

Kramer, Karen L. (2005) *Maya Children: Helpers on the Farm*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This book takes a look at the child labor practiced among the present day Maya of Xculoc, Mexico, a farming village in the Yucatan Peninsula. Due to the isolation of the village from the rest of the world, the people still practice maize farming in the traditional way. In this isolation children benefit little from modern education - as there are few jobs requiring this kind of specialization. Instead, the parents of children benefit more by putting their children to work as farm laborers.

Kramer shows us just how important children are to the lives of these people. She states that the people would have to double or triple their work production if children were taken out of the workforce. She goes into detail about the amount of planning that is done in order to facilitate the use of children as workers. The main form of subsistence for these people is maize agriculture, the cultivation of which is a simple but arduous task. Therefore, the more people they have working the better. Young children are very useful in the many laborious tasks of harvesting and transporting the maize. This may be one reason that these people practice child-labor. They have a lot of work that needs to be done and a limited amount of people to do it. Also, as the task is simple, children can help in the process. Whereas, in other parts of the world, many of the subsistence tasks require years of experience and learning before one can participate - reducing the need and use of children.

This is an interesting examination of a rare and insufficiently studied occurrence. Kramer delves into the many causes that these people practice child exploitation. In doing so, she helps us to understand other culture perspectives and perhaps allows us to question why it is not practiced in our own society.