Child’s Play
Bonobo adult plays with an infant
So far, most scientists think that one big difference between man and non-human primates is that humans actively teach behavior to their offspring, while juvenile primates learn from observation.
Dr. Savage-Rumbaugh and Kanzi
All human languages share three basic features:

- **Productivity** – They can be used to create new messages.
- **Displacement** – They can be used to send messages without direct sensory contact.
- **Arbitrariness** – There is seldom a connection between the symbols that humans use and the events and properties they represent.
Learning from Observation vs. Being Taught
Since parents, at least subconsciously, realize that the acquisition of culture is their offspring’s most important survival tool, it is not surprising that in many cultures parents invest a lot of time in language development.
Even from an early age, parents teach their infants about the specific culture they have been born to through speech.
Physical Development
Sometimes the cultural expectation is that children will learn physical skills as part of play.
Although we think of playing as a definitive aspect of childhood, some children are not allowed to play for a variety of reasons.

Muammar Gaddafi meets nine year old king of the Toro in Uganda on the sixth anniversary of the king’s reign
Mormon Children praying

Infanta Margarita Teresa de España

A Changing Concept of Childhood

Children of Charles 1
Children from a London Workhouse
The problem of working children is not a historical one, or limited to the west.

Mayan children
1907

Child laborer, Newberry, South Carolina, 1908
In 1833, the British government introduced the Factory Act specifying:

- No child workers under 9 years of age
- Employers must have a medical or age certificate for child workers
- Children between the ages of 9–13 to work no more than 9 hours a day
- Children between 13–18 to work no more than 12 hours a day
- Children are not to work at night
- Two hours schooling each day for children
- Four factory inspectors appointed to enforce the law throughout the whole of the country.

(http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk)
But, in the west, the idea that children were innately mischievous and in need of shaping and containment persisted.
Mrs *Emmeline Pankhurst* (sixth from left) welcomes hunger strikers from prison, September, 1909
Two girls wearing banners with slogan "ABOLISH CH[ILD] SLAVERY!!" in English and Yiddish, one carrying American flag; spectators stand nearby. Probably taken during May 1, 1909 labor parade in New York City.
The Young Birds

1. One day, Willy's mother told him that he might play among the trees.
2. He soon came back, and ran to his mother with a bright smile.
3. "O mother," said he, "what do you think I have seen?"
With the advent of near universal schooling, children’s lives became divided between periods of formal education and play.

Colorado County farm children, 1920
The Little Rascals
Shirley Temple
The Mickey Mouse Club
In 1968, Diahann Carroll broke new ground in the television portrayal of child-rearing in *Julia*.

*Julia* with Diahann Carroll
The proliferation of television programming and the increasing number of screens per household has meant that most children now watch television unsupervised.
Today, the biggest problem parents face is scheduling.
Interestingly, a Kaiser Family Foundation study found that children’s grades are not affected by television and computer use, but they are negatively influenced by computer gaming.
Gaming addiction is becoming a cross-cultural problem.

“South Korea’s PC Bang Cafes”

Gamers in Manila
So, is it time to pull the plug on the television, quit your job, and dedicate everything to spending quality time with your offspring?
Hmong Children Playing
1. Who are the child-rearing authorities in our culture?

2. How does the state limit the authority of parents?

3. How do child-rearing strategies differ between ethnicities?

4. How do you think the state could contribute to improving child-rearing in the U.S.?

5. If there were no economic consequences, would you prefer to work or take care of your child?

6. What do you think about “stay-at-home” dads?