order to remain sustainable. Children’s play is often limited and work responsibilities take its place.

Children’s play may be limited with concern for their moral welfare. With the Protestant Reformation, conservative views sought to eliminate creative play. Modern moralists often limit child exposure to sex and violence.
**Parent-child play**

In the village parents do not play with children.

In middle-class modern society, mother-child play is expected and common. Euroamerican and Asian parents invest much of their time playing with their children. Early engagement with children develops the teacher role of parents that is so significant in modern society. Also, parent-child play facilitates narrative skills as well as other skills important in western school success.

Father-child play is less than and differs from mother-child play among middle-upper-class U.S. fathers. Parent-child play is also less among lower-class U.S. populations.

Children whose play in monitored show greater curiosity and interest, and more imaginative play than children whose caretakers do not intervene in play.
**The adult management of play**

Middle-class EuroAmericans, in contrast to traditional societies, intervene in children’s play from birth. Research has shown that children prefer adult intervention in play; they believe it provides a structured activity which is better than boredom.

In a study of Little League, a prime example of managed play, some expressed concern about constant rigid instruction, with a lack of creativity among the children. When encouraged to organize their own game, the children expressed frustration and dissatisfaction.

Parents often invest significant time and money into managed activities for their children. Parents justify their investments through their child’s achievements, and the assurance that their child is learning beneficial behaviors that lead to success. Children’s involvement in structured activities also relieves parents of childcare responsibilities, allowing them to achieve their own success.
7 His first goat
Introduction

Euroamerican views on child labor differ from the rest of the world. We seek to keep our children from the labor force. Elsewhere, children are expected to contribute economically.
The chore curriculum

Observation and the emulation of skills is the common model of education in traditional villages. Tasks are assigned to capable age groups and increase in difficulty over time. This ranking of age with associated difficulty of tasks may be called the chore “curriculum” and is present in many societies.

Tasks are often “graded” to be matched with a child’s strength, size, and competency. Make-believe play introduces children to tasks where they can practice the needed skills. Adults may also accelerate the child’s skill acquisition by providing tools, such as blunt knives or sticks.

Children need little encouragement to emulate others, and are assigned additional tasks when skills are proven. Although very young children are not preferred for most tasks, they are frequently assigned errands and sibling care. Children are eager to emulate older siblings.

Chore curricula can vary greatly within and across cultures. Where children may interfere more than contribute to work, their efforts are discouraged. The chore curriculum is individualized to coincide with the child’s abilities and pace of learning.
All work and no play

Separation of work and play is prevalent in industrial society. However, in nonindustrial societies where children participate early in work, there is a blurring of the distinction between work and play.

Agrarian societies generally exploit children as laborers earlier than foraging and modern elite societies.

Gender roles first become apparent through the play-to-work transition. In village society, girls consistently spend more time doing domestic chores while boys spend more time playing. Mother’s tasks allow for frequent interaction with their daughters and can be shared with a child. In contrast, boys do not socialize with their fathers whose tasks are often too strenuous to share with a child.

“These gender differences are maintained even as societies modernize.” Girl’s work coincides with her mother’s work, and remains around the household. Unlike boy’s work that is far-ranging and often looks like play, girls work looks like work. Play-to-work transition can also be accelerated by food shortages, a loss of the father or mother, illness, and other environmental factors.

Tasks are usually gender-specific, and when gender roles are breached, it is often seen as unnatural.
Productivity and proficiency

Village curriculum differs from the standardized public school system. The No Child Left Behind initiative requires structured teaching, concentration, and memorization. In contrast, in the village curriculum, some skills may require years of practice for mastery, while most are learned easily at a relatively young age.

Foraging societies may be more demanding for skill mastery in comparison to farming societies. However, skill acquisition is still fairly undemanding. Children in foraging societies acquire skills and an early age. When practice is interrupted, such as attending boarding school, no negative effects are apparent. Some tasks are fairly simple and the skills needed can be obtained at an early age. Mastery is delayed when tasks require strength and experience.

