DEMYTHOLOGIZING "INNOCENCE" IN PORTRAYALS OF CHILDREN: HOW

CROSS-CULTURAL MISPERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN & YOUTH CAUSE

STRESS

by

BRIAN D. HARRIETT

A Capstone submitted to the

Graduate School-Camden

Rutgers-The New Jersey State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Graduate program in

Liberal Studies

Written under the direction of

Richard Drucker

and approved by

Stuart Charme

Camden, New Jersey, May 2014

i

CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

DEMYTHOLOGIZING "INNOCENCE" IN PORTRAYALS OF CHILDREN: HOW

CROSS-CULTURAL MISPERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN & YOUTH CAUSE

STRESS

By BRIAN D. HARRIETT

Capstone Director:

Richard Drucker

Various examples of childhood stress and trauma in fictional literature,

ethnographic, historical, and psychological works demonstrate several

constructions of childhood that don't serve the children well. These constructions

include specific ideas of the "innocent" child, a stereotypical caricature

manufactured by adults, and not actual portrayals of real life children. This

stereotype is ignorance of the 'real' child, its actual needs, and the consequences

to children due to adult attitudes. A second stereotype of children is as a

hindrance or an inconvenience. These false, or incomplete adult

misperceptions about children and youth, and their motives and agency, then

result in unnecessary stress to children across cultures. Culture and society

have constructed the idea of childhood as a general concept, childhood

innocence, and childhood agency, failed to recognize fallacies connected with

these traditional, and stereotypical, assumptions. Scholarly articles are grouped

by: stress and trauma, the concept of the child and stress and trauma; innocence, ideology, and abuse, children further at risk. Ends with discussion of feminism and its attempt to explain why abuse and stress happen too frequently to children, and how abuse, ideology, and stress have common centers.

__Introduction__

Various examples of childhood stress and trauma in fictional literature, ethnographic, historical, and psychological works demonstrate several constructions of childhood that don't serve the children well. These constructions include specific ideas of the "innocent" child, a stereotypical caricature manufactured by adults, and not actual portrayals of real life children. This stereotype is ignorance of the 'real' child, its actual needs, and the consequences to children due to adult attitudes. A second stereotype of children is as a hindrance or an inconvenience.

These false, or incomplete adult misperceptions about children and youth, and their motives and agency, then result in unnecessary stress to children across cultures. I will first discuss how culture and society have both constructed the idea of childhood as a general concept, then discuss childhood innocence, and childhood agency, and the failure to recognize fallacies connected with these traditional, and stereotypical, assumptions. I will then utilize three groupings of scholarly articles: stress and trauma, the concept of the child and stress and trauma; innocence, ideology, and abuse, children further at risk. Finally I will discuss feminism and its attempt to explain why abuse and stress happen too frequently to children, and how abuse, ideology, and stress have common centers.

I utilized three novels to round out the picture: *"The Bluest Eye"* by Toni Morrison; *"The House on Mango Street"* by Sandra Cisneros; and *"Woman Warrior"* by Maxine Hong Kingston. Each novel, when related to American and cross-cultural empirical studies, dramatizes and illustrates the above concepts and demonstrates the damage done to children and youth by flawed adult perceptions, stereotypes, and misunderstandings. All three novels have autobiographical foundations and portray fictionally authentic events in real cultural and social situations. These events are focalized through the 'omniscient' narrator in the "Bluest Eye", and the autobiographical narrators of "Woman Warrior" and "The House on Mango Street". My focus is on how adults in these novels view and thus form their children, but readers of these works should also recognize that these children can also be focalized by each other, and in their own minds.

Toni Morrison presents a tragic view of childhood. Her focus on Pecola Breedlove, as a lonely black girl living in Ohio in the 1940s, moves from one tragedy to the next. Pecola's "angry sadness" results from her 'pale' comparison to the "blond American myth" embodied by Shirley Temple. (pg.) Indeed, according to Morrison herself, Pecola's life was "dismissed, trivialized, misread". (Morrison, Afterward) However, Morrison chose "a unique situation, not a representative one…unlike the average black family and unlike the narrator's". (Ibid, After) Debra Werrlein credits Morrison with portraying children as

"victims, activists, recorders, and even oppressors—all as a way of demythologizing the 'innocent' past." Thus the title of this paper (Werrlein, pg. 54)

An important aspect of this paper is to provide empirical studies that seem to confirm, from social scientific and historical research, the dangers of misperceiving children, or mythologizing and thus misusing them. To accompany Morrison's work, Bernstein's work on "Racial Innocence" relates the age-old "nature versus nurture" controversy and informs us how Morrison's character Pecola is devalued by her innate ethnicity reinforced by her misanthropic upbringing. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" presents the archetype of the white and sinless character of white children as opposed to the inborn, dirty and sinful character of the black children. In their research, Dyer, Lipsitz and duCille emphasize the perceived cultural superiority of the white child with Shirley Temple as the iconic example.

Cisneros' work uses both heartbreaking and joyous vignettes to describe the life of Esperanza Cordero a female youth who lives on the fictional Mango streat. Less tragic but still harsh in its reality, it is set in Chicago in 1954. Cisneros weaves a story using various characters around Esperanza to paint the background from which she is forced to emerge. The suggestive autobiographical nature of the work gives a ray of hope that Esperanza

(Cisneros) emerges from her world of low expectations to become "one of the most brilliant of today's young writers". (Cisneros, Front Jacket)

Empirical studies that can be related to Cisneros' novel, and its damning environment of low expectations, start with Margaret Mead's comparison of South Pacific children with their American peers. In addition, Anna Mae Duane's work, *"Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race and the Making of the Child Victim",* highlights how the constructions of children and their expectations (by them, and of them by adults) are a powerful tool to influence how adults view children who can, or cannot emerge from disadvantaged backgrounds. The stress in Esperanza's life, and her disadvantaged environment, and their effects on her ability to learn and develop are reflected in a work by Miller that uses studies and theories of Hans Selye to illustrate the deleterious effect of stress on children. Megan Gunnar and Karina Quevedo in the "Annual Review of Psychology", and later Bryce McLeod, Jeffrey Wood, Shelly Avny, Dean McKay and Eric Storch, as socio-anthropologists in the *"Handbook of Child and Adolescent Anxiety Disorders"*, illustrate the importance of strong supporting structures in societies, needed to underpin the development of children like Esperanza.

In the *"Woman Warrior"* by Maxine Hong Kingston, through her own (and her family's) experiences, highlights "the author's own battles and understandings of the challenges borne by millions of immigrants in a society

pitilessly alien…" (Kingston, Rear Jacket)   The "ghosts" of old China that these immigrants brought to America clashed with the ghosts of "American reality". (Ibid, Front Jacket)

Kingston's description of the challenges facing immigrant children allows us to synthesize a variety of cross-cultural perspectives. Shane Jimerson, Eric Durbrow, Emma Adam, Megan Gunnar, and Ingrid Bozoky use school psychology to relate age and culture to brain activity in Caribbean village children. Bartlet, in *"School Pressures and Child Mental Health in Afro-Asian Cultures"*, takes a cross-cultural look to explore how health professionals from different backgrounds understand the links of stress and bodily function. Jeffrey Wood, Angela Chiu, Wei-Chin Hwang, Jeffrey Jacobs and Muriel Ifekwunigwe's article on Mexican-American students and the challenges they face hints at ways that immigrant children can overcome cultural barriers to succeed in American culture.

