

Lareau, Annette. (2003) *Unequal Childhoods; Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkley: University of California Press

This book examines the different styles, methods, tactics, and lifestyles that parents of different social classes use in raising children. It also examines the different lifestyles of children in different social classes. The book's main two distinctions are between the American middle class and lower class families. Even though some might think children's lives are equal throughout America, social class does make a difference.

Lareau shows us, through many different topical areas, the difference of family life between various races in different social classes. First, Lareau portrays the life of a middle class family - the Tallingers. They are a typical American family who focus on their children, giving them special care and attention. The book discusses the incredible time and money the family spends on educating their children and keeping them entertained. They find it of great value that their children are given everything they need to be able to be ready for the adult world. With their fast paced and hectic lifestyle, and seemingly arbitrarily set schedules, one wonders what the benefits to the parents are.

On the opposite side of the coin, Lareau takes a look at the McCallister family who live in an urban project. This lower class family seems to have all the time in the world to pursue leisurely activities but lack the funds to do so. Instead, they focus more on family life and develop close ties with extended family members - partly because there is no one else to establish ties with.

Lareau shows the positive and negative sides of these two social groups. In doing so, she shows how strong the social classes define ourselves the way we live our lives. The children in these two classes become defined by strong distinctions that make these two classes so different.