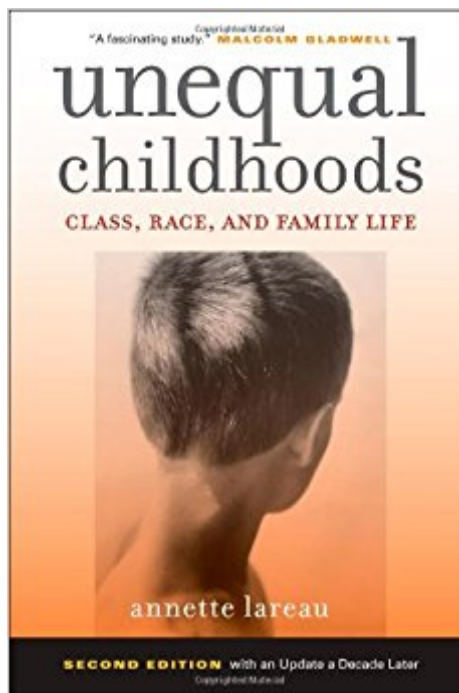




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Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, And Family Life, 2nd Edition With An Update A Decade Later



Synopsis

Class does make a difference in the lives and futures of American children. Drawing on in-depth observations of black and white middle-class, working-class, and poor families, *Unequal Childhoods* explores this fact, offering a picture of childhood today. Here are the frenetic families managing their children's hectic schedules of "leisure" activities; and here are families with plenty of time but little economic security. Lareau shows how middle-class parents, whether black or white, engage in a process of "concerted cultivation" designed to draw out children's talents and skills, while working-class and poor families rely on "the accomplishment of natural growth," in which a child's development unfolds spontaneously—as long as basic comfort, food, and shelter are provided. Each of these approaches to childrearing brings its own benefits and its own drawbacks. In identifying and analyzing differences between the two, Lareau demonstrates the power, and limits, of social class in shaping the lives of America's children. The first edition of *Unequal Childhoods* was an instant classic, portraying in riveting detail the unexpected ways in which social class influences parenting in white and African American families. A decade later, Annette Lareau has revisited the same families and interviewed the original subjects to examine the impact of social class in the transition to adulthood.

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Customer Reviews

Most Americans see individual effort as the key to success, with fewer than one in five seeing class or race as very important in getting ahead in life. The reality is that social class is a more important

determinant of a person's success in life than it used to be due to two powerful trends: Growing economic inequality that has created a wider gulf between rich and poor, and less mobility between classes. The fact is the USA has both less social mobility and wider economic inequality than any of the other rich democracies in Canada, Australia, Japan and western Europe. With more sluggish mobility than in the past, class has become more hereditary than it once was. The gap in spending per child is growing between rich and poor Americans, from 5 to 1 in 1972 to 9 to 1 in 2007. Just 17 percent of kids raised in the bottom fifth of the income distribution will make it to the top two-fifths by age 40. It's no wonder then that class differences are so powerful in shaping a child's life experience, more important in child raising than racial differences, according to Annette Lareau, a sociology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who won awards for the first edition of this book in 2002. Lareau's research reveals the basic class differences in approach to raising children. Middle-class parents have their children in organized activities and engage in a process of "concerted cultivation." By contrast, working-class and poor parents don't engage their children in concerted cultivation, instead allowing development through "natural growth." Poor parents face economic challenges just putting food on the table and getting medical care. They lack the resources and energy to put their kids in as many organized activities.

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