



The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings

David F. Lancy

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The raising of children, their role in society, and the degree to which family and community is structured around them, varies quite significantly around the world. The Anthropology of Childhood provides the first comprehensive review of the literature on children from a distinctly anthropological perspective. Bringing together key evidence from cultural anthropology, history, and primate studies, it argues that our common understandings about children are narrowly culture-bound. Whereas dominant society views children as precious, innocent and preternaturally cute 'cherubs', Lancy introduces the reader to societies where children are viewed as unwanted, inconvenient 'changelings', or as desired but pragmatically commoditized 'chattels'. Looking in particular at family structure and reproduction, profiles of children's caretakers, their treatment at different ages, their play, work, schooling, and transition to adulthood, this volume provides a rich, interesting, and original portrait of children in past and contemporary cultures. A must-read for anyone interested in childhood.

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