

Kusserow, Adrie S. (2004) *American Individuals: Child Rearing and Social Class in Three Neighborhoods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book takes a look at different social classes in America and how the child rearing is different in each one. This ethnographic approach to society in America is particularly interesting, as American society is often not carefully considered in such a sense. It is as if Kusserow is an outsider, insightfully looking in on a society from afar like an American anthropologist would study an African tribe. This offers a great glimpse of American society and child-rearing that is usually unnoticed.

It takes us into a society where we see that many of the actions in dealing with children go unexamined. Where the methods used are subtle and not necessarily done deliberately for a certain result but more as a continuation of what people were taught by their parents.

Kusserow offers an insightful look at these societies starting with Manhattan Parkside mothers, who see child rearing as something that should be done with delicacy and grace - letting the child work out what they need to know naturally without forcing them to conform to their ideals. They did however expect great things from their children. They enrolled them in competitive preschools already preparing them for lives of business people. The mothers spent enormous amounts of time and effort to assure that their children were ready and prepared to enter the adult world.

Kusserow then takes us into the working class neighborhood of Queens where parents use harsh, tough punishments and hierarchy to let the children know who is boss. The children were required to follow strict guidelines and listen to whatever the parents said. The children's wants and needs were seen as secondary to those of the parents. In fact, the parents did not really even spend much time worrying about their children. The parents assumed that their children would take care of themselves and learn on their own. Their primary concern was to have their children as little a nuisance as possible to their own lives.

The vast differences between these two social groups, who actually live a short physical distance apart from each other, shows how different social groups can be. With different goals, lifestyles, and ecological factors, each social group has vastly different methods of treating and raising children.