All of the novels are narrated from an ethnic child's point of view, and focalize themselves and other characters as developing in hostile, or alien, environments. These environments, and the interactions between the children, their families, and those they meet, all provide a harsh 'test tube' within which the children's identities are mixed, heated and catalyzed into a final adult compound. Their novels challenge the ways childrens' identities are suppressed or ignored to create instead an ideal, fictionalized image of childhood. The 'child's voice'

frequently is missing from many accounts that describe children, as they are written and interpreted by adults. Equally important are the autobiographical accounts of adults that actually experienced traumatic and stressful childhoods and the representations of children within ethnic literature.

The conclusion discusses how several empirical studies suggest how a redemption of childhood could be achieved, and how children from disadvantaged, prejudiced, and intercultural milieus can achieve success. David Crenshaw and Eliana Gil examine "self-directed trauma play" while Angela Veale in *"Review of War, Conflict, Play",* examines the importance of play in normalizing children after exposure to wars and other severe traumatic events. Paul Bramston and Jeff Patrick in *"Rural Adolescents Experiencing an Urban Transition",* highlight the importance of social support systems (families and schools) that can ease children's paths to recovery. Another remediation is suggested by Steven Roberts and Willard Ashley in *"Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy"*, for children who have experienced the trauma of natural disasters. Finally Kaoru Yamamoto, O. L. Davis, Stanislaw Dylak, Jean Whittaker, Colin Marsh and P.S. Westhuizen in *"Across Six Nations: Stressful Events in the Lives of Children"*, and later Angela Veale, Max Taylor, and Carol Linehan in *"Psychological Perspectives of 'Abandoned' and 'Abandoning' Street Children"*, examine children as "an understudied group" and present those experiences most

damaging to children and how they can redeemed through "adult commitment" to more positive attitudes about children.

Cultural Constructions of Childhood

There are many ways that children and youths have been caricatured, manipulated and used as "innocents". During various societal (and various cultural) periods, children have been alternately trusted and mistrusted; attributed with significant agency while being denied the agency to seek available opportunities; and have been the object of both significant effort and expenditure to build up children while, at the same time, using corporal punishment and strict discipline to tear them down. Ignorance of children and their challenges and dreams, willful or negligent, is evident in many portrayals of children, in songs, movies, stories, and novels. The construction of childhood that juxtaposes the dominant, majority culture's view in contrast to the poverty-stricken minority's view is most damaging.

The construction of the child as "innocent" has been common over the years in America, characterizing both disadvantaged American children and those children "unfortunate enough" to be born into starvation and trauma overseas. Morrison's tragic view of Pecola's childhood includes a birth into sin, disadvantage, and "American myths of black inadequacy". Robin Bernstein in

her book, *"Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights"* relays an interesting story of the imagined innocence of children and how these "imagined children" needed to be protected more than living adults.

> "In October 2009, Keith Bardwell, the justice of the peace in Louisiana's Tangipahoa Parish, refused to perform a wedding ceremony for Beth Humphrey, who is white, and Terence McKay, who is African American. 'I don't do interracial marriages,' Bardwell explained, 'because I don't want to put children in a situation they didn't bring on themselves." (Bernstein, pg. 1)

Bernstein relates that Bardwell was concerned that "the children will later suffer" and that, interestingly, his refusal to marry the interracial couple wasn't discrimination "because he denied his services equally to both a white woman and a black man". (Ibid, pg. 1) Notably, the children Bardwell was supposedly protecting were imaginary and trumped the rights of the couple to be officially recognized as married.

In opposition to the American colonial period's generally Calvinistic view of children as born with "original sin" and therefore were "inherently sinful and sexual", in the late 1800s and early 1900s emerged a view that children were born innocent "that is, sinless, absent of sexual feelings, and oblivious to worldly concerns." (Ibid, pg. 4)   According to Bernstein, this related to the complex construction of children included in "the Lockean tabula rasa and the

Rousseauian youth who were at essence an uncorrupted element of nature."
(Ibid, pg. 4) Morrison's focalization of her black characters as "born into
corruption" also touches on how damaging environments can limit what children
hope for. While the general construction of child innocence did contribute to
concern for the welfare of children, it was frequently turned into a racial
dichotomy of white child innocence versus black child depravity, which will be
discussed later.

This ambivalent perception of children as both innocent and depraved also
emerges in Cisneros' and Kingston's focalizations of their characters within a
'confined' social boundary relates to both the cultural raising of children and
children developing their own individual, cultural identities. Differences and
challenges in this development, within the overall societal parameters, is
evidenced in Margaret Mead's works about South Pacific island children.
"Growing up in New Guinea" is Margaret Mead's second book from her second
trip to the South Pacific (the first being to Samoa) in 1928. She was conducting
an in-depth observation of the Manus tribe, in the village of Peri, in the Admiralty
Islands to the north of New Guinea. In the book's introduction (by Howard
Gardner), anthropologist Margaret Mead "had a clear research agenda – she
wanted to determine whether children in this remote part of the world varied in
revealing ways from children in Western industrialized nations".

Mead's work makes no attempt to hide her cross cultural vision in terms of constructions of childhood identity. Interesting is Mead's ability, and willingness, to make comparisons familiar to Americans of the time such as, the Manus tribe essentially as "Yankee traders" with their economic focus, or Puritans from New England, in some of their moralistic behavior. Her work was offered but rejected by the Saturday Evening Post as it was "contrary to all our values" (Mead, pg. xxx). Although a major advance in anthropological studies, Mead's work conflicted with conventional wisdom about children and was largely ignored at the time.

In defense of the "nurture", or the environmental-learning argument, Mead did realize that the children in a variety of cultures were not able to provide stimulation on their own and lacked in imagination. This Lockean (tabula rasa) approach worked to support the nature argument, but the "Rousseauian notion" of inborn sufficiency showed up in other areas, such as how children are expected to teach themselves to survive in the Manus' harsh environment. (Ibid, pg. xviii) In fact, according to Mead, the South Pacific children were deprived of access to nothing except the property of others. Children were raised, or raised themselves, in dangerous oceanic environments with the supplement of adult reprimands when displaying 'non-innocent' behavior. The priority of the Manus social discipline is that "a good child is one who never touches anything and never asks for anything not its own" (Ibid, pgs. 27, 37).

The idea that children can raise themselves, and other children, also appears in studies of traditional African cultures where, as the women must return quickly to their agricultural duties to support the family, adult supervision is minimized. According to Robert A. LeVine in *"Child Care and Culture: Lessons from Africa"*, it is the lack of societal stability and the "hectic pace and increasing chaos of contemporary American life [that] undermine the evolving consistency and continuity that are essential for psychological growth" (LeVine, pg. xvi). These cross-cultural studies would seem to promote traditional South Pacific and African views of childhood as a carefree time without the continuous parent-child contact and stressful, adult-directed education, frequently promoted by American culture. Thus cross-cultural children are not deprived of experiences by their societies (physical and social), but are not mistakenly recognized as 'innocent', needing some adult/societal instruction to modify their 'natural' tendencies.

