



1996

## Children's status and children's rights, historically and cross-culturally

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Children's Status and Children's Rights  
Historically and Cross-culturally

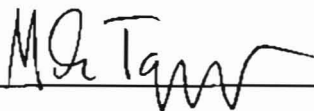
by  
Kori Heavner

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Senior  
Scholars' Program

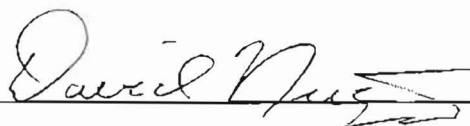
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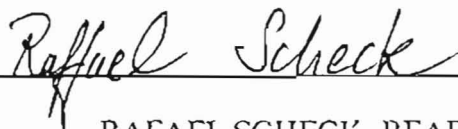
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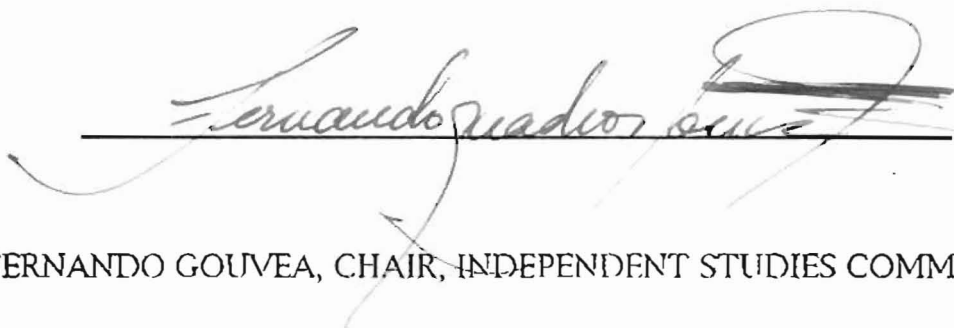
MARK TAPPAN, TUTOR

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DAVID NUGENT, READER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rafael Scheck", written over a horizontal line.

RAFAEL SCHECK, READER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fernando Gouvea", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and includes a large flourish.

FERNANDO GOUVEA, CHAIR, INDEPENDENT STUDIES COMMITTEE

## Contents

Abstract	p. 4
Introduction	p. 5
Chapter I: The History of Childhood: A European and American Discipline	p. 12
Chapter II: The Rights of Children	p. 28
Chapter III: The Status of Children in Northern Europe and Turkey	p. 44
Chapter IV: Children's Lives in Northern Europe and Turkey	p. 55
Conclusion	p. 67



### Abstract

In this thesis, my goal is to construct a vision of an ideal setting for children. By examining different ways of thinking about children and childhood, and by considering different approaches which have worked or do work practically, I will seek to envision something better for children. Trying to reach a better context for children will also include an inherent criticism of current conditions. Based on these criticisms, I will identify the elements that I believe can contribute to an ideal setting in which children can not only lead safe, healthy and happy lives, but also develop their own unique potential.

The discipline of the history of childhood as well as crosscultural studies show the relativistic nature of childhood. The concept of childhood, expectations of children, and societal roles for children have changed drastically over time and differ across cultures today.

Children's advocates and the children's rights movement both reflect and promote changes in the context of childhood. As attitudes about childhood change, efforts arise to bring reality into line with the new ideals and images. Efforts towards improving children's rights also spread new ideas about children through the society.

## Introduction

### On Children

Your children are not your children.  
 They are the sons and the daughters of life's longing for itself.  
 They come through you, but they are not from you.  
 And though they are with you, they belong not to you.  
 You can give them your love but not your thoughts,  
 they have their own thoughts - they have their own thoughts.  
 You can house their bodies, but not their souls,  
 for their souls dwell in a place of tomorrow -  
 which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
 You can strive to be like them,  
 but you cannot make them just like you.  
 strive to be like them, but you cannot make them just like you.

-Sweet Honey in the Rock

Part of the appeal in writing about children is the fact that children have great appeal. The idea of children is an easy idea to exploit. Children look cute to adults, and they represent innocence. Childhood is often idealized as a carefree time in life. Children also represent helplessness, and so they encourage protective feelings in adults.

When a problem or conflict is brought to public attention, it is often through images of children. For example, NATO intervention in Bosnia was preceded by media images of children whose limbs had been severed by mines, images of children fleeing their homes, and the release of the diary of a young girl growing up in the middle of the conflict there (Filipovic, 1992). Aid to countries hit by drought is often solicited with the help of images of starving children. Condemnation of societal inequities is often couched in references to

the miserable conditions of children in one section of society (e.g. Kozol, 1991)

Children's lives do not always reflect conditions which such outpourings of support might lead one to expect. Because using images of children garners support (money for victims of natural disaster and intervention for victims of war, for example), children should apparently receive support and resources from the societies in which they live. Statistics compiled by international organizations and by individual countries, however, show that children often suffer the worst that society has to offer; the most deprivation, the most harrowing conditions, and the least access to health care (UNICEF, 1994). Advocates for children sometimes focus on this aspect of child reality, and it is increasingly common to see extreme instances of brutality or deprivation as symptoms of more widespread wrongs against children.

Out of this latter view has arisen the contemporary children's rights movement, which generally aims to improve the worst existing conditions either by providing for minimal needs, or else by giving more self-determination to all children (Freeman, 1983). Despite such values, the specific goals of children's rights advocates are often hazy, because arguments tend to focus on the justifications for intervention, rather than on the rights being sought or on the long-term goals to be reached through intervention. For example, Wringer (1981), devotes three chapters to a theoretical discussion of the concept of rights before finally using one chapter to present the rights of children. Even the chapter on the rights of children begins with a conceptual discussion of childhood.

While I agree that improving conditions for all children will improve the lives of extremely deprived or abused children, I would argue that the first step in achieving better conditions is to envision what 'better conditions' would be. What is necessary is a vision of an ideal setting for children to grow up in. By setting I mean the entire environment of the child, including the physical provisions, the interactions between family and society, psychological factors, and other influences on the child's life. In order to work towards something better, there must be a vision of what would be better. Sweet Honey in the Rock, in the song quoted above, offers advice on raising children. However, their song seems directed at parents; families never make up the entire world of the child. A child's life conditions are created as much by the society in which that child lives as by the individual family. The physical living conditions as well as the social world of the child contribute to the well-being of the child. A vision of an ideal setting for children must, therefore, include the entire society in which a child lives, rather than just the parent/child relationship.

In this thesis, my goal is to construct a vision of an ideal setting for children. By examining different ways of thinking about children and childhood, and by considering different approaches which have worked or do work practically, I will seek to envision something better for children. Trying to reach a better context for children will also include an inherent criticism of current conditions. Based on these criticisms, I will identify the elements that I believe can contribute to an ideal setting in which children can not only lead

safe, healthy and happy lives, but also develop their own unique potential.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will explore the history of childhood and the history of children's advocacy. The history of childhood explores the different ways in which Western society has defined childhood and the impact that those definitions have had on the lives of children. The responses of children to different expectations throughout history may help to determine what is appropriate responsibility for children, whatever age the child may be. One result of an examination of the history of childhood is a realization of the amorphous nature of childhood. In different historical eras, childhood has been defined to include different ages and responsibilities. The fact that such differences have existed shows, at least in part, that children can adapt to a wide range of demands placed upon them.

While examples of child advocacy may be found throughout history, child advocacy coalesced as a movement in the nineteenth century in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. As labor moved from the private to the public sphere, child labor was banned and childhood came to be seen as a time for protection. The goal of childhood became that of a time to be spent in preparation for adulthood through acquiring knowledge and achieving basic levels of maturation. According to popular opinion, the child was supposed to be subjected to adult conditions only after knowledge and maturity were achieved. At the same time, education became mandatory, and social welfare measures became more popular. While child advocacy developed in response to the changing nature of society as it

industrialized, it also reflected a new ideal and conception of childhood. Thus, child advocacy both reflects the idea of childhood within a given society and is a means to reach an ideal of childhood for children in that society.

I will examine contemporary children's rights efforts in the second chapter. Some earlier achievements of child advocacy are now being criticized despite the fact that the contemporary children's rights movement is an extension of those efforts. Current advocacy methods sometimes reflect earlier goals to fulfill minimal physical and developmental needs. Other contemporary efforts, however, criticize even mandatory schooling, claiming that granting choices and responsibilities to children will help them more in various ways. The changing directions of child advocacy reflect changing ideas about childhood, although the new ideas are often unclear. Critics of earlier efforts often focus on justifying the concept of liberties for children, as well as on changing the concept of childhood from an idea of children as preparing to be adults through protected developmental time to an idea of children as individuals or citizens deserving liberties. Nevertheless, this new vision of childhood is not clearly articulated, and specific liberties claimed for children are rarely outlined.

In the third chapter I will examine social policies in Northern Europe and in Turkey, and their effects on children's lives. Just as an examination of childhood through various historical epochs reveals the ephemeral and changing nature of childhood, so too, an examination of various contemporary societies reveals significant variations in the ways in which childhood is understood and children

are treated. Children play varying roles and are the objects of disparate images of childhood in different countries. Northern Europe has a reputation for being highly developed (meaning highly industrialized) and having an extensive social net. Turkey, on the other hand, is popularly considered backwards, and is in the process of industrializing. While Northern Europe does have widespread social welfare policies, there are surprising inconsistencies on the societal level. For example, Turkey's commitment to children has inspired UNICEF policy, while Germany is still struggling with the basic nutritional needs of some of its children. By examining the different cultures, I will explore positive and negative aspects of child policy, and identify aspects which can contribute to the creation of a better context for children to live in.

The fourth chapter will contain selected observations of the lives of children in the both Northern Europe and Turkey, as they are found at home or in school. My experience living with and observing children in various communities led me to believe that despite differences in societal policy, the similarities in the lives of children in Northern Europe and Turkey are impressive. Children's lives in both countries revolve around school and play with friends. I will examine the situations I observed in Turkey and Germany, which will help to illuminate which factors do contribute positively or negatively to the lives of children. Although my experiences cannot be generalized to apply to all children, they reflect the lives of children in two different societies and settings.