With shifts in the family, such as the arrival of new baby or the marriage of an older daughter, children whose “work” has been playful and casual will need to rapidly increase productivity and efficiency.
Learning Crafts

In the West, it is accepted that every child should be formally educated to a specific level. In the village, the belief is that children must be competent and show an interest before being instructed. The chore curriculum is “required,” the craft curriculum is voluntary and may be discouraged.

Apprenticeship, more similar to formal schooling than self-guided skill-acquisition associated with chore curriculum, becomes more common with craft curriculum when children formally acquire skills.
Apprenticeship

Expected fees differentiate apprenticeship from general skill acquisition. Apprentices usually live with their masters and a period of menial service is required. Early stage of menial work provides a pre-payment and offers a means for evaluation of the apprentice by the master.

Parents are unlikely to apprentice their children. Abuse is often used as a means for discipline and parents are considered inadequate to provide the proper discipline. Masters only teach aspects of a process that is not obvious. Apprentices are expected to “steal” techniques and lore from their masters in order to develop expertise. When expertise is developed, apprentices continue working with their master, contributing all their work to him as a payment for the opportunity.

Apprenticeship does not lead to village prestige. Accomplishments are based on fundamental qualities like motivation and practice that are expected in all types of work, either designer/builder or goat herder. Teaching and learning are not considered necessary for success as an apprentice or the acquisition of any skill.
Becoming a navigator

Unlike the hands-off approach to skill acquisition, the Puluwat encourage their children learn to navigate despite the small number of individuals who actually succeed in their endeavors. Learning to navigate takes on the appearance of formal schooling in modern society; memorization is essential along with testing and lengthy instruction.
Milk debt

Parents, especially mothers, view their children as critical laborers, whose labor socialize them for society and pays their “mother back for the ‘milk debt.’” Children are expected to complete tasks to lessen their parent’s burden. Assistance by the parent is rare and is more often provided by other children. Praise for completion of a task is also rare.

Many communities rely on child labor for survival. Parents may discourage acquisition of more complex skills and reassign mastered tasks. Expectations rise in labor-intensive agricultural communities, whereas, in foraging communities, expectations are lower. Parents manage children’s time and labor to maximize the benefits to themselves and the family.
In US history of “taming” the frontier, large families were essential, and children were expected to fulfill many responsibilities. Homesteaders also relied on orphans for labor. Thousands of children were sent west to supply farm labor. Orphan trains continued until 1929, indicating our recent shift from viewing children as chattel to cherubs.
Poverty and children’s labor

In many less-developed countries, parents continue to have children despite increasing burdens. Children are often recruited for dangerous labor where payment is uncertain. Children often go away to labor and endure harsh treatment from employers. Despite poor working conditions, they volunteer and are encouraged by parents to go.

Fictive kin ties are created to mask virtual child slavery which is often labeled as an “apprenticeship.” Children, lacking skills, are released after years of providing free labor. When children are paid they are expected to send their earnings home.

Child laborers often endure physical and sexual abuse. Child prostitution provides families with higher income than other work, and parents seem guiltless in sending their children to serve as prostitutes. Children often work with harmful chemicals and materials in factories. When laws are created to protect children, traffickers easily get around them.

Although the West considers children as cherubs, children are perceived as chattel in many areas of the world. Impoverished children in Third World countries lives are unmistakably miserable compared to contemporary children, even those in poverty.
Until recently, the conditions of child laborers in Third World countries were found in the West as well. Apprenticeship generally resulted not in skilled workers, but laborers. Girls went into domestic service, generally never marrying, but bearing children of their master.

During the industrial revolution, parents saw an avenue for increasing their return from children, which resulted in an increase in birth-rate. Early reform was more often directed towards children who were not working, and termination of child labor was resisted.

Improvements in technology decreased child labor. Menial tasks performed by children were accomplished through technology, requiring more mature workers to operate machines.

A recent trend among parents is the decision to have fewer children who they can support and provide for. These parents, desiring a different fate for their children and obtaining middle-class status, look down on those who have many children.

*Plus ca change*
# Introduction

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Introduction

Biological maturity is associated with adolescence, but may not necessarily correlate with social maturity in all societies. Adolescence has resulted in a “youth culture” in the West, however, in some societies, adolescence may be brief or virtually non-existent.