Another side of the interest in child raising and image construction is the manipulation of concepts of childhood by adults to wield significant influence over children and youth. In the novels, how children can be used for the material benefit of their disadvantaged families relates to several studies of child manipulation. More precisely, in the novels, adults often seem to have manipulative, or unrealistic, perceptions of their children's abilities. Everyone has seen commercials raising funds to feed hungry children by showing them emaciated and covered with flies. According to Anna Mae Duane in her book

"Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race and the Making of the Child Victim",

> "The child had powerful political, social, and emotional resonances in early America, and thus the figure of the suffering child provides a key entry point into the messy processes of the era." (Duane, pg. 3)

One example of the manipulation of child constructs for political purposes was when late 18th Century American thinkers and politicians drew, again, on Locke's idea of the "threatened child" as "an analogy for the colonies' relationship with a tyrannical mother country". (Ibid, pg. 4)   That there were actual suffering children in America at the time was far from the rhetoric, and cultural constructions of these American philosophers.

Finally, the construction of childhood that juxtaposes race, ethnicity and gender has drawn inaccurate and unhelpful images that are used to boost the majority and belittle the minority. One of the most common and well-known instances of this dichotomy of child innocence is found in "*Uncle Tom's Cabin"* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. According to Bernstein, "the archetype of 'innumerable pale and pious' - one might say white and sinless – 'heroines' of 19th Century sentimental fiction" includes Little Eva as a "hub in a busy cultural system linking innocence to whiteness through the body of the child". (Bernstein, pg. 6)

Interestingly enough, Bernstein claims further that "the white child's innocence was transferable to surrounding people and things, and that property made it politically usable". (Ibid, pg. 6) Morrison's references to "Dick & Jane" and Pecola's infatuation with a Shirley Temple doll reflects this automatic endowment of white children with innocence and as a standard for minorities to pursue. The fact that Claudia goes on to dismember such a doll, in defense of her own ethnic value, is frowned upon by those adults who thought that maybe Claudia wasn't "worthy enough to own one". (Morrison, pg. 13)

According to Richard Dyer, "whiteness…derives power from its status as an unmarked category". George Lipsitz notes that "whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations". (Ibid, pg. 7) For Ann duCille in her work *"The Shirley Temple of My Familiar"*, this "silence about itself" is "the primary prerogative of whiteness, at once its grand scheme and its deep cover". (duCille, 1997) According to Bernstein, the idea of "Racial Binarism" or, polarizing race as "black and white", gained popularity through the 19th Century. (Bernstein, pg. 8) Also popular was the idea of "infantilized" blacks, or a race that is neither interested, nor capable, of achieving adult goals. According to Duane, this concept was based on "the implicit injury, suffering, and death that await the vulnerable child". (Duane, pg. 4)

Constructs of the innocence and vulnerability of children, were easily sold to adults ignorant of actual childhood experiences, and then led to manipulation of childhood as a vehicle to achieve adult goals. All this occurs with little actual detection of the suffering and stress on children of all races, ethnicities, and genders, which would be required to ameliorate unnecessary trauma. That such childhood trauma might erupt into youthful delinquency and dysfunctional adults seems to be a surprise to those who have been blissfully ignorant to the source of their current social problems. Such themes are echoed in Cisneros' references, and similar references in Kingston, to inborn minority qualities of children being "born bad", "a bad girl" and an "ugly daughter". (Cisneros, pgs. 58, 83, 88 respectively)

Stress and Trauma in Forming the Child as a Result of Adult Misperceptions

Significant studies have been done on the deleterious effects of stress and trauma on adult health, both physically and mentally. Little effort has been expended (outside of the educational field) to understand how children can be affected, frequently in much more significant ways, than stressed adults.

Stress has long been known, physiologically and mentally, to adversely affect humans. Some of these deleterious effects include physical illness, a trigger for chronic mental illness, lack of cognitive ability or focus, etc. These stresses, just now being addressed in adults, have a significant impact on the development of children. Many of the stressors on children world-wide are similar, with some difference between cultures, as also with the accompanying effects. Using America as a foundation, a comparison of several other cultures will be made to include: Modern Occidental (US, UK, South Africa), Modern Oriental (Japanese, Chinese); War Cultures (Lebanon, Kuwait); Transient Populations (Chinese and Mexican Immigrant groups); Transitional Cultures from disaster (U.S. New Orleans, post-Katrina).

To speak about the effect of childhood stress it is important first to define stress, how it is caused, and how it differs between cultures. A number of sources speak to these issues but one that I found particularly helpful was by Mary Susan Miller titled *"Child-Stress! Understanding & Answering Stress Signals of Infants, Children & Teenagers".* I was immediately drawn to Miller's work as the preface is written by Dr. Hans Selye, whom I recognize from my psychology classes as a groundbreaking theorist on stress and coping mechanisms. I didn't realize he was the Director of the International Institute of Stress, which boosts his credibility, and what is contained in Miller's book.

Miller describes Selye's description of the physical reaction to the 'sickness' of stress as "the Triad" (Miller, pg. 12). This Triad consists of: swelling of the adrenal glands, resulting in high cortisone levels and the release of ACTH from the pituitary gland; shrinking of the lymphatic tissues, including the thymus, spleen and lymph nodes; and bleeding ulcers in the lining of the stomach. There are also significant 'secondary reactions' that cascade through the body in a damaging, and many times vicious, cyclical fashion. According to Selye, "stress is a nonspecific response of the body to any demand" or the involuntary way our body's physical (and mental) components react to whatever it is forced to do. (Ibid, pg. 12) Of course stress produces a mental, or psychological, effect on children. Miller notes that stress actually unifies our physical and psychological beings in that, a reaction in one, affects the other (Ibid, pg. 13) The ability of main characters in the three novels to 'pull themselves together' when faced with stress is an accurate fictional reflection of these empirical studies. According to Kingston, Chinese girls were commonly engaged with the fantasies of being a heroine and swordswomen.

Interestingly, there is a 'pleasant' form of stress, and a reaction to positive (versus negative) stimuli, called eustress. This form is less likely to be harmful to children "probably because it rarely equals the intensity and duration of suffering". (Ibid, Fwd.) It is well documented that humans have a 'nominal' level of stress, balanced such that they are stimulated sufficiently to perform the tasks they need to, but aren't stressed past the point of effective response.

Selye's model of physical and psychological stress adaptation is very

familiar to me, as I taught it to my classes. His theory of stress adaptation is

called the "General Adaptation Syndrome" (Ibid, pg. 15). The three stages of

reaction consist of 'alarm', when the stressor (negative stimuli) is first

encountered; 'resistance', when your body defends itself against the stressor;

and 'exhaustion' when the body is no longer able to resist. As will be discussed

later, the intensity and length of the stressor is a primary factor in determining the

damage done to children in several different settings. As Selye notes in the

forward of Miller's book, and has been a common theme,

"There are many books on stress written for adults, but to my knowledge none

has wholly devoted itself to the subject of informing adults about the stress

experienced by children. Yet it is extremely important to begin teaching the

stress concept to children at a very early age, because all codes of behavior sink

in best if they are established over a long period". (Ibid, fwd.)