In the final chapter I will use these historical and cultural variations to create a vision of an ideal setting for children. Current

conditions, with images of children being exploited while children themselves are ignored, seem unacceptable to me. Historical and cultural constructions of childhood can help to deconstruct what is positive about current ideas of childhood, and what aspects of the current view are negative. The child advocacy and children's rights movements will be used to examine both the changing ideals of childhood and the means of reaching that ideal.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the cultural bias that I bring to this thesis. The discipline of the history of childhood is rooted in Western Europe and the United States, as is much of child advocacy. My own experience has been bounded by the same geography. I consciously chose, therefore, to look at Turkey as a society not bound by Western material and spiritual values. While I hope to identify themes and patterns that could improve the lives of all children, in the process of writing this thesis I have been forced to examine the value that I place on independence for children. Other people with different life experiences may well hold different values from those I espouse in this thesis, and acknowledging such differences is an important step in seeking a better life for all children.



## I: The History of Childhood: A European and American Discipline

Children in different parts of the world face different dangers, depending on the society they live in. The History of Childhood, a discipline which focuses on the development of the European and American ideal of childhood through history, provides a guide to the way in which some of these differences developed. It additionally provides insight into the current status of childhood in Europe and the United States. DeMause (1974) describes the history of childhood as a "nightmare from which we are only beginning to awake." Other historians believe that childhood did not exist as a concept until the Renaissance. Historically differing expectations of children illustrate surprising capabilities of children. Children's daily lives have been undeniably different throughout different historical periods. Much of the historical source information is from the upper and educated classes, and interpretations of it are disputed. Many historians speak of abuse when looking at historical uses and expectations of children. Others differ in their interpretations.

Many authors, among them Ariès (1962) and deMause (1974), agree that childhood has not been historically recognized as a social category. In contrast, children today are socially identifiable. While it is difficult to define what a child is - someone who attends school? someone who is between the ages of three and twelve or birth and twenty-five? - it is easy to recognize a child. Historically, infants

were those who developmentally could not yet work. They were separated by their different clothing and their social uselessness. Adults included those who could be productive members of society. Once a person could do work, at about the age of seven, he or she graduated immediately into the adult world. The age of seven years was significant because humans are physically well developed and have learned how to use their bodies. It is also the age at which children have a good command of speech, and it was considered the age of reason in antiquity (Postman, 1982).

According to Martinson (1991), who writes about childhood in Norway, childhood is "a period during which those in the age group between infancy and adulthood are placed outside the public systems of decision making and are treated in ways considered to be appropriate especially to their age and condition" (p. 1). However, the different treatment accorded to children has not always consisted of special consideration appropriate to their 'age and condition'. Many scholars have discussed the changes in children's status throughout history, ranging from abuse and nonrecognition of childhood as a distinct life period to special consideration and legal protection for children. Children have historically been expected to work to help their parents in agriculture or business, help support the family, or work in order to build character. While these expectations are still prevalent in many families and societies, the historical beginning of childhood is tied to an ideal of increased leisure for children, in which play and learning have been defined as the proper 'work' for children.

Martinson himself describes five different models of childhood, which he feels correspond to historical periods. First, children were considered private property. They were owned by the patriarch and could be disposed of, sold, or used as he wished. This view would be most clearly reflected in Roman society, where the male head of the household owned all of the people and goods within that household. The Roman patriarch had the power to decide whether those within his household should live free, be sold into slavery, or die. Later children became socioeconomic participants, useful for the labor they represented. The third category, which may be more culturally specific than the others, is a religious view of children. Under this view, children are seen as evil, born bearing the guilt of the original sin. This category is obviously conducive to child abuse, as the children are viewed as needing correction to make them good. A fairly recent view is the idea of children as eventual adults. The point of childhood in this view is to mature and to learn all that is necessary in order to function as an adult. Finally, children are viewed as citizens. This means that children are individuals in their own right, with certain rights and protections due them. Within a given society, each of these ideas is likely to be found. However, one of the conceptions will be dominant and encoded into popular morality and law. Our own society seems to be wavering between the idea of children as people and that of eventual adults.

Sommerville (1982), writing about The Rise and Fall of Childhood, discusses historical continuity and discontinuity with regard to parental expectations and children. Citing letters from

parents to their children, he writes that since the dawn of Western civilization in Mesopotamia parents have scolded their children for not appreciating their easier lives and their parents' hard work, and for not studying or working hard enough themselves. Sommerville deduces that Egyptians must have had the leisure and desire to devote time to children because they did not swaddle their infants. A swaddled infant may be hung from a nail and requires very little supervision, while a non-swaddled infant can crawl and get into the fire or find other dangers. However, Sommerville also describes the ebbs in parental tenderness towards children during some historical periods. For example, abandonment and infanticide increased dramatically during the Roman era. The Spartans in particular treated their children harshly, with the aim of instilling toughness.

Once past infancy, children in the Middle Ages in Europe were expected to function like the adults they worked next to, playing the same games, wearing the same clothing, and performing the same work. This role correlates to Martinson's period of children as socioeconomic participants, with the children valued for their economic and social contributions. While toys appear to have existed since the dawn of time, they were not made specifically for children until the late 18th century, as the idea of childhood was changing. The same games, from hide and seek to gambling, were played by adults and children alike during the Middle Ages. Early "toys" were often for adult use. For example, dolls may have been used for religious purposes or as miniature fashion models at various periods in history. Pollock (1987) includes specific descriptions of children's

dress during different historical periods. She notes an example from 1617 of a child graduating to adult clothing at two years of age. Later, the age of taking on adult clothing, and by implication, adult roles, rose. By 1882, a parent waited until her child was 13 years old before allowing her to wear adult clothing. Work in the Middle Ages often consisted of agricultural work as a serf beside the parent. However, if children belonged to the privileged classes, they were often sent to another home as servants 'for education' sometime between the ages of four and seven. Children apparently lived up to the behavioral expectations of adults through the various historical epochs, contributing to the games and work that they shared with or performed for adults.

When children were seen as socioeconomic participants, economic decisions were made about raising them. Infanticide was reportedly common until relatively recently in the Western world, and the widespread nature of childhood disease and death, especially during the Middle Ages, has led to claims that parents were indifferent to their children. Many of the aphorisms dealing with children also support this view, or at least the view presented by Ariès (1962). He wrote that adults were unable to empathize with children, not recognizing them as people in their own right. Plato for example suggested that children should be brought up with "threats and blows, like a piece of warped wood (as quoted in Postman, 1982, p. 7)." The oft-quoted proverb that to spare the rod is to spoil the child reflects a similar sentiment.

A different view of the same time period has been expounded by Pollock (1983, 1987). She argues that the different treatment of children in various historical epochs is not universally considered to show that there was no conception of childhood, and that the widespread abuse which deMause and others point to did not in fact exist. Pollock (1983), in her critique of the history of childhood, argues that "many historians have subscribed to the mistaken belief that, if a past society did not possess the contemporary Western concept of childhood, then that the society had no such concept," (p. 263). While mentioning the ideals prevalent in the eighteenth century that children should be quiet and agreeable, she focuses on the pride and joy that she finds in parents' writings about their children (Pollock, 1987). This viewpoint, that images of childhood must be looked at relativistically, is also at issue when examining childhood in different cultures today.

For example, there is also historical evidence that adults cared for and empathized with children, and parents tried to treat their children medically. Pollock devotes a chapter of her book A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries to childhood accidents, illness, and death, including parents' preventative measures. By the late eighteenth century, she documents parents trying to inoculate their children. Various potions and medicines were being tried by the 17th century, when her documentation begins. However, her studies begin at a later time period than do Ariès', and that difference could account for some of the disparity in the ideas about childhood.

While it is difficult to find causes for early shifts in ideas about children, the transformation of the concept of childhood to a view of children as eventual adults has been explored by theorists. Postman (1982) notes that ideas of separating children from adults, which dated back as far as ancient Greece, became useful and necessary with the advent of the printing press and the industrial revolution. The printing press enabled knowledge to be presented a little at a time and sequentially, and the people who had sequentially gained knowledge necessary to modern adult life were adults. Those without knowledge were children. With the advent of the printing press, knowledge became something to be revealed during the same time period that labor became separated from private life, and both of these trends changed the requirements for entry into the adult world. In fact, preparation and education for the adult world became necessary. Before knowledge was widely written down, information was not presented sequentially, and the knowledge that was necessary for adult life was for the most part learned by watching adults, and by helping parents and other adults. After the advent of widespread written literature and the movement of work from the home into the factory, physical ability became less important. Mental and emotional maturity, and self-discipline, on the other hand, became prerequisites for adulthood. When adulthood became a separate period of life, with more prerequisites, childhood became necessary as a time of preparation for adulthood. Then childhood became recognized as a social category, defined by a lack of information or maturity. The idea that measured or sequential information transmission is a prerequisite for the concept of

childhood is espoused by Postman (1982), who writes that "where there are schools, there is consciousness, in some degree, of the specialness of the young (p. 7)."

One result of the new awareness of childhood is that children have been expected since the 1800s to develop self-control and discipline. Usually regimented activities with adult supervision have been the means for children to achieve discipline, and by extension, maturity. Children profiled by Pollock (1987), who examined European and American child journals and letters from the 17th through the 19th centuries, had their days fully organized, with little play time. Instead, they spent their time at lessons ranging from writing and languages to riding and sewing.

Ideas about childhood have changed historically. While Pollock argues that a different concept of childhood does not imply no concept of childhood, she too admits that there have been different conceptions. Expectations of children have ranged from integration with adult society during the times when children were seen as socioeconomic participants to separate activities and peer groupings as children are seen primarily as in preparation for adulthood. The changes in expectations have led to societal changes as school became central to children's lives. Laws intended to protect children, such as mandatory education laws, child abuse laws, and labor laws, multiplied greatly as advocates for such laws appeared. Child advocacy grew as a movement during the nineteenth century, the same time at which Martinson's (1991) fourth category, childhood conceived of as a time of preparation for adulthood, emerged.



## Child Advocacy

"It has been said that human progress can be measured by the extent that children's rights are protected. " (Trattner, 1970).

The United States and Northern Europe have both developed ideas of childhood along this linear model of history. Children occupy separate social spaces from adults, and it is by getting information that children become adults. For instance, sexual knowledge and knowledge about drugs and alcohol have been considered to be adult topics from which children should be shielded. Childhood is seen as a period of development and learning, and there is a division between childhood and adult activities. This division is evident through laws protecting children, through adult expectations of children, and through different spheres of activities for adults and children.

