

External influences on child development



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1. 1 Referring to lecture *and* the course reader describe both how the following factors are interrelated and how they can influence concepts of childhood:

1. religion or culture
2. education
3. economy/socioeconomics
4. healthcare

*Be sure to discuss these factors as they relate to each other, not independently

A+B) Culture heavily influences education during childhood. Different cultures have values that they want to instill in future generations. I think this is seen through subjects that are taught in childhood education. For example, in class we discussed how Americans advocate for basic education, but when it comes to higher education there's a theme of only going far enough to have the skills to gain a financially secure future. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13, 2014) In American culture it's expected that you'll have a good job and be able to support yourself and a potential family. Originally, this notion was geared more towards men, which is common in many cultures. Men are historically thought of as being the provider for the family. This sort of cultural gender bias has shaped the education of children in many countries. For example, Lee(2010) stated in the article Parental Educational Investments in Japan, that Japanese parents prefer to educate their sons more because they are ultimately the ones who will be the successors of their families while daughters are married out into

other families. (p. 1582) It's not to say that daughters don't receive any education, but when resources for education are scarce, sons will be the ones to receive education instead of daughters because it gives greater benefits to the parents in the long run. Often this is because the family is short on money or they find that giving their daughter higher education is a waste, so they choose to educate their sons, who will inevitably take care of them when they get old, instead of educating their daughters who will use those skills to provide for a different family. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13, 2014)

C+D) The state of a country's economy plays a huge role on the availability of healthcare for its population. In North America, for example, it is relatively easy to get some kind of care for even if people don't have money or healthcare. This is because the economies there are able to support programs that advocate for nationwide medical care. Then there are those economies that aren't healthy enough to support such programs. For children this can lead to early death or health problems that could have easily been prevented with proper care. The " Factors in health initiative Success: Learning from Nepal's newborn survival initiative" article by Smith and Neupane(2011), says that many of the neonatal deaths that occur in Nepal could easily be prevented if the mothers had access to care. (p. 570) For people in these countries, even the most simple of illnesses can be deadly. Something so simple like diarrhea can be deadly when in places like the United States, medication to stop it can be found in almost any store. This shows how not having enough resources in an economy can affect the population and prevent it from flourishing. During one of the lectures we

learned that only twenty percent of healthcare posts offer twenty-four hour service. (E. Miller, personal communication, February 18, 2014) Those that have the money for the care they need are limited to when they can receive treatment making it much more dangerous to develop an ailment outside of the hours of operation. Also some of these clinics may take many days to reach if people do not have proper transportation allowing their health problems to become that much more severe and in a child's case they may not make it to the clinic. These clinics also do not offer care aimed solely for children. The Nepalese government has only established a healthcare system for children in Katmandu.

2. Education

1. From a global perspective, refer to lecture *and* at least two of the three articles in the reader (Hannum et al., 2009; Lee, 2010; and Lohani et al, 2010) to describe some of the specific challenges associated with educational equality or lack thereof.
2. Referring to lecture *and* the reader, discuss the unique factors of Nepal in terms of how they influence Nepalese children's current access to education.

A) Two of the most prominent factors that prevent equality of education are gender and financial status. In the United States gender is usually not a factor in education equality, but financial status is. Recently in class we discussed the importance of education in our families and in the United States. We discussed how families with greater wealth are able to send their children to private schools or public schools in better neighborhoods because they have the money to do so. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13,

2014) Those who are not able to afford such schools are likely to send their children to the nearest school to them regardless of quality. It's also common for the parents in that family to have received a poor education and so they may not value it as much as they should. This can lead to children not valuing education either and they could lack the drive to do their best in school or decide to drop out. In places such as Japan and China, gender and financial status play a role in education inequality. The article Parental Educational Investments in Japan says that when resources are low, parents are forced to choose which of their children will receive higher education. The level of education a child receives in Japan is largely dependent on their parents because of little public assistance. Women are also limited by little opportunities to advance and cultural incentives to stay home and care for the family. (Lee, 2010, p. 1582) These problems stifle a woman's ability to get a better education. According to Hannum, Kong, and Zhang's(2009) article " Family sources of educational gender inequality in rural China: A critical assessment", in China gender differences in education are concentrated in rural areas because children are competing with their siblings for too little resources for education. (p. 475) Educating girls is also considered a waste because their future incomes do not come back to their families.

B) In Nepal there is a struggle to provide better educations for children. Quality of Nepalese schools depends on the area and the amount of funding the school receives from the government. According to the article " Universal primary education in Nepal: Fulfilling the right to education" by Lohani, Balak Singh, and Lohan(2010), eighty six percent of students attend

community schools. Two of the three types of community schools receive little or no aid at all. (p. 356) This leaves financially strained areas around those schools to fund the materials needed for each student. In class we learned that many of the schools are poor in quality and many students of different grades must be taught together. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13, 2014) This lowers the quality of education that students receive. Students are also encouraged by parents to work instead of attending school. Only seven out of ten Nepalese children make it from first grade to fifth grade and over fifty percent drop out before lower secondary school. Of those who drop out most are girls. Some of the high dropout rate for females is caused by the girls going through puberty. In some areas of Nepal, menstruating females are temporarily exiled and are unable to go anywhere until the end of their cycle. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13, 2014) This causes female students to fall behind in their studies every month which makes it hard to continue on in school. There are also few female teachers and there are no separate bathrooms for females which can be influence them to dropout. Financial status plays a role in retention too and causes some students to be unable to attend school due to the costs. Many of those who attend are also undernourished and are distracted by hunger during the day, making it hard to retain information. They are often punished by teachers because of their lack of concentration. (E. Miller, personal communication, March 13, 2014)

3. Children in Antiquity

Referring to lecture *and* at least one of the articles in the reader on childhood during antiquity:

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1. analyze how families and children were conceptualized during that time and discuss how we know this today.
2. describe what factors determined how much or how little children were valued.