As Megan Gunnar states in her work on "The Neurobiology of Stress and

Development", "stress is a part of every life to varying degrees, but individuals

differ in their stress vulnerability" (Gunnar, pg. 146). Clearly an argument can be

made that many children have not been properly equipped (in maturity, or with a

supporting structure of adults) to prevent them from being particularly vulnerable

to stresses inherent in their respective environments. Gunnar goes on to point

out that the importance of individual differences can be used as a lens "through which to approach questions about stress experiences during development and child outcomes" (Ibid, pg. 145).   Indeed, the recognition, and reaction to, the differences between children and adults is the basis for an accurate conceptualization of youth, and understanding its particular qualities.

One factor common across age and cultures is the relationship between "adrenocortical reactivity" and academic achievement and attention in children. In their work with Caribbean village children (St. Vincent, West Indies), neurobiologists linked elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol (produced by the adrenal gland) to a lack of attention and how it contributes negatively to academic scores (Jimerson, pg. 121). In fact, children "with the most attention problems showed greater school, relative to home, cortisol elevations than did other children" (Ibid, pg. 123). This association between elevated levels of the hormone, caused by stressors that children are exposed to, is common to children undergoing schooling experiences across cultures. Pecola Breedlove's experiences in her urban school no doubt led to depressed immunity in dealing with both physical infection and mental traumas.

Moving from the Caribbean children to Japanese, Chinese, and African children, Bartlet, in his "School Pressures and Child Mental Health in Afro-Asian Cultures" concludes that "it appears that the longer children stay in full-time education the grater the strain, and it is at the senior stage that some resort to

suicidal behavior". Bartlet discusses how "health professionals from different countries are beginning to understand the links between stress and bodily function". These links seem common, only varying in the intensity of the stressor and the accompanying physiological or psychological reaction. According to Bartlet, Japanese children have "punishing, highly competitive school routines with pressures increasing as children reach their teens", while in China the stresses impinging on school children and students are similar, as they are in Africa. Kingston's fight with the other Chinese girl in her school helps illustrate these points.

Back in the US, Miller talks about the "myth that childhood is carefree" and that adults generally hold nostalgic views of childhood, filtering out the bad memories and only recalling the good (Miller, pg. 3). In fact a study of schools in four US cities showed that:

• In big schools 75% of students showed evidence of serious stress (high)

• In small schools 50% showed evidence of serious stress (low)

• In two other schools between 61 and 65% were under heavy stress (median)

According to Miller, the overcrowding and racial tension endemic to urban schools was a main factor in causing this serious stress. The fact that each of our three novels are set in big-city environments (Chicago, New York, urban California) speaks to these "racial tensions" that children are forced to deal with in urban settings.

As an addition to organizationally (or structurally) imposed stress through schools, a clear neurobiological link has been demonstrated between 'maltreated children' and higher 'salivary cortisol measures' and 'clinical levels of depression in children'. Jordan Hart, examined the "effects of stressful environments on physiological and affective functioning among 131 maltreated and 66 non-maltreated children attending a summer day camp" (Hart, pg. 201).   According to Hart, 'maltreated' children showed higher cortisol levels, "but their morning concentrations did not differ significantly from those of non-maltreated children" (Hart, pg. 210). This demonstrates that it is the stressors of the day, gradually raising cortisol levels that cause a damaging physiological change in children.

I appreciate how the specific neurobiological studies support Selye's GAS model of adaptation, and was interested in how these biological mechanisms were similar across cultures. The emerging theme seemed to be, the less intense and persistent the exposure of children to stressors, the less their bodies would react to produce cortisol, which results in physical and mental deterioration. It has been common to see 'adult' studies and solutions applied to children or youths as if they are exactly the same class of humans. As the feminist movement led to the first longitudinal study of women's medical issues (released in the last decade), a movement is afoot to treat children and youth as having their own categories of physiology, agency and behavior.

There is little question that modern Western society (and transferred to Eastern societies such as Japan, South Korea, etc.) is extremely stressful to adults. Do children have to be exposed to adult stresses or raised as type-A personalities to be rewarded or successful in modern society? Do we overstress children to suit ourselves while ignoring their vulnerabilities and needs? Do we take our adult stresses out on children and abuse them in the process? Are expectations of Chinese girls becoming Fa Mu Lan, more stressful and less realistic than growing up "to be but wives or slaves"? (Kingston, pg. 19)

Innocence, Ideology, and Abuse in Children

While being portrayed as "innocents" to improve their condition in society, or as aggressive savages to justify their enslavement and mistreatment in work and the criminal justice system, the actual plight of children has many times been ignored as "inconvenient" to the adults that run society. This failure to understand and value actual children is one reason that children are still at risk in our modern society. According to Duane,

> "When early Americans sought to make sense of intercultural contact…they turned to the child to help them articulate their own feelings of vulnerability, while also displacing that vulnerability away from the white adults who 'should' have been in control." (Duane, pg. 5)

Part of the problem is that adults, who should have been in control of children, and keeping them safe, are only marginally in control of their own lives. The exposure of children to conflicts, especially open and physical conflict, causes significant damage to children, whose bodies react to the resulting trauma. The Breedlove family, according to Morrison's narrator, "cope with their 'ugliness' differently."

> "Cholly and Sammy act ugly, while Pauline escapes into the fantasy world of the movies and her white employer's household. Pecola dreams of blue eyes, a gift that she thinks will suddenly transform her into a thing of beauty…later she will descend into madness in order to rid herself of the ugliness she feels is indelible…" (Bluest Eye CN, pg. 23)

Surrounded by their own issues with imposed 'ugliness' the rest of the family not only doesn't cope themselves, but fails to recognize and counter the stress of the other family members.

Not only can battles at home trigger a cortisol response, but other stressors emanating from wartime expose children and youths to the ill effects of stress. Mona Macksoud has written two articles that relate to these unfortunate phenomena. *"Assessing the Impact of War on Children",* and *"The War Experiences and Psychosocial Development of Children in Lebanon",* are contemporary articles that deal with Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and

the extended Lebanese conflicts from 1975 to 1991 respectively. Macksoud focuses on ways to assess the "impact of violent situations on the individual child and on a community of children" in Kuwaiti 11-16 year olds (Assessing, pg. 219). Like many of our articles, Macksoud asks questions that she is hoping to answer upon completion of the study. In this case the questions were:

1. How were Kuwaiti children's' war experiences organized during the Iraqi occupation?

2. What was the relation between Kuwaiti children's exposure to war and their psychological symptomatology and psychosocial adjustment?

3. Did certain specific war experiences burden the development of the children while others furthered their coping skills?

4. Does knowledge of Kuwaiti children's social ecologies…and developmental processes…increase our ability to predict the symptomatology and adaptation of these children?

Question number one relates to the type of experience which leads to the stress symptoms, and possible adaptation that children may achieve after the conflict is over. Interesting is the correlation between the types and persistence of the children's' experiences. As mentioned about the Japanese school children, the pressures of school over time, built in a damaging way, with the tendency towards self-violence occurring at "the senior stage". As the Japanese education system structurally inflicts "punishing, highly competitive school

routines" (Bartlet), the war-manufactured structure (and constraints) on the youth of Kuwait and Guinea Bissau were both damaging due to their intensity.