Laws relating to children have existed since the beginnings of legal codes. Common law provides that parents are ultimately responsible for their children. Advocacy for children, ranging from more elaborated codified law to qualitative differences in the law and in society, began with the beginnings of an idea of childhood. Hawes (1991), who summarizes the children's rights movement in the United States, traces the movements' roots back to the beginnings of European settlement there.

According to Hawes, the idea of *parens patriae* was brought over from England with some of the earliest settlers. *Parens Patriae* was a broad right of the state with regard to families and children. If a child seemed to be neglected or abused, the state could intervene.

The society was the ultimate parent of the child, and could interrupt the rights of the parent in order to retain the child as a future productive member of society. *Parens Patriae* has been rejected by judges as an ill-defined concept with little practical value. However, it is still an underlying basis for intervention in the family by the state.

Hawes also discussed the severe penalties which children could face under early colonial laws. Children who were stubborn, which was defined to include willfulness or delinquency, could be sentenced to death. Such laws among the Puritan settlers in New England were inspired by their religious background and based on Biblical law. There were a few provisions for the protection of children even then. In an early law, a child who struck or cursed their parent could escape punishment if their action was in self-defense. Provision was also included for children to complain to authorities they were abused or neglected.

During this same period, the various colonial governments were struggling with how to care for orphans. In many places, custody of children immediately reverted to the state if the father died. Often, the children would then be auctioned off to the highest bidder, and the mother or stepfather would have to bid along with everyone else. Hawes (1991) sees this as a positive way for states to place children, commenting that, "the colony . . . recognized that children had interest of their own, and it provided a system that would guarantee children's rights - at least their right to a certain amount of property and the right to be free from abuse (p. 8)". This assertion presumably

arises from an understanding that children were only separated from their remaining family when they were being abused or taken advantage of. However, such auctions provided revenue to the state, and it seems obvious that the state would have used the power liberally. The highest bidder would probably be someone with the means to properly care for the child. On the other hand, someone willing to buy children would likely use them as an indentured servant or a slave.

At the end of the eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, which Hawes (1991) calls the "Age of Institution Building," institutions were established for the protection of children. Orphanages were among the earliest institutions, providing a place for orphaned children to stay rather than becoming virtual slaves. Houses of Refuge were also established where children could be temporarily housed if they appeared to be in danger where they lived. Public schools began to spread quickly during this time. Organizations such as Children's Aid Societies and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children formed in various parts of the country, and they began to advocate further protections for children. These institutions represented and established the first formal recognitions that children have rights which need to be protected.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the academic discipline of human development began to increase the 'scientific' knowledge about children. Hall (1904) and Dewey (1916) were two of the eminent 'scientists' who proposed major reforms based on the new knowledge about children. At the same time that

knowledge about the child and psychology were growing in influence, the Romantic ideas that children represented a fresh start for society, and that children could thus be the key to social reform, were established. Social work and attention to children thus became more important to progressives and reformers.

During this time period, the sentimental view of children as innocents was countered by the idea that regulation and codification of children's worlds would provide the basis for societal reform. In this era, the juvenile court was established. The juvenile court was formed in order to protect children's interests, even against their own families. However, the gain of representation was countered by a loss of rights. In the juvenile court there was no provision for due process of the law. Children could be subjects of arbitrary sentencing, double jeopardy, and other abuses unthinkable in adult courts. Many of these problems are still being discussed today, and Hawes (1991) questions whether the juvenile court is not an example of the aims and purposes of society taking precedence over the needs, interests, and rights of the child.

When the earliest juvenile courts were established in 1899, it was defined as a separate court for anybody under the age of 16 considered delinquent. "Any respectable person" could report a child who was neglected, 'dependent' or delinquent (Hawes, 1991, p. 33). 'Dependency' was broadly defined, and included orphaned, 'homeless' (including lacking parents or a good home environment), neglected, or otherwise needy children. The court could place children in institutions, with charitable agents, in foster homes, or on probation.

The ideal for the placement situation was that the child should receive care, custody, and discipline which approximated that in the home (or an ideal home, as the children were being rescued from 'insufficient' homes). The final goal was that a child should be permanently placed in an improved home. In 1901 the definition of delinquent was broadened to include what we might today call 'at risk' children. The juvenile courts were supposed to act in the best interest of the child, but they did so with little regard for children's rights, parent's rights, or due process of the law.

During the same period that the juvenile court was being established, kindergartens based on the German models were also growing in the United States. From the 1870s kindergartens were established for the poor in order to save the children of those mothers who were "too busy, too ignorant, too poor, or too foreign" to inculcate middle-class values and attitudes into their children (Hawes, 1991, p. 35). Within kindergartens, there was a split as to whether the emphasis should be on the individual child or on society as a whole. One expressed goal was to help absorb immigrants into American society. While both groups wanted to expose children to normative middle class ideas, one group felt that it was for the good of the child. This group focused on health and individual issues as well. The other side of the debate saw early training of children as good for society, and focused on conformity to the wider culture. What the juvenile courts and kindergartens shared was a commitment to improving children's lives by providing better environments for the children.

For the first half of the twentieth century, child welfare was increasingly attended to by the federal government. The Children's Bureau was established, and conferences on children were held. All labor was eliminated for children under 14 years, and labor was severely limited for adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18. The Fair Labor Standards Act, passed in 1938, allowed children under 14 years old to work only for parents, delivering newspapers, or acting. Legal work for fourteen and fifteen year olds is currently limited to 3 hours of work per schoolday in certain narrow fields. Sixteen and seventeen year olds have most kinds of work open to them, except for those jobs defined as hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. The idea that children should not work indicated a new idea, that all children had the right to be a child, to grow and develop before working, and to have access to education.

Another law passed during the early twentieth century was the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921. It provided funding for prenatal and obstetrical care, as well as for basic pediatric care. Under hauntingly similar circumstances to the current debate over the reform of medical service provision, medical establishment and conservative interests convinced Congress to repeal the Act in 1929. One of the major charges against the Sheppard-Towner Act was that it was socialistic. However, Social Security measures were instituted during the 1930s and managed to provide some minimal help to families with dependent children.

Institutions and social services continued to expand from World War II through the 1960s. The Lanham Act, passed in 1940,

allowed funding for child care facilities, while the Emergency Maternal and Infant Care Program (EMIC) provided maternity care for wives of enlisted men. However, these provisions were made for the needs of the nation in wartime, rather than specifically for the needs of children. The clash between parents' rights and children's rights continued as women struggled for liberation and many child advocates claimed a right for children to have a full time parent (read mother). Other issues in child welfare were the beginning of the Head Start Program, which was a preschool program dedicated to helping to prepare poor or disadvantaged children for school, and a growing awareness of child abuse. The juvenile court was reevaluated, and more complexity, including accessions to due process, was instituted. It became possible for anyone, not just blood relatives, to sue on behalf of children, and this led to special advocates for children identifying themselves. In 1971, a comprehensive child care act was passed, but it was immediately vetoed.

### Conclusion

The United States industrialized as it developed. Laws relating to and establishing childhood were slowly but firmly put into practice over the course of the last two centuries. The first child abuse case in the United States was tried at the end of the 19th century. The history of childhood and children's rights through the twentieth century has been an evolution of visibility for children. This has been identified as the century of the child including, in 1979, the United Nations Year of the Child. Similarly, child economic

and physical welfare laws have been passed in various northern European countries over a similar time frame.

Historical expectations of children, as reflected in their becoming servants or functioning in adult circles at early ages, show higher functional abilities than what is asked of children in industrialized societies today. Pollock's (1987) descriptions of busy schedules with little play time seem to reflect similar conditions to those highlighted in recent concerns about overscheduling children and not allowing them 'down time.'

While the conception and expectations of childhood have changed historically, child advocacy has helped to promote the changes. The results of child advocacy efforts, such as the juvenile court, have been the objects of widespread criticism. However, advocates strive for better conditions for children, and child advocacy is an acknowledgment that improvements in children's lives are possible.

The historical characterizations of childhood and children seem to show a progression and improvement in the lives of children as time passed, whether the progress stemmed from better scientific and medical information or from better parental expectations and parenting techniques. However, child advocacy continues, and writers such as Alice Miller (1981) still describe childhood as a time of general abuse and denial of needs for children. This history provides a background to current childhood conditions as well as a source of possible appropriate expectations.



## II: The Rights of Children

This chapter expands on the discussion of advocacy for children which began in the first chapter. As conceptions of childhood changed, new ideals arose. While child advocacy began by trying to protect children from premature work and deprivation arising from poverty, child advocates today often seem to take an opposite approach, seeking to free children from the constraints intended to protect them, and to procure civil liberties for juveniles.

The modern children's rights movement began in the 1960s with politically active students. However, the movement quickly became a theoretical battle, with philosophers trying to understand rights and to categorize them. Efforts to define rights led to long and debatable lists. Even if a right, such as the right to education, is identified, the limits of that right are unclear: does a right to education imply freedom of choice and access or mandatory education?

The children's rights movement, as such, has arisen in recent history. As a movement, the campaign for children's rights has been coherent only in this century, and more specifically, over the last twenty years. Definition of children as a social group, historical evolution in the conception of childhood, the influence of civil rights and women's liberation movements, and other factors have converged to allow people to think about children as an oppressed group. The history of childhood as well as cross-cultural comparisons have been used to argue that childhood is a historically shifting

cultural construction (Franklin, 1982). Student activism in the 1960s also encouraged a conception of children's rights because of the confluence of childhood and schooling in western countries. As the question of whether student activists should be considered truants or strikers arose, theoreticians began to address various aspects of children's rights. Philosophical treatises about the nature of rights and justice were written, and rights were categorized. However, the questions of what rights are being claimed, for whom, and through which agents are still unclear.

Much of the student activism in the 1960s took the form of militancy, and not all of it was on behalf of students. In the United States, much of the student energy at that time was channeled into civil rights work. However, in European countries, and especially in England, student activism was more focused on students' issues. In Germany and France, students' joint management committees were established in many schools. Wringe (1981) describes the mood and events in Britain, where student representation was a major concern. Student representation boards and power diffused from the headmaster at the school were recurring demands. Pupils tried to use labor tactics such as striking and establishing unions, but school officials often treated such attempts as examples of childish misbehavior and responded by transferring students, suspending them, or other traditional disciplinary methods.

