

Historical Studies of Children

Historical studies of children and childhood have not received the attention they deserve. The small number of scholars and their scattered efforts and seemingly random results have not retained their convictions. To them, history concerning children, from the vantage point of youth, is by no means necessary, valuable, and imperative.

Among scholars, a certain necessity arose from the question of 'the discovery of childhood.' The provocative work of Philippe Ariès took many by surprise with his then novel idea that childhood as a concept in history was only a recent invention.¹ A number of Europeanists especially, have since challenged the veracity and evidence of early concepts of childhood as well as the lives of children in history.² However, the premisses and mentality like Ariès in their quest for a better history. Namely, a better understanding of people's lives and culture must constitute an important part of the study of history. In fact, in Ariès's case, such an understanding of the core values of any given society. That notwithstanding, the theory or the method remain few. For although the subject has drawn increasing attention from historians and social scientists, the Annales school with its refreshing look at the lives of infants and children have never been fully embraced by mainstream historians. This is the case despite the fact that they have proven that children and childhood are not just a subject that the subject carries unique value as its own. They judiciously demonstrate that the care of the subject is essential in time. Thus a society's evolving understand-

While historians of mentality tackled the past, historians also felt compelled to look in the past. Information pertaining to the experience of childhood was not the sole focus, became an important part of the study of infants and children, for them, not only for the child. It is also necessary to the familial story of the child. This is in American and European history in that the study of childhood could contribute to the understanding of family and community. Philip Barbour's *The Construction of Four Generations of Family* (1970) provides an appreciation for the experience of the child and the understanding of successive generations. The search for independence that developed among children of families in Massachusetts.³ Readers as a result recognized the importance of childhood in their formulation of individual and family histories. John Demos's study of family life in *The American Commonwealth* (1970), shows that parents and childhood experiences, have become important to historians.⁴ Recognizing the 'everyday' role of childhood in the fields of family and social history led to the study of childhood. By the time Lawrence Stone's *The Family and Its Alternatives* (1977) was published, studies on family, sex, and marriage in the past. The study of adult-child relations constituted one of the most important areas of research.

Works on long-term changes in family structure and information on children. Steven Ozment's *The Family in Europe*, Michael Mitterauer and John H. Elliott's *The Family in Europe*, and the evolving function of families in central Europe. Gottlieb's analysis of the family in the Victorian age, and Ralph Houlbrooke's *The Family Man* from the mid-fifteenth to the late seventeenth century. Attention to the questions of procreation, childbearing, and the physical, social, and cultural conditions of childhood. Studies of women's history and motherhood. The awareness of domestic conditions related to the study of childhood. The historical concept and the daily life of childhood become much more delineated than the study of childhood. The fact from the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

their attention to issues regarding childer-
ticide, child desertion, and child labor. Sele-
of newborn infants or young children, wh-
way to limit family size, were thought to be
societies. More recently, scholars have con-
cide in the history of Western societies.⁹ In-
tics, studies of infanticide in premodern tin-
circumstances for its occurrence. Since, in-
and legal definitions of the “infant” were
neonatal, these studies invariably address
cultural and historical environment.¹⁰

Desertion and neglect of children, a la-
nomenon, whether perceived from the view-
serted, have also been examined according
the fate of unwanted children in different
added to the understanding of the strength
Whatever the focus or concern, such studie-
donment, adoption, and foster care that h-
aspect of social and institutional history.¹²
in the 1980s and their shared outlook sug-
consciousness. The picture they present co-
coveries of mere details in the lives of chi-
popular attitudes, social practices, family
tics, urban and rural relations, economic
realities—a good example of the larger rel-
children’s history can produce for the ge-
society’s habitual “disposal” of at least a
witnessing three-fourths of its children p-
year, obviously indicates a great deal abo-
circumstances.

Child labor and the policy and laws it g-
historical attention. Along with scholars
graphic historians became increasingly aw-
much a part of children’s routine experien-
children in premodern times, it represente-
education or schooling. Although still lac-
ans of ancient Rome, early modern Englar-
geniously pieced together data to depict t-

dren and childhood everywhere, therefore such insights may relate their seemingly 'Y'ject to the broader field of history or disciplines.¹⁹

This brief overview of recent inquiries the kind of directions and categories that n angle of history of mentality, family, wel Many other important and potentially fru added to the list. At the end of which this historical understanding of children, as th ethnic or religious minorities, social misfi can become legitimate intellectual pursuit begins by focusing on the experiences of th population but soon mingles with those of also suggest the kind of intellectual curiosi quires entail and further stimulate. One c modern researchers to contemplate, both very modern definition of "children" and ' biophysical understandings and the Freu bottom line for all child studies, it is rar specific cultural historical contexts.²⁰ In ac its faith in rationality and linear progressio studies on children and the history of chil psychology, cognitive development, and c tivist forces behind most of the interest in the childhood experience of the past.²¹

The Case of China

Interest in children and childhood t among historians of China than among mentality, the field that first spurred the hi tract significant attention from historians dren and childhood" has hardly been an main forces in modern Chinese historiogr: pped with quite different sets of problems. children and childhood in Chinese history ance from similar undertakings in the Wes