A distinct and extensive adolescence period exists in modern societies. Although teenage couples are capable of reproduction, society suppresses these desires to step towards adulthood. Conflicts among parental authority and adolescent autonomy arise in this state of limbo, “neither child nor adult.”
Boys and girls begin to segregate in the preteen years. Like primates, adolescent males often engage in boisterous behavior. US adolescents enjoy their independence, which is often perpetuated by disposable income, and participate in anti-social behavior, theoretically rejecting adult culture.

While our society may try to restrict adolescent behavior, other cultures may accommodate it. Dormitories for adolescent male groups exist in many parts of the world. These social groups may provide village labor and social relations that benefit the community economically.

Curiosity and risk-taking among adolescents may allow for social-rank advancement, new discoveries that benefit the community at-large, and increased mating opportunities. However, risk-taking may be dangerous and deplored, especially among contemporary society.

American adolescents seem to be self-absorbed. Contemporary adolescents allow peer acceptance to direct their conduct, often defying adult authority.
Creating warriors

Historically, some societies prolonged male adolescence to provide for an army. Removal from the home and family, especially the mother, was common and considered essential for the transition to adulthood. Some societies require complete isolation of both girls, generally with their first menses, and boys, who often experience complex initiations.

In societies where violence was prevalent, boys aspired to be warriors. To become “men,” boys often participate in violent rituals, displaying courage and endurance. A common component in male transition to adulthood is misogyny. Boys are taught they are superior to women, which is often emphasized through denying women access to ceremonies and cultural knowledge. However, some societies provide initiations for both boys and girls.

Adolescents often have a group-think mentality, often making them prime recruits for military, terrorist groups, or missionary work.

Initiation ceremonies, often in preparation for warriors, have influenced modern sports; athletics, such as wrestling, mimics historic or village initiation rites. Even in societies that are no longer producing warriors, adults often criticize, humiliate, or use physical violence as part of the initiation process.

Although many societies focus on physicality or biological maturation in adolescence, the acquisition of good manners may
serve as an initiation for adolescents into adulthood. Europe traditionally treated ballroom dance as a means for acquiring skills to properly function in society.
Sexuality

Where promiscuity is frowned upon, adolescence seems to be a more stressful period. A “cult of virginity” may exist in some areas of the world, such as Polynesia. However, adolescent sexuality is considered normal, and may even be encouraged in many societies.

In foraging and pastoralist societies, pre-marital promiscuity may be the norm in contrast to more complex societies where it is not accepted. Virginity is often essential to make a good marriage in many societies, and males are often given the responsibility of maintaining sexual integrity among their family members. Female circumcision or clitorodectomy, argued to restrain sexual impulses, is practiced in many societies, especially among Muslims, to reduce promiscuity.

Attitudes towards adolescents’ sexuality differ between similar cultures. Europe seems to be more permissive, while America, influenced by the Religious Right, is more repressive. In spite of these different values, sexual activity varies little between the two. Since US adolescents are less educated about the consequences, they are more likely to become pregnant or contract STDs.

Immigrants also face conflicts concerning adolescent sexuality. Parents may teach native cultural values while their children prefer to assimilate.

Boys are often encouraged to explore their sexuality while girls’ sexuality is restricted. In ancient Greece and Papua New Guinea,
homosexual relations are common in a mentor relationship with adolescent boys and older men.

Postponement of family formation has been an aspect of modern restriction of adolescent sexuality. Extra-curricular activities have been created to postpone adulthood and curtail adolescent sexuality. Although, pregnancy out of wedlock is not often accepted, some societies, such as the Inuit and poor white Appalachian communities, support their teenager’s pregnancy.

Few societies allow their children to select their spouse; kin generally assume the responsibility of determining marriage. Marriages often provide a family with wealth or labor, and girls must ascribe to cultural expectations to insure a “good” match. Consequently, societies that value chastity marry off their daughters at the first sign of puberty.
Coming of age

Initiation practices are common throughout the world and deems a child capable of starting a family, especially among girls. Girls’ circumcision, although sometimes used to deter sexuality, often leads to adult status. “Fattening” is a common theme in preparing girls for childbirth. With the onset of puberty, girls are often expected to assume women’s responsibilities.