Discussing children's rights is problematic because so many terms need to be defined. I will begin this chapter with a summary of theoretical attempts to define and categorize rights. While many

ways of thinking about rights are possible, two broad categories are generally accepted. The next issue in conceptualizing children's rights is the problem of for whom the rights are being claimed. This is related to the problem of defining childhood. Finally, it is difficult to identify which specific rights are being claimed for children. I will list some specific rights which are widely accepted as justifiable before identifying a few problems with giving rights to children.

### Conceptions of Rights

The attempt to define and categorize rights was an academic response to the student struggles. Many of the arguments have a base in the History of Childhood: if children were historically treated like adults from approximately the age of seven, then that means that it is possible to treat them that way today. However, protections of children instituted over the last hundred years have been seen as great advances. Most children's rights theorists would agree that there are different kinds of rights, and that the rights must be organized hierarchically, in order to determine whether it is a greater good to protect children or give them adult-like freedoms.

Part of the debate centered around the definition of 'right.' If rights are considered to be natural, arising from the existence of life rather than from any culture, then rights are also universal. This is the basis of, for example, the United Nations and its conventions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child implies that the rights detailed in it are inherent and universal, to be enforced and protected by all of the signatory nations. The idea that rights are inherent also

implies that they exist even if they are infringed (Freeman, 1983). That is, just because a right is not recognized or is not enforced does not mean that it does not exist. Rights have been compared to duties and claims, but for the purposes of this paper, a popular understanding of rights as a means to justice will suffice.

Freeman (1983) identifies four categories of children's rights advocacy. The first group consists of claims, rather than rights: children should have their minimum needs, such as food and shelter, met. These imply that society has a duty to establish the "lowest common denominator" as something achievable for all children (p. 41). Secondly, privileges are claimed for children: children should be free to do that which is not wrong. For example, if a child wants to stay up late, there is nothing inherently wrong about that. Third, there are children's rights which entail duties on the part of adults. If a child has a right to not be subjected to physical punishment, then parents and teachers have a duty to refrain from corporal punishment of children. Freeman's final category of rights has to do with what he defines as limitations on powers. In this category are the most controversial claims, including claims that children should have the same rights as adults, for instance, voting rights. Allowing children to vote implies less adult control over the outcome of an election, and is therefore a limitation on adult power.

Wilkerson (1973) also describes four categories of children's rights: welfare rights, protective rights, adult rights, and rights against parents. Welfare rights include the basic claims to housing, nutrition, and the fundamentals of life. He describes these as being

achieved mainly through legislation such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Protective Rights provide for protection from neglect, abuse, and other dangers, including premature work. Adult rights are those that are accrued to all adults within the society. These might include the rights to vote, work, marry, and drive, among others. Finally, rights against parents mean that children should have greater autonomy. If a child has a right to do something its parents will not allow, or a right to protection from the parent, then that child has a degree of independence.

Children's rights advocates are usually seen as being in two opposing camps: protectionists versus liberationists. Freeman's (1983) first and third categories, those dealing with claims to basic necessities and those dealing with adult duties towards children both can be seen as protecting children and children's development. On the other hand, the privilege to do what is not wrong and limitations on the powers of those around the child, including the larger society, seem to give more liberty to the child. A current dilemma involving these issues concerns seven-year-old Jessica Dubroff, who died in a plane crash while attempting to be the youngest person to fly across the United States. Protectionists would argue that Jessica should not have been allowed to fly a plane because she was too young, small, and incapable of handling the demands placed on her as a pilot. Liberationists would argue that what was important was Jessica's own desire to pilot the plane, and the adults involved were doing the right thing in helping her to achieve her goal.

Much of the early concern over children's rights meant that children were protected, but their rights were forfeited. Parents or the state made decisions for the child, and protection from child abuse, neglect, and poverty were the primary evils that seemed to be threatening childhood. Early achievements of child protectionists included the abolition of child labor. Such advocates seek to ensure that special consideration is given to children on the basis of their age.

Child liberationists, on the other hand, seek to provide rights for children. The rights range from a right to the basic necessities of life to freedom of expression and the right to vote. These claims have been seen as extreme by much of society, and the problem is largely due to the dilemma of chronology. When the word "child" is used, an image of a small child comes to mind. However, many of the children's rights theorists argue for youth rights (meaning that adolescents deserve the liberties being claimed, as opposed to the rights), while shrugging off the hypothetical retort that recognizing rights as due children might mean recognizing such rights for all children, regardless of age.

A basic argument reflecting the division between protectionists and liberationists concerns children who are brutalized. Protectionists (i.e., Purdy, 1992) assume that most children are actually loved and treated well by their caregivers. Children who are brutalized need intervention from the state to put them into a more typical and healthier environment. Liberationists (i.e. Cohen, 1980) argue that well-publicized horror stories about brutalized children

are merely symptoms of widespread degradation of children, and the only solution is to give all children more self-determination.

Other theorists point out that the division between protectionism and liberation is not necessarily a clear-cut opposition. A look at the adult world shows that adults are both protected and granted rights in society. For example, when adults work, regulations protect them from workplace hazards. Adults have many liberties, ranging from choice of work to freedom of religion and expression. However, even adults are protected by government regulations restricting the availability of pharmacological drugs, noise levels, and zoning issues. Welfare payments and unemployment benefits ensure that adults will have some of their basic necessities met. Children who are protected through welfare benefits could also have choices about after school jobs, but children's choices are currently much more limited by government regulations.

It is useful to categorize the rights involved in discussing children's rights. While varied groupings are available, the idea of protective rights and liberative rights seems most helpful, in part because advocates and theorists most often use the binary grouping themselves. The two kinds of rights are usually considered to be in opposition, but they are not mutually exclusive.

#### Rights claimed for Children

A significant difference between the student strikes and activism in the 1960s and the theory which came later is the difference in actors. Part of the history of childhood as well as the

struggles of the children's rights movements has been a movement towards seeing children as human beings in their own right. Child advocacy and protection began during the same period that historians believe that empathy with children grew and the idea of children shifted to a view of children as future adults. As the view of children again shifted to a view of children as persons, the children's rights debate heated up. Related to the idea of the child as person is the question of whether a child should be a subject or an object of activity. Protectionist arguments focus on whether decisions for the child should be made by the state or by the family. In either case, the child is an object of decisions about where that child should live, whether the child is being subjected to appropriate conditions, and if the best interest of the child is being served. Child liberationists often argue that the child should decide what is in its own best interest.

As discussed earlier, childhood is not a unitary, or even a well-defined term. When protectionists write about children, they seem to have a vision of a preschool or elementary age child. Even children's rights opponents like Laura Purdy (1992) admit that teenagers may deserve more civil rights than they are now accorded. Liberationists, on the other hand, tend to focus on older children, those who have not always or everywhere been considered children. While the age of children is not explicitly mentioned, and while advocates of child liberation may try to implicitly include all children, young children are excluded. When adolescents are the subject, consensus is easier to achieve than for younger children, including those in middle



childhood (7- 11 years old), who are not yet mature by any measure, but who have apparently functioned as adults in some societies.

The various rights claimed by liberationists and protectionists must be outlined in order to allow criticism. Surprisingly, many children's rights advocates do not spell out rights that they feel are appropriate. Instead, they remain vague, arguing solely for self-determination or societal protection from abuse.

One important exception is the effort by Wringe (1981) to survey the activities of various activist and advocacy groups in Britain in the 1970s, which resulted in a list of eleven explicit rights and some "further rights" (p. 15). The following rights are described in Wringe's introductory chapter on the children's rights movement in Britain and reflect a range applying to different age groups (p. 11-15). It is important to acknowledge that each of the rights was interpreted differently, even by those who were instrumental in compiling them.

Children should be seen as persons in their own right. This is the most basic of the claims. Historically children have been most often seen as property of their parents or else the state if the parents could not care for the children. As property, children had no rights, but only needed to be maintained. Even if children are seen as future adults, they are not cared for in their own right, but only for what they might eventually be.

Children should have the rights both to go to school and not to go to school. Compulsory education is considered to interfere with

children's self-determination, and so children should be able to choose whether to take part in the formal educational process. The idea of children needing passes to move around the school or leave during lunch is especially demeaning. On the other hand, it was claimed that school-age children access to any desired information should be freely available, including information about sex or violence.

Children should have the right to educational democracy. This means that they should have the right to participate in their school decision making and power in ways ranging from participating in student council to having community control of the school. They should also be able to organize democratically outside of school. As mentioned above, some British students tried to organize student unions during the 1970s, and this often led to their exclusion from the school through forced transfers, expulsion, or suspension. Because of this, the right of students to express political opinions became more important.

Children should have the legal rights of appeal, representation, and redress. The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) claimed these rights for children within a school context. It contested the idea of schools as *in loco parentis* because the school then denies the above rights. Schools have the authority to punish students as they see fit, without ascertaining the student's guilt.

Children should have the right to freedom in personal appearance. School uniforms or limits on personal appearance have

been considered by many theorists to be fairly innocent areas where children, especially teenagers, should have disgression. Of course, more serious objections to this right have been raised in the United States, where gang identification and emphasis on stylish clothing have caused violence in some schools. The issue of violence also introduces the possibility of a protectionist argument for dress codes.

Children should have the right to freedom of expression. Again, the arguments surrounding this right put forth in Wringe's (1981) book deal solely with school issues. The rights to publish school newspapers and magazines, and to run clubs, without censorship was the focus of free expression. Children should also have the right to freedom of worship, according to Wringe (1981). Children, especially adolescents, should be able to choose for themselves whether they will partake of religious education, because they will not necessarily share their parents' feelings with regard to religion.

Children should have the right to be free from corporal punishment. The NCCL defines corporal punishment as assault, and other countries (notably Sweden) have abolished corporal punishment. It is possible to argue from a historical perspective that corporal harassment is primarily an artifact of power-based relations in society, because historically anyone of low status - lower class, slave, female, etc. - was subject to socially sanctioned beating.

Children should have the right to sexual freedom. The extent of sexual freedom claimed ranges from wanting acknowledgment and some sanction of the sexual activity which takes place between

adolescents to seeking better sex education and the availability of contraceptives.

Further rights were claimed by the groups Wringe (1981) surveyed, some applying to the social worlds of children and to younger children. Among these are rights to food, space, toys, books, to one's own mistakes, to vote, to work, to own property, to travel, to choose one's guardian, to receive an income, to control one's learning, to use drugs, to drive, and to assume legal and financial responsibilities.