In fact, one of the most stressful events to a child is the loss (in some form) of a parent. The war articles mention this, as Miller does in her citation of the 'Holmes and Rahe Life Event Scale' (Miller, pgs. 22-23). Among the 43 events they list, the top four have to do with: death of a parent, divorce of parents, separation of parents, and parent's jail term. All of these could, and did happen in a short period of time during the Iraqi invasion. The massive jailing and separation of families during the brutal invasion were legendary (removing Kuwaiti babies from incubators so the incubators could be taken back to Iraq). Certainly, historians of American slavery would acknowledge the severe stress that black children experienced as a result of the trauma and fragmentation of broken families.

The more extended type of conflict in Lebanon caused war traumas, but of a more serious and chronic nature. Macksoud and her colleague examined 224 Lebanese children (aged 10-16 years) and "the relation of such traumatic experiences to their psychosocial development" (War Experiences, pg. 70). Macksoud's first two questions (from the Kuwaiti study) again came into play with the Lebanese children, using measures of "war exposure, mental health symptoms, adaptational outcomes, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Indeed the number of war traumas was "positively related to PTSD symptoms"

(Ibid, pg. 85). Related to conflict duration, those children exposed to "multiple war traumas" exhibited PTSD symptoms and those separated from parents reported depressive symptoms…" (Ibid, pg. 86) Again we see the damage done by parent-separation traumas along with the significance of repetitive and enduring traumatic experiences.

These two articles, when compared with other articles we've reviewed, seemed particularly significant to me on two points: do we unwittingly expose our children/youth (and adults) to repetitive traumatic events, and do we unwittingly remove (or fail to provide) the support systems that these children need to recover from their extreme stressors? The US violates international standards by employing 17 year olds as combatants (with parental approval), bringing charges from the rest of the industrialized world of using 'child soldiers'. What is the bottom age that anyone should be exposing youths to traumatic experiences such as 'hot' wars or even peacekeeping conflicts where violent acts can be even more extreme among non-combatants?

The ladder of chronological age seems to become less significant in judging the propriety of these exposures. The repeated exposures of US soldiers serving multiple tours in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan has produced an inordinate number of suicides and PTSD symptoms. Our US structures should more carefully weigh the extended physical and psychological cost of taking youths into situations where they will be repeatedly exposed to traumatic events.

Ironically enough, we've given more consideration to the propriety of women in combat instead of the age of those combatants. This seems an obvious bow to social norms of gender appropriateness instead of decisions made based on real data concerning youth exposure to violence. We've gotten away from the Vietnam-era draft, which disproportionally fell on the poor and black men, but have we recognized the 'warfare' that regularly occurs in the dysfunctional homes portrayed in our three novels?

Damage done by parent-separation traumas constitutes not just an aggravator of severe symptoms of depression, but an almost intentional structural device used to 'toughen children'. Boarding schools and the military intentionally remove the youths from their parents, and other support systems (peers, familiar environment, etc.), for the purpose of breaking them down into conformity with the rules of the structure they are in. Do we realize the damage that a combination of trauma and lack of support may cause in the long term?

Erik Erikson isolated eleven separate fears which he associates with childhood stress. The first of these fears is the "fear of withdrawal of support" (Miller, pg. 26). Again, using a particularly Western view, a new mother is apt to let an infant cry himself to sleep to achieve a 'toughening up' experience. We have seen that this type of separation, physically and perceptually (ignoring) have resulted in a higher level of crying of Western. Clearly there is a parallel,

through infants, to children and youths in the damage done by separation and/or isolation.

Along with separation/isolation from parents, parenting styles are well known to prevent, or cause, stress in children. McLeod, Wood, and Avny explore the role that parenting plays "in the development, maintenance, and amelioration of child anxiety" in their chapter on "Parenting and Child Anxiety Disorders" in the book "Handbook of Child and Adolescent Anxiety Disorders". The methodology is particularly helpful because the book provides a general overview of the applicable literature, describes emerging theories, and reviews experimental studies (McLeod, pg. 214). We've seen several review type articles that help to bring together data and conclusions that would be difficult to find individually. The book focuses on "new theories of the parenting-anxiety link as well as the studies that have emerged in the past decade evaluating these refined contemporary models" (Ibid, pg. 218). Most helpful perhaps is the authors' own ideas about "avenues for future research intended to build upon and extend the existing research" (Ibid, pg. 227). Further references to Kingston's and Pecola's relationships with their mothers highlight the important role that a stable mother can, or cannot, make in providing the necessary positively affective environment required for 'normal' psychological development. This was echoed in LeVine's earlier criticism of the "hectic pace and increasing chaos…" inherent in American culture and mothers. (LeVine, pg. xvi)

Also highlighting the importance of parenting in ameliorating child trauma is Jeffrey Wood, and Bryce McLeod's book "Child Anxiety Disorders: A Family-Based Treatment Manual for Practitioners". The authors note that "over 10% of all children meet the criteria of anxiety disorders", which makes it one of the "most pervasive psychiatric problems experienced by school-aged kids" (Child Anxiety, pg. vii). From a developmental perspective, "anxiety can be a severe impediment to a child's family and peer relationships, not to mention their performance in school" (Ibid, pg. 4). Wood and McLeod introduce a "unique intervention approach" that combines "family therapy with targeted cognitive-behavioral techniques" for a particularly effective treatment strategy. Remission rates are achieved of "around 80%" by treating the "child as part of a system that can support his or her growth and coping". Essential to that process is the "family-based" approach (Ibid, pg. 15). Again, the importance of parent and child communication and play can mitigate the effects of trauma and also provide long term coping strategies.

Another work by McLeod, Wood and John Weisz, claims that while "theoretical models posit that parenting plays a causal role in the development and maintenance of child psychological problems", that actually "parenting accounts for less than 6% of…child externalizing problems and less than 4% of…childhood anxiety" (Weisz, pg. 1002). Using a methodology of meta-analysis is another particularly useful tool in surveying a variety of studies to bring together coherent conclusions. The authors analyzed 45 studies and found that

parenting did account for 8% of…child depression and perhaps more importantly, that "parental rejection was more strongly related to childhood depression than was parental control" (Ibid, pg. 990).

This study provided both a summary and an opposing view to the other reviewed works that may have overemphasized the role of parenting in causing childhood mental illness. That is good news to parents who can satisfy themselves that they are not the major cause of their children's problems, but that they can be a key to helping their children get through and deal with trauma and its symptoms.

Along with parental rejection and control, Morrison's example of displacement causing stress in children shows up in Pecola's idea of the "outdoors". She notes that "outdoors, we know, was the real terror of life. The threat of being outdoors surfaced frequently in those days." (Morrison, pg. 11) Pecola also notes the difference between "being put out and being put outdoors".

"If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go…Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition."

Cisneros plies a similar theme of displacement and child stress. When describing "the house on Mango Street", Esperanza expresses relief that the

house belongs to them and they don't have to pay rent. (Cisneros, pg. 3) She

goes on to note that her family was forced to "leave the flat on Loomis quick",

because the landlord wouldn't fix the broken water pipes. Moving to Mango

Street, "far away, on the other side of town" clearly involves not just a move but

the necessity of developing new friends and a new support system. (Ibid, pg. 4)

Kingston's sense of displacement is more generalized as her family's

former homeland in China was never in her direct experience, but was always

present in comments and expectations. Her mother, Brave Orchid, even felt the

need to routinely give directions back to their village with the expectation that she

was "to return to China where I have never been." The stress that she felt from

the constant "funneling" of expectations from the ancestral homeland must have

stressed her, both in the reality of going back, and in the reality that she would

not want, and probably never would, go back to China. (Kingston, pg. 76)

Poverty many times comes with physical displacement, known to cause

stress in children. Indeed the survivors of Hurricane Katrina were subjected to

experiences generally associated with natural disasters which produced

"increased symptomatology in both children and adolescents" (Osofsky, pg. 212).