Initiation rites may include painful body modifications; scarification and teeth modification are common. These initiations often lead to adult status. Although marriage is generally a rite of passage, some societies require the formation of families and stability in order to obtain full adult status.
Adolescents and social change in traditional societies

Adolescent males have often been the first members of their community to leave the village for the city to work. They often bring back material goods and new ideas, which often contributes to the decline of traditional culture and disrupts the social structure.

Christian missions and government schools offer alternative lifestyles to village children, but often do not socialize or prepare them for the modern economy.

Barriers to opportunities for women are decreasing. Women often avoid pregnancy to continue their education. However, with rising school fees, they may seek to earn money through sex. Also, employers are beginning to hire women over men because they are more reliable and cheaper. Hence, men find it difficult to provide for their families when women can support themselves and their offspring, which may result in the decline of nuclear families.

Contemporary governments and terrorist groups seek to exploit adolescents. “Living in limbo” perpetuates adolescent psychology that terrorists use to their advantage. The introduction of modern education that inadequately prepares individuals to succeed economically also provides governments with prime targets for military service.
A sense of anomie is also created in developed societies often through poverty and unclear expectations and roles. Political and economic forces enhance instability among those who cannot support family formation and face remaining in adolescence.
Adolescents as students and consumers

In societies where education leads to employment, children contribute little to the household and parents work more. Schoolwork and extra-curricular activities take up much of a student’s time and is considered their “job.” Adolescent employment is most common in the US and has resulted in a distinct adolescent culture.

This commercial culture, including entertainment, clothing, dating, etc., fueled by adolescents, has spread cross culturally, and is most prevalent among those who live similar lives as American youth.
9 How schools can raise property values

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Introduction: a tale of two Lincolns

Modern children spend most of their time in school and are involved in organized extra-curricular activities. Contemporary society, especially the US, emphasizes childhood as a “race” where winners and losers are predicted at early ages.

In a study of two Elementary schools in Compton and Cupertino, California, the value of high-ranked schools is attested. The Compton school, with a racial mix of African-American (45%) and Hispanic (55%), where all students are labeled “socioeconomically disadvantaged,” had a low composite score of 583. Cupertino, where houses run for a million dollars on average, is predominantly Asian (72%) and white (25%) and had a high composite score of 920. It is obvious that obtaining a Cupertino address is sought after and that “good” schools raises property values. The comparison reveals how US schools are deeply segregated by income level.

Universal schooling emphasizes the divide between the poor and the wealthy. Access to public schooling has increased, yet an educated workforce has not. Village societies hesitate to sacrifice their child’s work for schooling that does not seem to produce benefits.
The rise of schooling

Schooling most likely began among scribes in ancient Sumer with knowledge being passed down from father to son. Greece created the “humanities.” Educated boys were thought to be socialized into the ideal adult role. Elite Roman society expanded the Greek pedagogue’s duties to school preparation that is associated with parents and pre-schools today. Aspirant Roman citizens viewed schooling as a means for social mobility and started to send their boys to school.

Schools fell with Rome, but were re-introduced with the Renaissance and Reformation. School and teacher productivity increased with the invention of the printing press and allowed more to be educated. Evidence that not all children benefited formal education became apparent in the US at the turn of the century when compulsory schooling spread.

Asian education has existed since Confucius which created the earliest meritocracy. Education focused on staffing civil service through open competition for success in grueling examinations. Formal education has spread across the world with the spread of Asian and Western civilizations.
“Bush schools” focus on indoctrination, not education such as religious instruction or cultural values. Hence there were no formal, educational institutions in the village to serve as models for an indigenous version of public schooling. Instead, schools based entirely on foreign (Western, Chinese) models were introduced and have not been very successful.

A divide between everyday knowledge and academic knowledge was apparent. However, villagers often resist and resent the incorporation of local cultural material into academic lessons.
Village schools

Western and Asian-style schools now exist in all areas of the world. However, a lack of resources and insufficient teacher training provide for a poor education. Village schools often look like “bush schools.” Instruction is often in a language incomprehensible to the children, a lack of resources perpetuates the lack of success of the school, and parents are often uneducated and cannot help their children learn what is taught in school.