Despite his extensive list, Wringe did not cover all of the rights claimed for children. The American Supreme Court "affirmed the constitutional standing of children" in a 1967 case (*Re Gault*) by claiming that the Bill of Rights and the fourteenth amendment applied equally to adults and children (Freeman, 1983). Cohen (1980) argues that children should have exactly the same rights that adults do. He asserts that children should not be allowed to do whatever they want; they would have responsibilities, and their rights would be curtailed by membership in a society and a home, just like adults' rights are. The important point for Cohen is that age is an arbitrary and unjust basis for denying rights to a group. Therefore children should have constitutional and legal rights exactly like adults.

The criteria upon which rights are based determine which rights are considered just. Thus Wringe (1981) focuses primarily on the rights of the child in school, because school is the primary world

of the child, and the child's training ground for society. That means that children deserve rights in part because they will one day be adults, and learning to use rights is part of learning to be adult. Cohen (1980), on the other hand, feels that age and ability are irrelevant to determining who deserves rights. According to Cohen, rights should be extended to all people, regardless of age or maturity. If someone is unable to make use of their rights because they are too young, then they should have an agent assigned to them who can help them to take advantage of their rights.

In counterpoint to Cohen, Freeman (1983) focuses on children's inherent dependence. First, the question must be raised of whether the child, on its own, can adequately decide the issue inherent in the right. If not, then the child must have someone's help. The second question is whether there is a decision-maker who will make a better decision for the child than will the parent. If so, then that person should be brought in. Finally, Freeman asks whether the state can ultimately remove the decision-making responsibility from the parent.

Cohen (1980) focuses mainly on civil liberties for children. Freedom of religion, for example, is defined by Cohen as a right against congress rather than a right against parents. By this he means that while congress may not establish a state religion, the parents may indoctrinate their children into whichever religion they would like. Cohen carefully defines his idea of children's rights as exactly equal to adult rights, meaning that privileges like staying up late are not rights, but freedom from assault is a right.

According to Cohen, there are three suspect assumptions under which caregiving is now defined. The first is that an adult can know what is in the best interest of a child, and that an adult can know the best interest of the child better than the child itself does. Secondly, it is assumed that there is no conflict of interest between the adult and the child. The third assumption is that if the head of a household acts in their own best interest, it also will be in the best interest of the household. One conflict based on this principle is the debate over divorce: economically, it is usually better for parents to stay together. However, emotionally, it might be better for them to split up. The head of the household often escapes the economic consequences of divorce. The question is then whether the head of the house will consider their own interest in considering divorce, or the interest of other family members. Finally, it is assumed that the quality of care can be improved by passing control over the child among adults (Cohen, 1980, p. 5-7). Cohen argues that adults should not assume that they know what it is like to be a child just because they have been one. Miller (1994) appears to make a similar argument when she argues that adults repress many of their painful memories of childhood (p. 93).

### Conclusion

The primary demand of children's rights proponents appears to be that children be seen as people in their own right, which matches Martinson's (1992) fifth historical model of childhood as described in the first chapter of this thesis. The fact that children's rights advocates seem to call for a recognition of children as citizens implies

that society is still in transition from a view of childhood as a training period for adulthood to a view of children as citizens or whole people. A conception of children as citizens implies that they would be given more respect than if they were merely seen as in the process of becoming adults.

The primary reason for rights to be granted to children, according to children's rights theorists, is because it is just. The arbitrary nature of age limits and the integrity of the individual are primary arguments for the justice of equal rights. If there is no clear age division between someone who is mature and someone who is not, then it seems unjust to arbitrarily design that line. After all, the difference between a seventeen-year-old and an eighteen-year-old is not great. Secondly, if a child is recognized as an individual with worth, then that person should be accorded human rights.

The primary right claimed for children is an acknowledgment of their humanity. It is from that right that all other rights derive. If basic humanity is granted, then dignity and individual rights can be claimed. However, if another view of children, such as that they are merely future adults, is subscribed to, then concerns relating to their humanity can be ignored. The granting of humanity to children implies many of the other rights which are suggested. Basic necessities may be granted to animals or other people, but free speech and self-determination are considered self-evident human rights in western democracies. If a child is a full-fledged human being, then limiting the child's rights is more difficult to justify.

In justifying various rights for children, theorists must look at the problem of implementing those rights. Cohen (1980) deals with the problem by offering child advocates - adults who would intervene on behalf of individual children if the child could not intervene on his or her own behalf. However, this does not really address the issue of recognizing the child itself. Instead, it adds another adult controller in a child's life. Other theorists talk even less about the practical implementations of rights for children, presumably expecting that children will be able to take advantage of any rights they have.

While liberationism is popular among many theorists, there is a deeply rooted backlash towards protectionism. Violence among children seems to beg increased protectionism in the form of curfews and prohibitions. However, neither completely protecting children from themselves and others, nor completely setting children free to fend for themselves is appropriate. Protection, while socially acceptable, leads to a low sense of self-efficacy and even learned helplessness. Complete liberation, on the other hand, could turn into neglect. Some form of compromise is necessary, and current situations may provide some guide.



### III. The Status of Children in Northern Europe and Turkey

In the previous chapters, I explored changing ideas of what it means to be a child, and the ways in which those ideas have influenced societal treatment of children. While childhood has been different in different historical periods, it is also different in different contemporary cultures. This chapter will present studies of contemporary children's lives in Northern Europe and Turkey. When seen in a historical context, especially through DeMause's (1974) vision of childhood as a "nightmare," conditions for children appear to have improved greatly as time has passed. For example, child mortality has, for the most part, fallen in industrialized countries, and children have been increasingly protected by laws. Industrial, social, and scientific advances have been connected to the apparent improved living conditions for children in many countries. The development of immunizations and the willingness of parents to immunize their children reflect scientific advances and possible increases in parental concern for children. Social, environmental, and work related legislation have taken children into consideration, recognizing their special status and treating them differently than adults. However, children's lives are still not idyllic or ideal.

While romantic ideas about childhood and children are now popular and are reflected in official policy, the daily lives of children are often much different from that ideal. Each of the European states has tax and welfare laws aimed at families with children, from tax credits for dependents to monthly allowances paid to all families

with dependent children. Northern Europe, including Scandinavia and Germany, is seen as socially progressive with extensive safety nets and welfare states. Turkey, on the other hand, is perceived as a backwards country, heavily influenced by Islamic ideology. In reality, Turkey proudly claims its status as the only country in the world to celebrate a national children's holiday.

I have chosen to focus on the status of children in the two areas of Northern Europe and Turkey because of my personal experience living with, going to school with, and observing children in northern Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Turkey. It is particularly relevant to look at Northern Europe and Turkey because, while two regions cannot represent the entire world, Northern Europe consists of industrialized countries while Turkey is in the midst of industrializing. The distinction between industrialized and industrializing countries is an important conceptual distinction in the contemporary world, and industrialized countries are often seen as a model for development. However, elements of pre-industrialized countries are increasingly being seen as worth preserving. By examining 'modern' and industrialized countries as well as an industrializing, more traditional country, I hope to find some revealing contrasts in children's daily lives that might reflect the societal differences in conceptualizing childhood. In fact, I was repeatedly surprised by the similarities in the children's lives.

## Northern Europe

Northern Europe tends to have widespread economic and welfare protections for children. It went through industrialization at roughly the same pace as the United States, and the history of childhood described in the first chapter applies to Northern Europe as well. However, the idea that children deserve a fair start (also described as an equal start) in life is firm in Northern European countries such as Germany and Sweden, where the state is often willing to financially contribute to or otherwise subsidize childrearing.

Sweden, for example, has increasingly provided services for children since the 1920s. The country was transformed from a primarily agricultural to a more industrialized country suddenly around the turn of the century. In the 1920s, the birth rate fell alarmingly in Sweden, producing a nativity crisis and "concerns for maintaining racial or ethnic homogeneity, for national defense, and for the negative psychological and economic effects of depopulation (Carlson, 1990, p. xvi)." These fears were worsened by the massive emigration which had taken place at the end of the nineteenth century during early industrialization. Myrdal and Myrdal (1941, 1956, 1960) proposed a series of welfare provisions, which they claimed would encourage a higher birth rate. The Myrdals envisioned a society in which feminism triumphed over old socialism as defined by Marx; reason triumphed over tradition; central government triumphed over regions; urban, multi-family dwellings triumphed over the suburban single-family model; the therapeutic triumphed

over the moral; and the state triumphed over the personal (Carlson, 1990). Their proposals ranged from child care provisions and monthly child allowances to legalized abortion and sexual education. By the 1930s, after many of the Myrdals' suggestions had begun to be implemented, the welfare proposals seemed justified as the birth rate once again rose.

The Myrdals' ideas provided the foundation for the modern welfare state in Sweden, as well as the basis for much of Sweden's contemporary social policy. Besides programs which are typically associated with the welfare state, such as money subsidies for food, housing, and childrearing, many other programs were instituted which affected Swedes of all income levels and social backgrounds. Policies arising from the Myrdals' philosophy include a housing program in the 1970s which aimed to provide 1 million new housing places in urban areas, the end of joint taxation for married couples, eased divorce laws, improved maternal leave, and affordable daycare (Lopez-Fresquet, 1994).

Conditions for children in industrialized countries today may best be described as uneven. Northern Europe tends to lead the world on such tangible measures of children's status as child mortality rates and medical statistics, but most of the countries are still striving for better conditions for their children through reexamination of welfare laws or child care provision. While most Northern European countries have no iodine deficiencies, Germany is an exception, and it has no plans for iodizing all food-grade salt (UNICEF, 1993, p. 8-9). While Sweden had the highest number of

'baby-friendly' hospitals (i.e. hospitals that meet UNICEF and WHO criteria) among industrialized countries in 1993, it still fell far behind many industrializing countries.

While education is mandatory in Northern Europe, public education is relatively job oriented. The decision whether a child will go to the university preparatory school or to the technical school is made when the child is approximately ten years old. Sixteen year olds have adult options in Germany and Sweden. The legal drinking age in Germany is sixteen. In Sweden, sixteen year olds may be legally of majority - able to end school, collect 'welfare' and live on their own. Each of these age limits impact the independence of the child.

