

Contrasting Experiences of Ancient Greek Children & Parenting With Contemporary Families

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Marriage and Family

- Males – 25-30 years of age/Females 12-16
– Partners chosen for females due to young age
- Females' families paid a dowry
- May not meet one another before marriage
- Moving into the same home constituted marriage
- Extended family and enslaved people also resided in the home



Marriage and Family

- Divorce occurred
 - Dowry returned (unless adultery by female)
 - Children stayed with father
- Role of women was to care for family
 - Childbearing a priority
 - Wealthy women rarely left the home
 - Had authority over household and enslaved people



Childbearing

- Most important role of women
- Average 4-5 children, 6-8 pregnancies
- Occurred in the home
- Father controlled decision to “expose” children
- Purification ceremony at 5-7 days after birth
 - childbirth defiled mother and those attending
 - no longer able to expose the child
- Named on day 10



Education

- Girls not educated
 - Stayed with mothers until marriage
- Enslaved children not educated
- Poor children not educated
- Boys educated from about 7-13 years of age
- Generally one teacher per 10-20 boys
- Curriculum: reading, music



Gender Roles

- Females very subordinate to fathers/husband
 - Marriages arranged
 - Fathers decided whether to “expose” children
 - Female names not used outside of the home
 - referred to by father’s name
 - took female version of husband’s name when married
- Thought to take longer to gestate a male child
- Thought to be harder to bear a female child



Role of Toys and Games in Society

- Enculturation – transmission of the rules of culture from generation to generation
- Prepare for adult roles
 - Pretend play
 - Building - males
 - Caregiving - females



Girls Playing Ephedrimos,
Hellenistic, ca. 300 B.C.E., Terracotta,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York, New York

Toys and Games

- Very much a part of childhood
 - Boys gave toys away at puberty
 - Girls gave dolls to the Gods at the time of marriage
- When children are represented they are often seen playing



“one must think Archytas’s rattle a good invention, which people give to children in order that while occupied with this they may not break any of the furniture; for young things cannot keep still.” Aristotle

Types of Toys

- Rattles – first toys
- Tops – spinning and used with a whip
- Wheeled toys
- Balls



Types of Toys

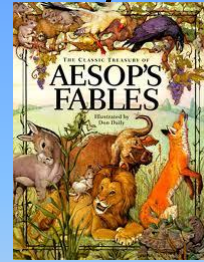
- Dolls
 - female use
 - of various complexities
 - renounced the night before the wedding
- Knucklebones
- Animals
- Games



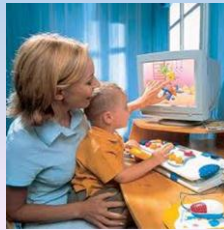
Contemporary Views of Play

- Edutainment

- Contemporary?!?



- Trickle down notion of childhood education



Contemporary Views of Play

- Technology

- Shapes play externally

- May hinder imagination

- Expensive



Final Word on “Edutainment”

The new scientific research doesn't say that parents should provide special 'enriching' experiences to children over and above what they experience in everyday life. It does suggest, though, that a radically deprived environment could cause damage.

The Scientist in the Crib

A. Gopnik, A. Meltzoff & P. Kuhl