10 Suffer the children

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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 theses situation 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.