Chapter 1

Introduction 2
Is there such a thing as childhood? 3
But why bother with childhood? 4

Introduction

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 Bofi) 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 know 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.