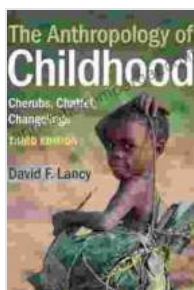


The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, and Changelings

Children are a ubiquitous and essential part of human societies. They are the future of a society, the bearers of its culture, and the inheritors of its wealth. But what does it mean to be a child? How have children been perceived and treated throughout history and across cultures?



The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings by David F. Lancy

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
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In her groundbreaking book, *The Anthropology of Childhood*, Margaret Mead argues that childhood is not a universal concept. She shows that the way children are defined, raised, and socialized varies dramatically from culture to culture. In some societies, children are seen as innocent and vulnerable beings who need to be protected and nurtured. In other societies, they are seen as little adults who are expected to contribute to the household economy. And in still other societies, children are seen as a source of wealth and power.

Mead's work has had a profound impact on the way we think about childhood. She has shown that there is no one "right" way to raise a child. Instead, the best way to raise a child is the way that is most consistent with the values and beliefs of the society in which the child lives.

In this article, we will explore the anthropology of childhood further. We will examine the different ways that children have been perceived and treated throughout history and across cultures. We will also discuss the role that children play in society and the challenges that they face.

Cherubs

In many cultures, children have been seen as cherubs - innocent and angelic beings who are close to God. This view of children is often reflected in art, which depicts children as beautiful, winged creatures with rosy cheeks and golden hair.

The idea of children as cherubs has its roots in ancient Greece. The Greeks believed that children were the messengers of the gods. They were seen as pure and innocent beings who could intercede with the gods on behalf of humans.

The Christian tradition has also adopted the view of children as cherubs. In the Bible, children are often described as "little angels." They are seen as innocent and vulnerable beings who need to be protected and nurtured.

The view of children as cherubs has had a significant impact on the way they are treated in many societies. Children are often seen as being in need of special protection and care. They are often given preferential

treatment and are exempt from many of the responsibilities that adults have.

Chattel

In some cultures, children have been seen as chattel - property that can be bought and sold. This view of children is often reflected in the law, which has historically allowed parents to sell their children into slavery or to use them as collateral for loans.

The idea of children as chattel has its roots in ancient Rome. The Romans believed that children were the property of their fathers. Fathers had the right to sell their children, to use them as collateral for loans, or to kill them.

The view of children as chattel has also been adopted in some other cultures, such as China and India. In these cultures, children are often seen as a source of wealth and power. Parents may sell their children into marriage or to work as servants.

The view of children as chattel has had a devastating impact on the lives of many children. Children who are sold into slavery or used as collateral for loans are often subjected to abuse and exploitation. They may be forced to work long hours in dangerous conditions, and they may be denied food, water, and medical care.

Changelings

In some cultures, children have been seen as changelings - creatures that have been substituted for human children by fairies or other supernatural beings.

The idea of changelings has its roots in ancient folklore. Fairies were believed to be mischievous creatures who would often steal human children and leave their own children in their place. These changeling children were often described as being sickly, deformed, or mentally retarded.

The belief in changelings has persisted in many cultures up to the present day. In some parts of Europe, it is still common for parents to accuse their children of being changelings if they are behaving badly or if they have a physical or mental disability.

The belief in changelings has had a negative impact on the lives of many children. Children who are accused of being changelings may be subjected to abuse and neglect. They may be hidden away from society or even killed.

The Role of Children in Society

Children play a vital role in society. They are the future of a society, the bearers of its culture, and the inheritors of its wealth. Children also contribute to society in many ways. They help with household chores, they care for younger siblings, and they work in the fields and factories.

However, children also face many challenges. They are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. They may be denied access to education and healthcare. And they may be forced to work in dangerous and unhealthy conditions.

The Challenges Facing Children

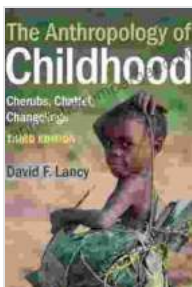
Children face many challenges in today's world. These challenges include:

- Poverty
- Violence
- Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Discrimination
- Lack of access to education and healthcare

These challenges can have a devastating impact on children's lives. They can prevent children from reaching their full potential and from contributing to society in a meaningful way.

Children are a vital and important part of human societies. They are the future of our world, and we must do everything we can to protect them and to ensure that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We must work to eliminate the challenges that children face, such as poverty, violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and lack of access to education and healthcare. We must also work to create a more just and equitable world for all children.



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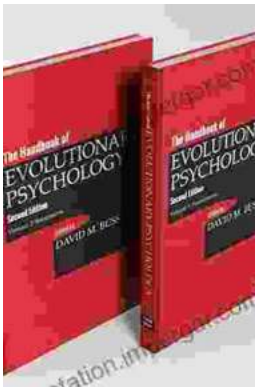
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