Despite regional differences, children's lives in all of these countries are focused around school. The schoolday in Northern Europe varies from four to six hours long for elementary school students. Although parental leave may last for a year in Sweden, daycare is widespread, and children often begin daycare at two or three years of age. In Germany, by contrast, mothers are expected to stay at home with their children. Kindergarten, separate from public schools in Germany, is the only form of institutional childcare, and it is provided for all children the year before they start elementary school. Some children may begin earlier if there is space for them. If the mother must work because she is a single parent, she might be able to start her child in Kindergarten as early as two or three years old. After Kindergarten, elementary school begins. The subjects being taught, including math, reading, social studies, and so on, are familiar.

However, not all subjects are taught each day. The combination of classes, and even length of the schoolday, varies daily for children. Four classes may be taught on Monday, and six, including physical education, on Tuesday. When children start school, they will stay with the same class of students through much of their school life. German children stay with the same group of children until they leave elementary school in the fourth grade. Swedish students stay with not only the same student group, but also with the same teacher for three years at a time.

While it is difficult to generalize about the everyday activities of children beyond school, the concerns and fears of adults show some of the expected behavior for children. In Northern Europe, recent well-publicized child crimes, including murders by children as young as ten years old, are highlighting adult concerns. For example, adults wonder if latchkey children have too little adult supervision, too much freedom, and too little control. Issues of television violence, and television viewing in general, show concerns about children developing the self-control and emotional maturity which have been markers of adulthood over the last few centuries. Family breakdown, including parental divorce, is also seen as a possible cause of child crime. In Sweden, many of the tenets of the welfare state are coming under fire as causing the breakdown of family life (see for example Anderson, no date; Lindbeck, 1988; Popenoe, 1988).

## Turkey

Turkey has yet to protect its children as a class to the same extent as has Northern Europe. Child labor is common, and few children's rights or welfare provisions are encoded into law. However, after the Turkish Republic was founded in 1921, Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, dedicated the anniversary of the foundation of the Republic - April 23 - to the children. He declared the national day to be a National Children's holiday, stating that children were the nation's future. Now, UNICEF has declared April 23 to be International Children's Day, having coordinated its celebration with that of Turkey. However, Turkish press and people proudly affirm each year that they are the only country, unique in the world, to have a national holiday for children. The day is celebrated through exhibitions by children of traditional songs and dances, poetry recitations, and other types of presentations. In the capital city of Ankara, children from all over the world are brought together to stay with Turkish host families and to celebrate culture and childhood. At the same time, children's representatives are sent to take over the government for a day. All of the state officials and high ranking bureaucrats are replaced by children, who sign executive orders and hold special parliamentary sessions to discuss children's issues.

As in Europe and the United States, the acknowledgment and celebration of childhood in Turkey followed sweeping societal

changes. These included industrial modernization and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The rejection of the Ottoman heritage was coupled with a commitment to modernization and Westernization, the establishment of a secular Republic, and the development of a tourist sector. The Turkish alphabet was Romanized, and the Republic was changed from a system based on Islamic law to a secular democracy. It began as a one-party 'democracy', evolving through two transitional periods to the multi-party democracy it now is. Turkey is still in the midst of industrializing, having gone through a green revolution in the 1970s. The green revolution included the introduction and increasing prevalence of tractors and other farm machinery. The introduction of machinery and modern farming methods transformed rural life, disrupting the traditional patronage system and rearranging land use patterns. Tourism has grown as a sector of the economy, and migrants have moved to tourist centers or cities rather than to agricultural lands. All of these changes have affected children's lives as labor has moved away from the home, and as the use of child labor has been affected in the agricultural sector and introduced in tourism (above information from: Y. Ertürk & A. Gürsoy, personal communications, February 1995).

Recently, child labor has been identified as a problem in Turkey by some Turks. The trend toward elimination of child labor in Turkey follows, as it did in the United States, a shift in the culture, which is connected to advances in industrialization. The higher economic and social classes in Turkey are currently pushing for greater legal and social protections for children. Although economic



reality continues to make child labor attractive, useful, and, in some cases, necessary, Yakin Ertürk (1994) writes in her study on child labor that:

If there is a clearly identified social entity of childhood in a society, then, this would have to encompass all children, whether part of an urban middle class setting or rural peasant households. To perceive the latter as a natural component of the work force, while defining the former as children who need to be protected and nurtured would undoubtedly be a double-standard (p. 76).

Elementary schooling is mandatory through the fifth grade, and has been since the founding of the Turkish Republic. However, it has been difficult to enforce educational laws, especially in rural areas. Schooling, at least to this minimum level, is becoming more common today as roads have been built, transportation has been improved, and other efforts have been made to make education accessible.

The dichotomy between school and labor in Turkey reflects the dualism of children's lives. As everywhere, there is both the positive and the negative in children's lives. This is especially clear in industrializing nations, where people are struggling with the shifts between tradition and modernity, and struggling to blend the two. While child labor is an open issue for discussion within Turkey, imprisonment and torture of underage people is not acknowledged. Instead, the normalness of education and children's play is evident on the surface of the society.

The health of children is one measure of their worth in society, because resources are devoted to important sectors of countries. In

Turkish society, there is currently a push toward vaccinating children, which has been hindered by religious fundamentalists wary of the process. UNICEF's report for 1994 chronicles a country that for the most part seems to be average for its income level in health services. Iodine deficiency exists in Turkey, but there are no plans for combating it. Approximately 10% of Turkey's children are malnourished. While such depressing health statistics exist, Turkey is vocal in its commitment to its children. The fact that approximately one third of Turkey's population is under the age of fifteen has certainly led to an increase in the rhetoric of support for children in Turkey (Government of Turkey - UNICEF: Program of Cooperation, 1991).

### Conclusion

In Turkey, children often have different kinds of responsibilities in their family and in the community than in Northern European countries. Like Turkey, many European countries have experimented with children's congresses. The United Nations year of the child, 1979, was especially marked by such conferences. Unfortunately, experiments with children's congresses have typically consisted of one-time or small-scale events in Europe, in contrast to the annual international event in Turkey. In the northern German town of Espelkamp, where I went to high school for a year, the local women's group sponsors a children's conference, the main function of which is to plan summer activities.

Commitments to children exist in all of the areas surveyed. The celebration of children seems to demonstrate a commitment to children, and is positive because it provides a public display of celebration and joy related to children. The fact that children symbolically take over parliament once a year demonstrates a possible willingness to listen to children and to pay attention to their concerns. Northern Europe on the other hand seems to provide an example of practical measures which Turkey might use to act on its concern for children, at least when the results are examined. Northern Europe has achieved medical successes which Turkey is trying to achieve. Children in Northern Europe have also been protected under laws which limit their participation in labor and impose age limits on certain activities. These protections are currently being debated, and the more informal community protections as found in Turkey may provide alternative ways of dealing with threats to children.

While official policies on children exist in Sweden, Germany, and Turkey, the northern European policies seem to have more practical consequences. The effects of the Swedish welfare policies are reflected in statistics which show high levels of child health. However, teen suicide and alcoholism rates show that emotional needs may not always be met by the same programs. Turkey, on the other hand, consciously celebrates its children every year, dedicating a national holiday to them, even though health and vaccination levels are much lower than in Northern Europe, and child labor is a problem.

#### IV: Children's Lives in Northern Europe and Turkey

While I was abroad during my junior year of college, I deliberately collected and compared observations about children's lives in the various countries in which I lived. In Germany and Turkey I especially had opportunities to be around children. While I lived with a family in Germany, I spent most of my time in the school, especially in the Kindergarten. In Turkey I also visited school, but I was around children the most when they came home and played in the family compound where we lived. While the buildings and the living arrangements were very different in each country, the lives of the children were surprisingly similar. Germany seemed immediately familiar, with apartments and nuclear families. The extended family living in a circle of houses in the Turkish village (see diagram at end of chapter) seemed more foreign to me, but it also gave me the opportunity to interact with all of the related children. Although my observations were not systematic, I took advantage of the different settings to observe children as naturalistically as possible. What I saw in each town reflects how societal provisions for childhood impact children in that society.

While I observed children of all ages, I will focus my descriptions primarily on children aged three to eight years old, because this is a historically and developmentally important point in a child's life. The importance of seven years as the age of reason has already been described in the first chapter, as has the fact that seven was often the transition point to adulthood. Today, children make the

transition to school at age five, six, or seven. Developmentally, children have a good command of their bodies and of language by age seven. They are developing their mental abilities, learning memorization techniques and additional ways to organize new information.

### Observations in Germany

Levern, Hude, and Espelkamp are three small Northern German towns on the border of Northrhine-Westfalia and Lower Saxony, about an hour from the Netherlands. The towns are similar: they have populations of approximately 2,000 people and are within half an hour of each other. The differences between the three towns are not impressive. Levern is so small that it has joined its town government with neighboring towns into a community called Stemwede. Espelkamp is the school town, where the junior high and high school for the surrounding towns are located. This area of northernmost Northrhine-Westfalia has attracted many immigrants from Eastern Europe. As a result there is also an intensive language school for immigrant children in Espelkamp. Hude is further north, across the state border in Lower Saxony. It lies on the Dümmer See, a popular summer destination for Germans.

When I returned to the family with which I had spent a year in Levern, their situation had changed. The parents had separated, and the mother had moved with all four children to Hude, where I was to spend a month going to Kindergarten with the two youngest children. The Kindergarten that the children attend is in Northrhine-Westfalia,

where there is an optional afternoon Kindergarten which is not available in Lower Saxony. All Kindergarteners go to the morning sessions, but only a few stay in the afternoon. One reason for a child to stay in the afternoon is if the mother works, but all of the older children stay once a week to go do gymnastics at a nearby gym.

The children in the family with which I lived were four, six, eight, and eleven years old. While I spent most of my time in the Kindergarten where the younger children went, I also went to the third and the fifth grades with the older children. The children also spent time with me when they were at home or playing with friends.

### Germany: Kindergarten

Kindergarten in Germany is normally organized around the doctrine of free play (Caiti et al. 1992). Various activity centers are set up around the room, and children may choose whichever one they would like. These include playing with blocks, or in the kitchen, doing crafts, or any number of other activities. There are usually a couple of group activities, including breakfast, songs, and games. The teacher leads children in crafts and observes the activity in the room, rarely interfering. She may also join the children. The Kindergarten I observed has three groups of children, their rooms off of a central room. Each group has its own bathroom and washroom, and each child has their own towel and hook in the bathroom.