*Be sure to differentiate between male and female children as well as ancient Rome or Greek city-states

A) According to the “ Children in Antiquity” article by Valerie French(1991), families in antiquity consisted of the normal mother, father, and children plus midwives, tutors, slaves, nurses and many other adults. (p. 13) This shows that child rearing was important in antiquity and was viewed as being a job that extended outside of immediate family. Wealthier families also seemed to control the amount of children they had through family planning in order to restrict the number of heirs to their fortunes. Poorer families also had controlled sizes through limited resources and poor health. Families tended to have two or three children. Occasionally the restrictions on the number of children became a problem, when there were fears that two or three children were not enough to maintain the population. The Romans were much more concerned about not being able to have enough heirs to keep up the aristocracy and not having enough soldiers for their legions. For Romans and Greeks, mothers were often the more lenient between the parents while the fathers were harsher. Romans also had family welfare plans for those in poverty to promote health and family growth. Information about the family and childhood in antiquity are not hard to find. According to our lecture, when historians analyze the information they find they must try to do so in the mindset of the author by making assumptions about their experiences

and beliefs about children. (E. Miller, personal communication, February 4, 2014) This allows them to get the most out of the poems, plays, essays and biographies they find.

B) For Rome children didn't seem to have a lot of value. According to Veyne's (2003) *From Mother's Womb to Last Will and Testament*, the head of the family decided whether or not any children born into their household would be raised, abandoned or killed at birth. Abandoned children could be taken by anyone who wanted them and all of these practices were common. (p. 12) This seemed to be a common practice for Greece as well. It seems that in both Greece and Rome, male children had more importance than female. Males were thought to be the ones who would take over the family and in Rome's case power the legions. According to "Children in Antiquity", in Greece female children barely had an adolescent stage because they were married off so soon after hitting puberty. (French, 1991, p. 17) Their education was also very different from that of male children. Usually, after marriage it was up to the husband to complete his wife's education. Education was thought to be important by Greeks and Romans in order to ensure a good future. According to one of our lectures, Greeks tended to treat females like slaves and they were not permitted to engage in anything related to politics. (E. Miller, personal communication, February 4, 2014) From the articles cited above and class lectures, it seems that Romans and Greeks didn't value their children as much when they were babies, potentially because of the high rate of neonatal death, but seemed to derive a lot of pleasure from their childhoods. It seems that children only really became of use when they were able to start their own families and take on

higher roles in society. Even their education seems to be toward making them useful for the community instead of for the advancement of their minds. Value of children for Greeks and Romans seems to have been really situational. If a child was born and was displeasing to the head of household they were simply cast away or even sold into slavery. Female children seemed to be thought of as expendable child bearers that were not very important in the community and were left to simply care for their families.

4. Renaissance and Puritanism

Referring to class lecture *and* the Sommerville and Greven (i. e., Cotton Mather) articles:

1. describe the cultural context of the Renaissance and how it set the stage for the Puritan view of childhood and emphasis on educational reform.
2. describe Puritan practices and goals associated with each of the following: education, piety, and parenting. Discuss why the Puritans pushed for a more practical school curriculum and how Puritan values have influenced contemporary American culture.

A) During the renaissance it seemed like parents became gentler towards their children and began to value them as more than just a way to continue their families. During this time parents began to shy away from so much physical punishment, as had been done in earlier times, because they believed that God was watching them. According to Sommerville's(1990) article, *Childhood Becomes Crucial: The Religious Reformations*, reformers became more interested in children because of their concern for the future

of the church and the children's spiritual welfare. (p. 101) It seems like parents became aware that how they treated and taught their children would decide the future of their society. Children were taught more about what was right and wrong which began to set the stage for the wholesome childrearing tactics used by Puritans. Reformers made parents believe that their children could save the world. These reformations gave way to educational that were more rewarding for children instead of the before used tactics of fear and discipline. The structure of education changed into the system that would be used by the Puritans and one that modern education is based off of.

B) Piety: According to Greven's(1973) article, Cotton Mather: One the Education of his Children, children had to learn at early ages how to practice religion in order to be pious. (p. 43) Children were also encouraged to pray alone to develop their own tactics for prayer. Though adults believed that children had favor with God, they were taught at young ages of His watchful eye and how to stay in God's favor. According to our lecture, puritans believed that everyone was entitled to a basic education regardless of class or economic status. (E. Miller, personal communication, February 27, 2014) Everyone was taught arithmetic, writing, and reading. Puritans also favored government assistance for schools. These two characteristics are still the base of the modern education system. Class does not determine whether we are educated or not, it only determines the quality of education. Puritan parenting methods have resemblance to methods used in modern times. Today children are encouraged to rely largely on their parents for everything and usually do so without question, until a certain age at least. According to Greven(1973), children should fully rely on their parents to guide them and

know that they have their best interests at heart. (p. 44) Puritans wanted to encourage children to trust their parents instead of fearing them as they may have in the past. I also think they wanted to dissuade children from rebelling against their parents as well. According to Sommerville's (1990) *Childhood become crucial: the religious reformations*, education became important because puritans believed that without a proper education their children would not be able to properly understand and teach scriptures from the bible. Even girls would be included in this primary education, which was uncommon in earlier times. (p. 105) Puritans only believed in primary education for religious purposes which are similar to America's views that education is for making money. It's interesting that in neither time periods is education considered important as a way to increase knowledge.

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