Children do not generally use at home what they are taught in school. On the other hand, when universal schooling is redefined to promote rural development, villagers resent the vocational curriculum because they view education as a means for upward-mobility. Schooling is NOT seen as the means to directly improve village life but, rather as the avenue towards higher education, urban wage employment and the remittance of wages back to the village. But this outcome is exceedingly rare.

Village children are often physically punished in school. As a result, parents distrust the schools, and it often takes years for students to complete one year. Poor teacher training and instruction in a foreign language may also increase the number of years a child attends school.

Schooling prevents the child from learning to adapt to the village environment and does not often adequately prepare a child for life in town. However, children frequently view school as an
alternative to village labor, and a means for economic success, although rarely realized.

Modern society depends on parents-as-teachers for educational success. Governments must provide alternative education services, such as pre-school, to compensate for parents’ inability or unwillingness to act as a teacher.
Parents are reluctant to send their children to school and lose a worker. However, when the modern world is introduced, they often see schooling as a “road to riches.” Parents believe their child will not live in the village, and are therefore unconcerned with their lack of cultural knowledge.

In contrast, for those who have been exposed to schooling for a longer period of time, they rarely see the results they had hoped for. With high opportunity costs, sacrificing a worker, and low returns from schooling, enrollment drops.

When parents’ expectations of government schools are not met, they may opt to send their children to private schools. The rise in popularity of private schools has increased the gap between the wealthy and poor. When resources are aimed at private schools, the elite who attend, are more likely to succeed.
Parents as teachers

Village parents do not often engage in direct instruction or teaching. Learning is expected through observation. Consequently, village parents struggle to act as teachers by using direct instruction.

Western parents, like teachers, offer children praise which may increase a child’s interest in learning.

School’s focus on individualism, in contrast to village focus on collectivism, creates conflict. Cultural routines serve to raise productive community members. However, a lack of school routines creates conflict with the parents-as-teachers model.
An educated woman

Historically, education served only boys. Schooling that was directed towards girls prepared them for society and insured their virtue. In modern times, girls still pursue further education to “make themselves a more attractive mate and more competent mother.”

In villages, schoolgirls are often treated with disdain and discouraged from continuing on in their education. However, children whose mothers have attended at least some school, are more successful students.

Schooling has greatly affected the increase of women’s status in the West. Around the world, women prove to be successful students and may even be favored in the “information society.”
Bedtime stories as cultural capital

Reading bedtime stories seems to increase a child’s interest in reading. Where literacy instruction in the home is rare, often among low-income families, it is more difficult to succeed in school. Middle-class parents often engage their children in bedtime stories and other school readiness routines that prepare their child for success in school.

Attempts have been made to transfer these routines. However, many obstacles hinder the attempts to spread these practices. Many parents do not see themselves as teachers and do not deem it necessary. Parents who did not succeed in school are reluctant or disinterested in teaching their children.

Pre-school programs have been created to compensate for a lack of parent teaching. Although some prove to be highly successful, many serving poverty-class children are inadequate. Teachers are often from the same community as the children, and use the same parental teaching methods that prove to be ineffective.
“Dry cleaner” parents and “helicopter” parents

Many parents are not involved in their child’s schooling. This may be because parents may have been unsuccessful in their own schooling, or consider teachers responsible for their child’s school success. These parents who expect their children to be successful without their help are referred to as “dry cleaner” parents.

“Helicopter” parents, on the other hand, are so involved in their child’s activities that they often let them dictate their schedule. They give praise and are determined their child will contribute to society, contrary to working-class parents, who practice dominance over their children.

Among helicopter parents, fathers are more likely to be involved. Parents may be more concerned about “downward social mobility” and remain highly involved in their child’s education, especially when they are at the bottom of their class.