The article "Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms in Children after Hurricane Katrina:

Predicting the Need for Mental Health Services" provides insight through the

study of 7,258 children and adolescents from heavily affected Louisiana parishes

(Ibid, pg. 212).

Echoing the chronic nature of traumatic experiences in Macksoud's article on the Lebanese children, the children of Katrina required continued mental health services two years after the disaster. The mental health issues resulting from the trauma of war or disaster stressors certainly continue to affect child development over the long term. Macksoud notes the "tremendous impact on psychosocial development" from repeated trauma in Lebanon including: attitudes toward social relations with others; outlook on life; and that these traumas although diverse, induced chronic and occasionally repeating symptoms over a long period (War Experiences, pg. 87). Interestingly, as in the novels, repeated traumas in family relations, including abuse by family members such as Esperanza getting raped when Sally leaves her for a man and Pecola becoming pregnant by her father, affect not just how they are treated by others, but their own pessimistic outlooks on life.

Macksoud notes two types of the diverse traumas that in the Lebanese children included "Emigration" and "Extreme Deprivation".   The forced movement of populations due to active conflict, extreme conditions or political threats has produced first and second order traumas to both children and societies. The effects of "Acculturative Family Distancing (AFD) on Chinese American high school students is the subject of an article in the "Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology". This study included data collected from 105 students and their mothers to describe how the "distancing that occurs between immigrant parents and their children through breakdowns in communication and

cultural value differences" causes stress (Hwang, pg. 656). It is easy to suggest that Pecola Breedlove fits these descriptions of 'extreme deprivation'.

Study findings indicated that "greater AFD was associated with higher depressive symptoms and risk for clinical depression" (Hwang, pg. 667). Interestingly, the communication difficulties and differences in intergenerational cultural values (inherent in AFD), resulted in how "family conflict mediated the relation between AFD and depression while in mothers; AFD directly increased the risk for depression" (Ibid, pg. 667). The disparate effects of immigration trauma (culture shock?) on youths versus their mothers were an interesting take away.

Jeffrey Wood's article "Adapting cognitive-behavioral therapy for Mexican American students with anxiety disorders: Recommendations for school psychologists", echoes Hwang's article in the need for providing immigrant minorities with "culturally competent care" (Wood, pg. 516). As Mexican American students are the fastest growing group in US public schools, a critical factor in dealing with the trauma of immigration is the availability and usage of available mental health services. According to Wood, "there is a growing body of research indicating that Mexican American families underutilize mental health services and are more likely to drop out of care prematurely when they do seek help" (Ibid, pg. 530). Adapting therapy for immigrant students with anxiety

disorders "can lead to positive outcomes for Mexican American students" and for the US societies that they live in.

As the impact of an estimate 12 Million illegal immigrants in the US, and those crossing national and state boundaries globally as the result of war, privation, political, or economic turbulence takes its toll on children and the societies they live in, political and social structures need to be adaptive to their needs. Since we can't always depend on our structures to provide for individual needs or even 'culturally competent care' per Wood, the family unit is still the best preventative and mitigating factor in most children's lives.

Kingston's focalization of the Chinese subculture, within the larger American culture of California, echos these empirical studies. The "ghosts" that the children experience from their past life in China are both foundational, and possibly unwelcome in the children's new environment. Has 'globalism' helped to even out these cultural shocks or are pockets of cultural and societal backwardness condemning children to continued future stress, abuse, and lack of agency? Certainly Pecola's fascination with the white doll could be considered another form of these 'ghosts' that serve to remind these children of their past experiences, present challenges and insufficiencies, and future (often unrealistic) expectations.

Why Stress and Abuse of Children Still Occur: Feminism and Expectations of Childhood Agency

In many studies of children, they are treated merely as immature adults or as a nuisance to be shoved aside until they get old enough to either push back or become an asset to society. The advent of Childhood Studies as an interdisciplinary manner of investigation has attempted to include the "child's voice" and perspective in attempting to gain a more realistic and useful picture of child agency. As children have been ignored, so has been the female half of society. Whether suffering from overly paternalistic societies where they are not valued, or as simply an adjunct to males, females have long been relegated to the wings where they become more vulnerable to stress and abuse.

Women's ability to bear children (imagined or delivered) has cut across their, and their children's, agency in several ways. According to Duane, as "the imagined epigenetic fetus unfurls its potential, pregnancy itself emerged as a powerful, and potentially threatening, battleground for patriarchal privilege". Developments in the woman's sexual role, "and her ability to act as a consenting agent in that role", both cut across philosophical, legal and medical constructs and "were parsed along the lines of class and race". (Duane, pg. 106) Duane analyzes two novels that focus on women "who seek to control their bodies in the

marriage marketplace", Susannah Rowson's *'Charlotte Temple'* and Hannah Foster's *'The Coquette'*". (Ibid, pg. 107)

> "In an era when women were increasingly eligible for consideration as an agent in sex and reproduction, these texts invest the fetus with ultimate control over women's bodies." (Ibid, pg. 107)

As a result, these novels helped create "an intensely emotional, symbiotic relationship between white women and the reproductive process [which] was also a key element in dismantling those women's growing claims to the role of consenting adult". (Ibid, pg. 107) In the American slave era, poor white women were excluded "from definitions of motherhood accorded to white middle and upper-class women and "indentured servants and African slaves were explicitly alienated from the labor of their own bodies…" (Ibid, pg. 106)

> "The children produced by these women were either a devaluation of the woman's labor (for indentured servants who would have to serve extra time to make up for the lost labor of pregnancy and child-birth) or a supplement to it (for African slaves whose children added to the master's property holdings)." (Ibid, pg. 107

Clearly, from America's early days, lines of conflict were drawn between: men & women; white women and black women; and women and children. The philosophical, legal and medical issues were formed from this colonial

background and interacted with highly patriarchal minority society to value, or devalue, women and their children in the same way. Cisneros emphasizes this when she mentions that "the boys and the girls live in separate worlds". The boys can't be seen publicly socializing with the girls and have different expectations in their own nature, or imposed by cultural norms. (Cisneros, pg. 8) Another example from Mango Street is when Esperanza sets the English translation of her name (hope) to the low expectations for her with the comment, "the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong". (Ibid, pg. 10)

Morrison's example of herself and her sister, both disadvantaged by race, poverty, and gender, is expressed using a metaphor of seeds. Finally, the sisters had to admit to themselves that, "no green was going to spring from our seeds" and that their father had dropped his seeds in the "unyielding" black dirt. For Pecola, nothing remains but her and the "unyielding earth". (Morrison, pg. 3)

Kingston's bow to ethnicity and gender inequity comes through in the expectations levied on the Chinese immigrant women in punishing the 'aunt' for her sexual offense. "I have believed that sex was unspeakable and words so strong and fathers so frail that 'aunt' would do my father mysterious harm." (Kingston, pg. 15) Additionally the devaluation of girls in Chinese society is described by Kingston;