Sonia, five years old, is affectionate and outgoing, almost hyper. She has long blond hair and a mischievous smile. When a stranger comes into the room, she is the first child to initiate contact.

When I went to class on the first day, Sonia invited me to play in the doll corner with her. She is aggressive, making sure that I know what she wants to do. While she and I are in the kitchen, her brother Michael, four years old, comes over to play with us. Dennis (6), who has too much energy to sit through an entire game of anything, intermittently comes to join us. Sonia leads the game as it changes and adapts to the boys. First she and I are mother and daughter, then we are friends, then doctor and patient, and then friends again.

In contrast to Sonia, Marie is a quiet, mousy girl. She stands and watches what is going on, waiting for a direct invitation. When I ask for her input in deciding what to do, or if she would like to do something, she usually just shrugs. If I ask her to join in or suggest an activity, she agrees to it. I never see her spontaneously joining in to play with other children, and she rarely plays with me when I am with another child or children. Instead, she seems to disappear - fading away to whatever activity she can find.

Dennis, who bounced in and out of my play with Sonia on the first day, is probably Michael's best friend, although he is too active to concentrate on the friendship. Dennis is considered difficult, and Michael sometimes seems to model his behavior on Dennis'. The teacher tells me that Dennis has always been noisy, but that it seems worse since his parents divorced. She tries to make sure that the class goes outside every day so that Dennis can get some exercise. Dennis is, however, surprisingly compassionate, and he tries to be helpful. The other children often avoid Dennis because he has so little self-control. When another boy was upset because he had left a toy

at home, Dennis was the one who understood the problem first and solved it. After Dennis helped me to take care of a little boy who had wet his pants, he took off running and played with off-limits toys.

Sasha is another troublemaker, fighting with and biting the other children. He always seems to be wherever trouble is happening in the room. However, the teachers in the room do not seem to identify Sasha as a trouble child. Their attention is occupied with Dennis.

There was a popular clique in the Kindergarten. It consisted of three girls who were very mature and exclusive. They played together, usually doing the same activity. However, they almost never played with other children. They worked on crafts with the teacher, but I was unable to enter their activities or to help other children enter into their activities because the three girls seemed complete in themselves. They did not need anyone else to spice up their games or for anything.

### Observations in Turkey

Aslan Bucak, a society on the southern coast of Turkey where I did research, reflects the changes in Turkish society over the last century. It was founded around a century ago by people moving out of the mountains into arable plains. Aslan Bucak's position at the foot of the mountains, a half hour inland from the Mediterranean Sea, drew wheat farmers. As economic demands shifted, the farming began to be focused on orange and lemon groves, and now greenhouse farming is growing in economic importance.



In the last ten years, Kemer has been built as a planned tourist town between Aslan Bucak and the sea, incorporating Aslan Bucak as one of its neighborhoods. Many of the middle aged people of Aslan Bucak arrived from villages further up in the mountains and live traditionally. They follow most of the religious traditions and (especially the women) dress traditionally, keeping their heads covered and wearing shalvar (traditional baggy pants). Young adults and teenagers have grown up with the influence of tourism, especially since both the junior high and high schools are in the town of Kemer. Most young adults wear more traditional clothing once they marry. Children and teenagers may wear jeans, and even bicycle shorts. Taking on traditional clothes at young adulthood represents more of an assimilation into the adult community than a return to traditional ways, as young adults are lax about religious festivals. Like the rest of Turkey, approximately a third of the population of Aslan Bucak is under the age of 15.

Parents in this setting want their children to reap economic opportunities of tourism and Westernism, but want them to hold on to tradition as well. Little children are encouraged to play dress-up with headscarves and shalvar. Most families have few children. The average number seems to be two children, although the parents feel unfortunate if both are girls.

Children are seen as carefree and without responsibility. Most children are expected to begin helping with household or farm chores at around puberty, although girls may be thought of as helpers much earlier, and boys may not become contributors until after military

service. However, observation of children's activities shows that they are actually helping their parents more than is reported. Children are mostly used as messengers and gofers. Their parents send them on errands, and so do older children.

The youngest children have few demands placed on them. They are expected not to bother adults and are exposed to and encouraged in the kinds of caring and relationships that will later be expected of them. They are fed until they are about four years old, and linguistic ability seems low. Önder, for example, spoke very little at three years old, although he seemed to understand when he was told to do things. Adults did not expect to be able to communicate verbally with these children - they joked that the children were speaking another language. Children were also expected to be obnoxious, and were often teasingly called brats.

The families in Aslan Bucak seemed to encourage dependence, to want to help the children. They fed children at this age, although they might have been able to feed themselves. These young children were also encouraged to show prosocial, or helping, behavior, which is theoretically beginning to be evidenced in early childhood. Önder was encouraged to care for Hande, taking her home. Hande tried to feed a younger infant, and the children often saw prosocial behavior modeled by older children helping them. In this way, they also received social support. It was difficult for these children's families to be socially isolated, as they were surrounded by extended family. Instead, they saw that their parents had good relationships, and mutually dependent relationships, with those around them. Thus,

although young children are expected to do little in the community of Aslan Bucak, they are being trained and enveloped in a social structure, which will define later expectations - providing, for example the freedom and responsibility of a young distant relative to correct two children playing noisily.

### The lives of the children in Turkey

Önder, a smaller than average three-year-old, often had accidents related to his toilet training. His family was no longer actively toilet training him, but he did not yet have complete control over his bowel functions. When he was playing in the yard and had an accident, he would run home to get clean pants. His mother Gülay often called him names and occasionally hit him. Other people did not approve of Gülay's treatment of her son. Gülay's aunt, a schoolteacher from the nearby city, scolded Önder's mother, because Önder could not help himself.

Makbule, one of Gülay's neighbors, also had a three-year-old. When the two three-year-olds were looking at puppy, Gülay came by and threatened the children playfully with a stick. The children were frightened, and Makbule sighed disapprovingly.

The difference in parenting style between the two mothers was clear when I had to leave the children at the end of a day of playing. When the children and I parted for dinner, both of them cried. Önder's mother scolded him and made him follow her home. Hande, in contrast, was pacified, and I was invited to have dinner at

her house. Later I was encouraged to sneak off while she wasn't looking, and she was told that I was going to the bathroom.

Makbule seemed to be a permissive parent in comparison with her own sister as well. However, part of the difference between Makbule and her sister might be attributed to the different ages of their children. On the evening when I ate in Makbule's home, with her, her husband, and two daughters aged three and eight, I was encouraged to relax and talk to the husband while Makbule prepared the meal. On the other hand, when I ate at her sister's house, I was immediately put to work in the kitchen with the fifteen-year-old daughter. The older girl was expected to do more than the younger girls, and my treatment varied accordingly.

As shown in the above example, middle childhood is still a time of minimal contribution to the house. Children start school at about six years old, and learning is a primary responsibility for children aged 7 to eleven. Out of nine households interviewed, only three claimed that their children (in one there were only girl children) began to help their parents "from six or seven" or "from the time they're in primary school."

While I was in the village, the national children's holiday took place. Even the English language paper printed editorials about the holiday. The children in the village spent weeks after school practicing dances, songs, and poems in order to be ready for the celebration. On the twenty third of April, the day of the holiday, children dressed up in costumes or new clothes and went to school

early in order to travel to the celebration site in town with their classmates. The families went into town later in the morning to watch the presentation by all of the area elementary schools. After the children had danced, played instruments, and finished all of the day's presentation, a nurse was posted near the exit of the park in order to offer vaccination shots for any child who needed them.

### Conclusion

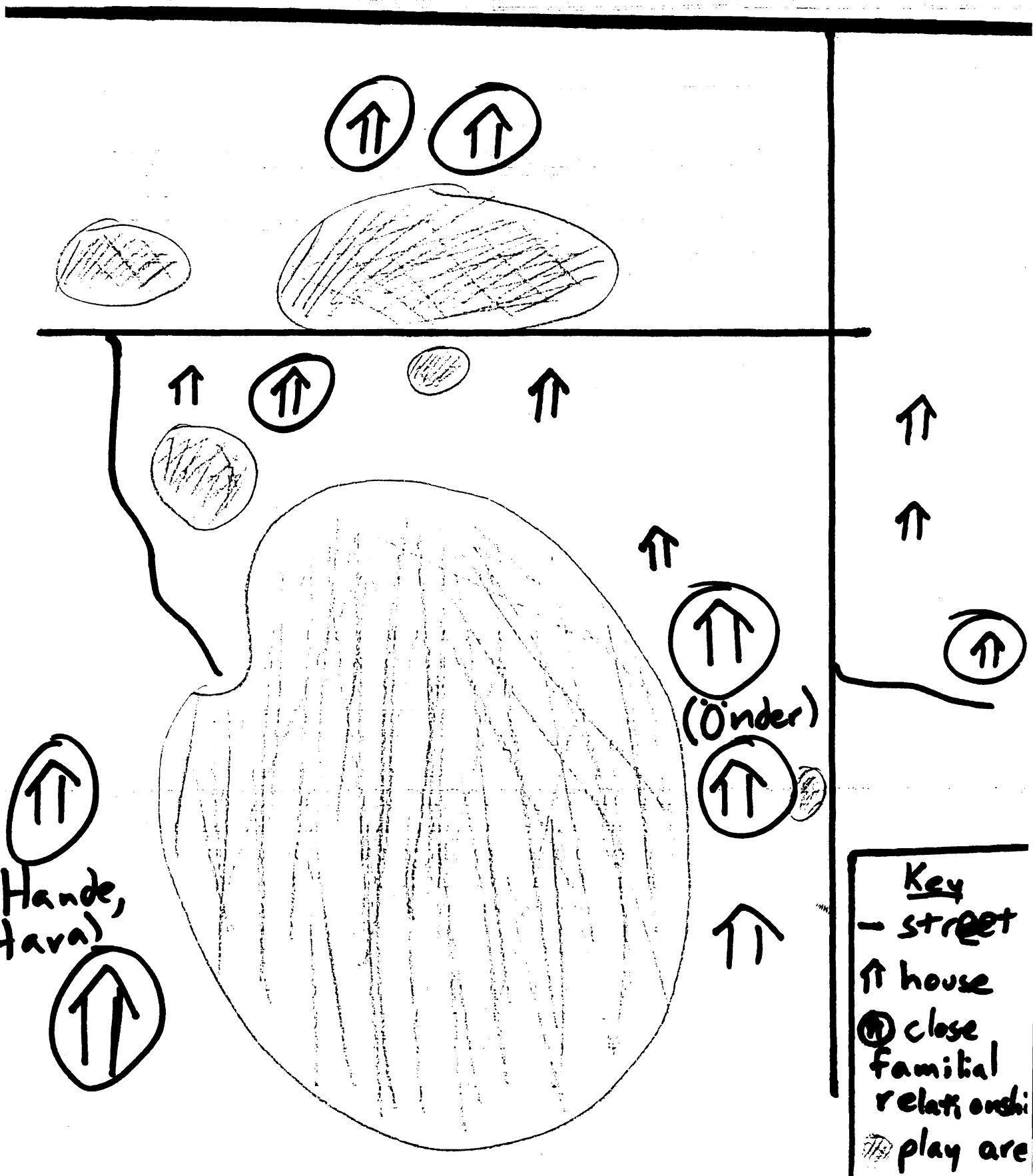
Each of the countries profiled here has official commitments to children. Ironically, Turkey seems to have gone farthest in actually carrying out its ideals, especially through the annual children's parliament and other celebrations of children's day. The industrialized countries, on the other hand, have generally enacted more protections for children into law. Daily lives for children in all of the countries seem to be similar, and official policy often seems to make little difference as long as basic necessities are met.