Parents often let their children’s education dictate their lifestyle. Many middle-class families select their homes based on the quality of education available, also insuring a supportive peer group for their children. These tactics are evident in immigrant families in the US, however, they may invest less in girls’ or “learning disabled” children’s education than Mainstream American parents.
**Against all odds**

Indian immigrants have proven to be highly successful in Western schooling. Punjabis in California have experienced upward mobility because of their hard work and determination. Although Punjabi students face social discrimination and cultural clashes in school, their parent’s rigid expectations have insured school success.

Punjabi parents dictate much of their children’s lives. Punjabi students cannot work, date, or participate in extra-curricular activities. Punjabi children are expected to assimilate into the school system while maintaining their cultural values and traditions, unlike other minority groups in the same schools.

Other immigrants with high aspirations have proven to be academically successful as well. Immigrant parents in the US impose strict rules and expectations to avoid “living in limbo.”
Examination hell

The success of Asian immigrants in US schools may be rooted in the Confucian legacy of examinations, or “examination hell.”

Mothers are expected to devote their time to insuring their children’s academic success. Mothers select toys to stimulate learning and invest in extra-curricular activities. She interacts with her child’s teacher and school, along with other parents to insure awareness of academic opportunities.

Japanese mothers are indoctrinated into the role of helicopter parent. Mothers are expected to adhere to school suggestions and requirements, as well as prepare their child for school with structured teaching at home.
Nerds, Jocks, Fluff Chicks, Breakers and Homeboys

Unlike East Asia, strong academic curriculum has not been the focus of education in the US. School is often perceived as a means for strengthening character, not primarily obtaining knowledge. The demand for conformity with cliques may create a diversion from academics.

Mainstream American parents invest time and money in extracurricular activities and material culture that serve to improve their child’s social standing. Research has shown that athletic ability is directly correlated with popularity.

Minority students see “good” students with “acting white.” Minority students who excel at academics are often condemned for deviating from group norms. Peer pressure often deters individuals from doing well in school, even among Asian students whose parents did not instill academic values at an early age.

Navajo students, who did not succeed athletically or academically, formed a clique based on break-dancing to express their distinctiveness. Groups that do not fit into common cliques may form their own to express success in alternative ways.

Not all minority students fall prey to the “not acting white” mentality. Those who succeed in school generally have strict parental supervision and friends in similar situations.
Moving towards a meritocracy

Two avenues through education exist in the USA, and the disparity between the two is ever increasing. “Lombard Street” avenue is favored by those who view schooling as a means for upward mobility. In contrast, those who do not perceive schooling as essential or beneficial favor “Easy Street.”

Government’s response to Easy Street has been the installation of competency tests, moving the USA towards an Asian-style meritocracy. Funds will be directed to those who will benefit the most, not the neediest, creating a triage effect. Only children whose parents are involved will benefit from these policies, intensifying the lack of success in schools where children do not receive passing grades.
The other side of the coin

Head Start was created to provide poor children the opportunity to be adequately prepared for schooling. However, public pre-schools are often of low-quality and have not provided positive results.

Social and economic disparity increases with poor school programs. Although money seems to inhibit providing high-quality pre-schools, which have proven to break the poverty cycle, other countries have provided early and effective universal programs with modest budgets.

Prisons are filled with undereducated adults, which may be attributed to the lack of early, effective school programs. When the government decreases efforts to use schooling to reduce economic disparity, they may be contributing to the increase of those in prison.
Introduction

Global resource distribution perpetuates the distinction of children as cherubs in the First World and children as chattel or changelings in the Third World. Wealthy first world parents have cherubs. Poor Third World parents have chattel.

Children in Third World nations work in poor conditions for low wages to supply goods for First World children. Children are expected to work at earlier ages to survive, often independently of family. Children in the First World become more dependent through indulgence.
Mother’s choice

Overpopulation is a growing problem. A high birth rate is perpetuated by outside moral authorities’ opposition to limiting family size, and a lack of contraceptives. Also, many parents in poor nations do not consider it their responsibility to provide for their children, leaving survival to luck and maintaining high birth rates.

Educated and urbanized women often seek to limit fertility. However, ideological opposition to family planning and contraception limits the availability or ability to monitor family size.