"Carrying the baby to the well shows loving. Otherwise abandon it. Turn its face into the mud. Mothers who love their children take them along. It was probably a girl: there is some hope of forgiveness for boys." (Ibid, pg. 15)

The hope for boys and tolerance of girls is well illustrated by Cisneros in her passage about the separation of the boys and girls and having their "different worlds". (Cisneros, pg. 8-9) Not only gender differences, but poverty and racial prejudice across cultures relegate females to a permanent subordinate role.   An example from Morrison is her discussion of the Breedlove family being a "minority in both caste and class", forcing them into a "peripheral existence". (Morrison, pg. 11)

Conclusion

We have seen that children, across cultures, are alternately held up as the future hope of our societies as "true representatives of enlightenment" and also as immature cogs in the mechanism of society. Also important to note is the damage that can be done to children when only 'lip service' is given to their traumas and strong support is not offered to them. Are there solutions to the conundrum of childhood trauma and stress, and suffering from disadvantaged positions or lack of social agency?

A surprising fact is that some of the studies acknowledged 'positive' physiological and psychological outcomes, given the nominally correct level of stress (or eustress per Selye), or when a support system is available throughout the experiencing of the trauma. On example is cited in "Stitches are Stronger than Glue" by David Crenshaw. He describes a "self-directed trauma play" where self-directed repair through play can occur (Crenshaw, pg. 200). While some children handle the separation and divorce of parents "without breaking their developmental stride" Camila, a 5-year old girl, was deeply affected and manifested a severe reaction to it (Ibid, pg. 202). Crenshaw cites Brewin, Andrews & Valentine in his assertion that "the availability of strong social and familial support systems has been found to promote resilience in the face of extreme stress" (Ibid, pg. 201).   While listing several individual variables that are "consistent with resiliency in children", Crenshaw notes that "the strong and consistent support of Camilla's parents, as well as caring and supportive teachers, contributed to her ability to recover from her multiple losses" (Ibid, pg. 218).

Another review of a study highlighting the importance of play as therapeutic is *"Review of War, Conflict, Play"* by Angela Veale. She reviews the book by T. Hyder (2005) about working with war-affected refugees and asylum seeking children. The book outlines theories of child development and play, a universal activity for children, but with the "meaning and value placed on play differ[ing] enormously between Western and non-Western cultures" (Veale, pg.

306). As African mothers visiting Paris were shocked at the expectation of the 'Westernized' mothers that children could be left alone with objects (toys) to amuse themselves, there remains a wide gulf between cultures on the meaning and usefulness of play and how it can best be 'accomplished'.

A further example of the importance of familial support in countering the effects of trauma and stress comes from a study by Paul Bramston and Patrick Jeff, "Rural Adolescents Experiencing an Urban Transition".   The authors developed a questionnaire study of 255 rural students from Queensland, Australia and utilized 28 students in 5 focus groups to collect data on depression, anxiety, and stress associated with transitioning to urban boarding schools. Adolescents who moved offered useful insights into the "best and worst aspects of the transition", including how families and schools can ease their path (Bramston, pg. 250). Given sufficient support, the adolescents made the transition "surprisingly well" noting that "being prepared for the move emerged as important (Ibid, pg. 250). This finding reflects the similar results of the article we studied on youth participation in their family moves in Wales, UK.

Another example of a powerful remediation of trauma is discussed in "Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy." Steven Roberts and Willard Ashley state that "disasters are a given in the human experience" and that "trauma is part of the human condition" (Roberts, pg. ii). According to the book, "repeated studies have shown

that significant numbers of people having difficulties in the wake of disaster turn either first, or only, to spiritual care providers for help (Ibid, pg. 2). A majority, 60 percent of Americans polled were 'likely' or 'very likely' to seek help from a spiritual counselor as opposed to only 40 percent who were 'likely' or 'very likely' to turn to a mental health professional…" (Ibid, pg. 10) These facts would seem to prove that while studying physiological and psychological effects and remedies to stress, that the spiritual element needs to be further included and studied as a separate dimension of human existence.

Our three novels focalize children, girls in particular, as ancillary to the main efforts of the family and with only low expectations of their future. As an understudied group in the social sciences, with little voice of their own, children present many topics for future study. Some of the reviewed literature has shown that we may underestimate the damage to child development done by intense, repeated, or long-term trauma to children. It also ignores the importance of parents (support systems) and attention to the cultural complexities in treating children of different cultures.

A study by Kaoru Yamamoto "Stressful Events in the Lives of UK Children: A Glimpse" emphasizes the "importance of learning and knowing children's perceptions and interpretations of everyday experiences" (Yamamoto, pg. 305). According to the article, many events that adults would see as 'normal', such as "childrearing, schooling, and other social practices" could "easily be taken by the

child as rejecting, deserting, threatening or shaming" (Ibid, pg. 313). These results were found to correlate closely with previous figures from the US and five other countries, showing that a "culture of childhood" that cuts across "geo-political boundaries and ethic groupings", actually exists but still remains a mystery to adults in spite of the increasing evidence.

Another avenue for further study comes from an article by Yamamoto along with Davis, Dylak, Whittaker, Marsh, and van der Westhuizen called "Across six nations: Stressful Events in the Lives of Children", where a total of 1,729 children (7-15 years old) from South Africa, Iceland, Poland, Australia, and the UK rated 20 events "in terms of how upsetting the event would be to them" (Westhuizen, pg. 139). This study was also compared with a previous study of US children by Yamamoto, indicating broad agreement and supporting Yamamoto's previous assertion about the universal 'culture of childhood', It showed that, except in Poland, "the loss of a parent was the most upsetting to all children, followed closely by the loss of sight" (Ibid, pg. 149).

The authors note that "events seen as very upsetting fell in the same two categories: experiences that threaten the sense of security, and those that occasion personal denigration and embarrassment" (Ibid, pg. 149). Both of these occur in our three novels. Displacement in "Mango Street", a lack of physical security from strangers and family in "Bluest Eye" and embarrassment and denigration instilled about the 'aunt' in "Woman Warrior". Again the child's need

for a secure and positively affective environment, which prevents bullying and other forms of denigration, needs to be more thoroughly studied and implemented in our educational structures.

A striking article that seems to reinforce the idea of the need for secure environments but bemoans their absence is by Veale, Taylor and Linehan's article "Psychological Perspectives of 'Abandoned' and 'Abandoning' Street Children". This chapter from the book "Abandoned Children", reinforces the idea from our previously studied article on "Homies Unidos" that "implicit and unchallenged assumptions about the lives of street children in fact serve to discriminate against them" (Perspectives, pg. 131). The adult 'commitment' to such assumptions and constructs tend to perpetuate the idea of street children as "nobody's children" denying them the structure and support they so desperately need (Ibid, pg. 142). The need to 'empower' the children and build on their strengths "emphasizes children's efficacy and resilience" and highlights an understudied segment of the global child population (Ibid, pg. 145).