The Kindergarten in Germany provides a separate space for children within a specific age range. There is an emphasis on peer interaction and age specific activities, which may promote independence from parents. On the other hand, there is little everyday interaction with the larger community, especially for children who spend the whole day in Kindergarten. Such children have few opportunities for interactions across ages, and little community-based experience.

Turkish society, as I observed it, provides more cross-generational interactions. Children learn that they are part of their

community, which consists of parents, grandparents and children of all ages. However, Turkish children have fewer peer interactions. They do not have access to a separate space for their age group. While such children might become better integrated to the community than children in Germany, they might also be the objects of expectations from adults who might have little experience with young children. By implication, little experience could lead to inappropriate expectations of children, although that is not what I observed.

While children are recognized and given special status in Germany, Turkey, Sweden, and the United States, varying official measures have been implemented. However, children's everyday lives seem to have few differences, and groups in each of the countries advocate for better circumstances. In the final chapter, I will identify elements which can contribute to model conditions for children.



## Conclusion

In this thesis, I began with an examination of the ways in which the concept of childhood has evolved historically. While people have always cared for their children, the expectations placed on children during some historical periods appear inappropriate today. Children have been abused and killed in various cultures, but a growing empathy with children makes such treatment of children seem horrible, at least to most members of contemporary Western societies. Children are typically viewed as developing adults or as human beings in their own right, and these views are reflected in discussions of children's rights, but views of children as property, as labor, or as embodiments of evil continue to exist.

When the idea of children as developing adults became predominant, child advocacy began. By that time, which was the early nineteenth century, adulthood was fully differentiated from childhood in the upper and middle classes by work, voting, and other criteria. While voting laws pertained to poor families as well, poor children were likely to have adult roles like work. Advocates focused on protecting children and preparing them for adulthood, and on establishing a universal role for children within their society. Thus, education and basic needs became important as fundamental parts of preparation for healthy productive adulthood. Improvements in the lives of children followed as they were protected from, for example, exploitative work environments. However, treating children as merely in the process of becoming adults has been criticized as a



view of children as individuals in their own right has gained increasing credence. The modern children's rights movement is divided into one branch which sees children as needing protection so that they can grow into good adults, and another branch which sees children as needing liberation so that they can enjoy their full potential at whatever age they currently are.

In looking at Northern Europe and Turkey, I examined one culture (Northern Europe) which has many protections in place for children and another (Turkey) in which children have more freedom, as represented through national level laws and policies. Northern Europe has required school for children until they are sixteen and provides welfare benefits to ensure that children have basic needs met. Turkey, on the other hand, only requires school through the fifth grade, and has few welfare or labor laws concerning children, and reflects some of the conditions which were criticized by earlier child advocates in the West. However, an observation of children's lives in Turkey shows other provisions, like caring communities, which protect children. Northern Europe, on the other hand, represents a society which has protected its children through measures extolled by earlier child advocates and child protectionists. However, it is also the society which confines children and is criticized by child liberationists. In children's daily lives, factors like parents' work provide for some independence for children.

The lives of parents are an integral part of the lives of children. As Postman (1982) described the evolution of childhood, adulthood appeared at the same historical period as did childhood. That is,

childhood became a time of preparation for adulthood because adulthood became a state which required education and preparation. In both popular and scholarly literature, writers are beginning to warn that childhood and adulthood are disappearing today. Postman (1982) argues that radio, television, and computer technology are making information available to children, thus breaking down the barriers between children and adults. Bly (1996) argues that adults refuse to take on responsibility or to act responsibly. As a result, adolescence is extending through middle age, and adult role models are becoming scarce.

While protectionist initiatives improved life for children as a whole, they are no longer the ideal. Depictions of conditions in orphanages and the institutional nature of them, which precluded individual care for children, resulted in the downfall of orphanages. Orphanages provided care for children which represented a gigantic improvement over abandonment, sale of orphans, and institutional blindness to abuse. However, orphanages had many flaws, and systems of foster care were an improvement. Although problems with foster care are glaringly obvious, a return to orphanages, as advocated by some politicians today, would not represent an advance in societal care for children. The ideal to be achieved evolves as the reality and concept of childhood evolve.

In an ideal setting, the basic needs of every child would be met. Sweden has done a good job of ensuring health and minimal housing standards for children. Basic needs of food, shelter, and medical care can all be met through government regulation and

governmental welfare programs. Before liberty can become an issue, life must exist, and **basic needs** are the prerequisites for survival. However, two more factors have to do with the survival of the child. First of all, love or contact must be supplied. One of the failures of the orphanages was that children in the institutions died for lack of human contact. Such contact can not be legislated, and so it is on a different level from the other basic needs. Secondly, a right to survival implies a right to life, which has recently been interpreted to mean that once an infant is conceived, it has the right to be born. While this right may be affected by legislation, it would require another thesis to examine the implications of that right. Here I focus only on the rights of children already born.

The right to love and human contact fits more neatly with an advanced class of rights. These rights, such as the right to be respected as a person, may be infringed upon by legislation, but are difficult to guarantee through legislation. Instead, love and respect must be products of an enlightened society. The best example of this on a legislative level is the children's holiday in Turkey. A yearly celebration of the existence of children in the midst of society implies that love and joy are felt in the presence of children. The celebration is even more impressive because it is on the anniversary of the founding of the republic - a day devoted in many other countries to the celebration of the military and of patriotism.

I am afraid that, after my criticism of other theorists for not having been specific enough in their goals, I will also have to conclude with nonspecific suggestions. While the abolition of unduly

restrictive laws would help, a shift in the concept of childhood, which seems to be underway, will make the greatest difference.

Protectionist laws should be enacted and firmly enforced insofar as they relate to the basic needs of childhood. Without food and health, life can not be ideal. However, protectionist or liberationist laws pertaining to other aspects of a child's life must be flexible.

The main problem for children whose needs are met is lack of dignity. Liberation - the granting of the right of free speech and other rights - can help to achieve dignity. However, introducing another adult to ensure that a child takes advantage of rights will not add dignity to the child's life. In order to achieve individual dignity, a child must not be seen as an age, but as a person. For example, a child or youth commenting on a discussion should not be asked how old he or she is. Instead, the remark should be accepted on its own value. I call this 'age anonymity.' It is normally considered rude to ask an adult how old he or she is, and the question is often used to discount the person based on youth or senility. Age anonymity should be extended. The result would be a child who is not considered extremely mature or immature, but instead a child who is accepted at face value.

In order to provide children with the respect which can balance dependence with autonomy to produce personal integrity, adults are needed. Adults must be sensitive to the needs of children and able to meet those needs empathetically, without making the child feel inadequate. A great degree of maturity is needed in order to sensitively meet a person's needs without feeling superiority over

that person. However, that is essential, because superiority precludes respect.

A large investment of energy and resources is needed for a child to be brought up with dignity while its physical, mental, and social needs are being met. Just as the end of swaddling meant that adults would have to invest more time in children, a less condescending relationship means more energy. Even the most mature and capable adult would not be able to meet the child's needs all by himself or herself. Instead, an ideal setting in which the child's personal integrity is respected would require a caring and committed community, as was found in Turkey. While primary childcare was the parent's responsibility, the child could be fed in any of the homes. Such a community would also be the basis for protection of the child from abuse or neglect, since a neighbor would see the effects.

I believe that liberation for children will come at a reasonable rate if the child has integrity as a person. If the child can be met as a human being by those around it, then rights such as freedom of expression will follow. The parents and community would then help the child to realize human rights in order to help the child be more human. However, the limits of the individual child would also be respected. This would eliminate arbitrary age limits on rights, allowing flexible age limits based on individual abilities and limitations.

The image of the ideal world for a child includes food, shelter, health, love, personal contact, and personal integrity or respect. In order to reach such a world, governing bodies can and should ensure first the rights which I identified as basic rights. However, the last three rights can not be legislated. A communal celebration of children, like the holiday in Turkey, can help to foster an environment for love and respect of children. The love and respect must however come from a continued evolution of empathy for children.

In a setting where children had all of the above rights, children and their families would have community support. As Hillary Clinton said in a recent speech, the child is the inspiration for community; therefore the child would be the center of the community. In such a community, children would have many options for seeking help if it was needed. Children would also have age anonymity and would be respected as people in their own right, rather than for what they might one day be. A community which respected and cared for its children would accept participation and input from its young members.

In conclusion, an ideal society for children is not a society in which children have power and are free from all constraints, as many opponents of children's rights might imagine. Instead, ideal means that children are allowed to participate to whatever extent they can in society, while having their needs met without condescension. Groups such as women, blacks, and other minorities have complained that they were degraded because they were treated

like children (Cohen, 1980). However, the same treatment was never seen as degrading to children. If such treatment is degrading, then it is degrading to all groups in society, including the socially constructed category of children.

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