Without villagers scrutinizing parental discipline, child abuse increases in urban and modern societies, especially when men abandon their wives and children. Mothers are often expected to fulfill domestic roles, unaided by husbands, while participating in the workforce. Methods and aids are adopted, such as bottle-feeding, to reduce childcare burdens, resulting in poor nutrition and unsafe conditions.
Children as bread winners

Expectations of children’s economic assistance in contemporary families often lead to dangerous working conditions, child prostitution, and low wages.

The International Labor Organization seeks to impose child labor laws without much success. Youth are often eager to work to support their family or escape village life.

Although many street children may be on their own, the majority may belong to intact families where the parents monitor their children’s work. Where families require their child’s income for survival, policies often monitor labor conditions rather than ban child labor. However, children in these situations may fare better on their own without parents who may force them into dangerous work and usurp their wages.
Children without parents

Although a lack of a father’s presence in young children’s lives seems to have little effects, adolescents seem to be adversely impacted. Adolescents without fathers become teen parents who make poor decisions.

The number of orphans throughout the world is increasing. HIV/AIDS greatly increases adult mortality, and, combined with the breakdown of the extended family, has left many children without parents and family to provide for them.

Traditional laissez faire childrearing may result in more resilient and adaptable children. Street children and their siblings seem to adapt and survive fairly well. Although they may make a living in creative ways, they are often exposed to dangerous situations.
Children’s agency

The First World often condemns child labor. However, children around the world often seek employment voluntarily. Campaigns to end child labor often result in poorer working conditions and lower wages for children. Controversy arises when considering cultural relativism and child labor; children often resist being removed from employment or from parents who force them into employment.

Children have become frequent perpetrators of violent crimes and are often targeted for military service or militia involvement. Children make enthusiastic soldiers, especially when they are offered better living condition and a supportive community.

A conflict arises because placing abandoned children in orphanages or otherwise restricting their freedom may be best for them in the long-term but, in the short-run it denies them free agency.
Parents as teachers

Village parents do not often engage in direct instruction or teaching. Learning is expected through observation. Consequently, village parents struggle to act as teachers by using direct instruction.

Western parents, like teachers, offer children praise which may increase a child’s interest in learning.

School’s focus on individualism, in contrast to village focus on collectivism, creates conflict. Cultural routines serve to raise productive community members. However, a lack of school routines creates conflict with the parents-as-teachers model.
An educated woman

Historically, education served only boys. Schooling that was directed towards girls prepared them for society and insured their virtue. In modern times, girls still pursue further education to “make themselves a more attractive mate and more competent mother.”

In villages, schoolgirls are often treated with disdain and discouraged from continuing on in their education. However, children whose mothers have attended at least some school, are more successful students.

Schooling has greatly affected the increase of women’s status in the West. Around the world, women prove to be successful students and may even be favored in the “information society.”
Over-protection

In contrast to Third World nations where children are often independent, child dependence and indulgence is ever-increasing in modern society. Our focus on the happiness of children allows them to dictate their parent’s actions.

Over-protectiveness has negative consequences including health problems with a “too-clean” environment, lack of motivation and persistence with constant praise in school, and ignorance about consequences of sex when information is withheld. Popular media add to these harmful effects while increasing sedentism and consumerism.
So what can be done?

Most societies are gerontocracies where children are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, unlike our neontocracy where children are considered cherubs.

Programs that impose “improved” conditions for children have to compensate for the loss of the child’s labor to the family. If parents send their children to school, the education has to be effective and jobs that require educated individuals need to be supplied. Traditional and cultural knowledge should not be supplied in schools; children replicate what they have learned through observation, not direct teaching.

The modern economy often results in parental migration, concluding that village children cannot benefit from both close parental care and participate in the modern sector.

Providing direct inducements to parents to limit fertility may make more sense than trying to provide costly but meager resources to help the “surplus” children.

Our own ethnocentrism dictates the quality of life of children around the world. We embrace notions that everyone can have as many children as they desire, whether they can adequately provide a stable and healthy environment or not. Our mindset results in the marketplace deciding the fate of children. Poor children suffer from malnutrition, while wealthy children prosper. Poor children work for low wages to provide goods for children in developed
nations. In our capitalistic society, Children are treated as commodities that can be assigned a specific dollar value.