While seminal novels such as "The Bluest Eye", "The House on Mango Street", and "Woman Warrior" more realistically portray the challenges of ethnic and impoverished children, they present a voice that cannot be ignored if we care about the trauma and stress caused in our youth. The faulty constructions of 'innocent' childhood, ignorance of children's true needs, and failure to notice and account for the juxtaposition of child privilege and impoverishment, majority and

minority, male and female must be more accurately recognized through continued empirical studies, and followed up by practical action. Clearly children and youth have been traditionally underserved in the study of their unique perspectives, traumas and what is available to mitigate and ameliorate the damages that are, unwittingly or intentionally, inflicted upon them. If the children of today are truly our future, we should highly value their study and positively develop their agency to help them grow into our future cultural dreams instead of our future cultural nightmares.

Works Cited

Bartlet, L. B. "School pressures and child mental health in Afro-Asian countries" (1996): Psychiatric Bulletin. May 20:301-303; doi:10.1192/pb.20.5.301. Web

Blumenthal, Rachel. "Morrison's THE BLUEST EYE". (2007): Explicator, Winter 2007, Vol. 65 Issue 2, pp. 117-119.

Bramston, Paul; Patrick, Jeff. "Rural adolescents experiencing an urban transition." (2007): The Australian Journal of Rural Health. Vol.15 (4), Aug,   pp. 247-251.

Corporal Punishment and Physical Abuse: Population-based Trends for Three-to-11-year-old Children in the United States. (2010): Child Abuse Review (2011): Vol. 20: pp. 57–66 18 June. Web. (wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/car.1128

Crenshaw, David A.; Gil, Eliana [Ed]. Working with children to heal interpersonal trauma: The power of play. New York, NY, US: Guilford Press; US. 2010.

Duane, Anna Mae. Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race and the Making of the Child Victim. University of Georgia Press, 2010.

DuCille, Ann. "The Shirley Temple of My Familiar". (1997): Transition no. 73 pg. 13.

Eakin, Paul John. "Living Autobiographically." (2005): Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly, Winter, Vol. 28 Issue 1, p1-14.

Elkind, David. "Culture, Change, and Their Effects on Children." U of Rochester, NY.

eNotes.com. "Summary." (26 May 2012): Novels for Students. Vol. 1. Gale Cengage. (Bluest Eye CN)

Gray, Paul. "Book of Changes." (1976): Time, 12/6/1976, Vol. 108 Issue 23, p109.

Gunnar, Megan; Quevedo, Karina. "Annual Review of Psychology" (2007): Vol. 58., pp. 145-173.

Hart, Jordan; Gunnar, Megan; Cicchetti, Dante. "Altered Neuroendocrine Activity in Maltreated Children Related to Symptoms of Depression." (1996): Development and Psychopathology. Vol. 8, 1996, pp. 201-214.

Hwang, Wei-Chin; Wood, Jeffrey J; Fujimoto, Ken. "Acculturative family distancing (AFD) and depression in Chinese American families." (2010): Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. Vol.78 (5), Oct 2010, pp. 655-667.

James, Adrian L. "Competition or integration? The next step in childhood studies." 2010: University of Sheffield, Childhood, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 485-499.

Jimerson, Shane R; Durbrow, Eric H; Adam, Emma; Gunnar, Megan; Bozoky, Ingrid K. Canadian Journal of School Psychology. (2006): Vol.21 (1-2), Dec.

LeVine, Robert A., Dixson, S., LeVine, S., Richman, A., Liederman, P.H., Keefer, C.H., et al. "Child Care and Culture: Lessons from Africa". (1994): Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

McLeod, Bryce D; Wood, Jeffrey J; Avny, Shelley B. McKay, Dean [Ed]; Storch, Eric A [Ed]. "Handbook of child and adolescent anxiety disorders." (2011): New York, NY, US: Springer Science + Business Media; US. pp. 213-228.

Macksoud, Mona S; Aber, J. Lawrence; Cohn, Ilene. Apfel, Roberta J [Ed]; Simon, Bennett [Ed]. "Minefields in their hearts: The mental health of children in war and communal violence." (1996): New Haven, CT, US: Yale University Press; US. pp. 218-230.

Maira, Sunaina; Soep, Elisabeth, ed. Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Mead, Margaret. Growing up in New Guinea: A Comparative Study of Primitive Education. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1930.

Miller, Susan Mary, Child-Stress! Understanding & Answering Stress Signals of Infants Children & Teenagers. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1982.

Osofsky, Howard J; Osofsky, Joy D; Kronenberg, Mindy; Brennan, Adrianne; Hansel, Tonya Cross. "Posttraumatic stress symptoms in children after Hurricane Katrina: Predicting the need for mental health services." (2009): American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. Vol.79 (2), Apr, pp. 212-220.

Roberts, Stephen B [Ed]; Ashley, Willard W. C Sr. [Ed]. Disaster spiritual care: Practical clergy responses to community, regional and national tragedy. (2008): Woodstock, VT, US: Sky Light Paths Publishing; US.

Sullivan, M. Alayne. "Mango Street and Malnourished Readers: Politics and Realities in an "At-Risk" Middle School." (2007): Journal of Latinos & Education, Vol. 6 Issue 2, pp. 151-175.

Veale, Angela. "Review of War, conflict, play." (2005): International Journal of Early Years Education. Vol.13 (3), Oct, pp. 305-307.

Veale, Angela; Taylor, Max; Linehan, Carol. "Psychological Perspectives of 'Abandoned' and 'Abandoning' Street Children." Extracted from "Abandoned Children" (2000): Panter-Brick, Catherine; Smith, Malcome T [Eds], pp. 131-145.

Werrlein, Debra T. "Not So Fast, Dick and Jane: Reimagining Childhood and Nation in 'The Bluest Eye'." (2005): MELUS, Winter, Vol. 30 Issue 4, pp. 53-72.

Wissman, Kelly. "Writing Will Keep You Free: Allusions to and Recreations of the Fairy Tale Heroine in The House on Mango Street." (2007): Children's Literature in Education, Mar, Vol. 38 Issue 1, pp. 17-34.

Wood, Jeffrey J; Chiu, Angela W; Hwang, Wei-Chin; Jacobs, Jeffrey; Ifekwunigwe, Muriel. "Adapting cognitive-behavioral therapy for Mexican American students with anxiety disorders: Recommendations for school psychologists." (2008): School Psychology Quarterly. Vol.23 (4), Dec, pp. 515-532.

Wood, Jeffrey J; McLeod, Bryce D; Hiruma, Laura S [Illus]; Phan, Ann Q [Illus]. Child anxiety disorders: A family-based treatment manual for practitioners. (2008): New York, NY, US: W. W. Norton & Co; US.

Werrlein, Debra T. "Not So Fast, Dick and Jane: Reimagining Childhood and Nation in 'The Bluest Eye.' (2005): MELUS, Winter, Vol. 30 Issue 4, p53-72.

Yamamoto, Kaoru; Whittaker, Jean; Davis, O. L. Jr. "Stressful Events in the Lives of UK Children: A Glimpse." (1998): Educational Studies. Vol. 24, Nov, pp. 305-314.

Yamamoto, Kaoru; O. L. Davis; Stanislaw Dylak; Jean Whittaker; Colin Marsh; and P. C. Westhuizen. "Across Six Nations: Stressful Events in the Lives of Children." (1996): Child Psychiatry and Human Development 26.3, pp. 139-150.