

Evidence-Based Parenting

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*Please note: this hand-out is intended as a **supplement** to the presentation, not as a **substitute** for the presentation. This handout is NOT intended to be read separately from the presentation; it cannot “stand alone.” If you would like to get a sense of the presentation but did not have the opportunity to attend, please read my most recent book **The Collapse of Parenting**. You can reach me via email leonardsax@gmail.com (scroll to the bottom of the document for complete contact information, including address and phone).*

The established consensus in 1964: encourage immigrant children to assimilate as soon as possible. For the scholarship underlying this consensus, see Milton Gordon's monograph *Assimilation in American Life: the role of race, religion, and national origins*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. Because of this long-held consensus, the more recent finding that immigrant children now do better than American-born children is regarded as evidence of a “paradox.”

For an overview of the immigrant paradox, please see my essay for the Institute for Family Studies, “The Immigrant Paradox: why are the children of immigrants doing better [than the children of parents born and raised in the United States]?” online at <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-immigrant-paradox-why-are-children-of-immigrants-doing-better>. Scroll to the bottom of this document for additional citations documenting the immigrant paradox.

The culture of disrespect. The opening chapter of my book *The Collapse of Parenting* is titled “The Culture of Disrespect” – which is a fair summary of contemporary North American popular culture, as experienced by children and teenagers. Proponents of the culture of disrespect include Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion, Bruno Mars, and Drake.

The Disney Channel also exemplifies the culture of disrespect, with shows such as *Dog with a Blog* and *Jessie* and *Liv and Maddie*.

American popular culture now has toxic elements. Cardi B's 2020 video "WAP" broke records for the most streams in one week (93 million streams) and reached #1 on the Billboard Top 100. See my article "Why WAP Matters"

<https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/08/70643/>.

Bruno Mars won six Grammys, including the Grammy for Best Song, "That's What I Like." The song begins with these lyrics:

*I got a condo in Manhattan
Baby girl, what's hatnin'?
You and your a-- invited
So gon' and get to clappin'
Go pop it for a player, pop-pop it for me
Turn around and drop it for a player, drop-drop it for me*

For more about Bruno Mars and his award for Best Song, January 28 2018, please see my essay "You and Your [Expletive] Invited," online at

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sax-sex/201802/you-and-your-expletive-invited>.

Drake has had 67 hits on the Billboard Top 100, compared with Taylor Swift at 40, The Beatles at 34, Michael Jackson at 30. For more on why that matters, please see my article for the Institute for Family Studies, "Why Culture Matters," <https://ifstudies.org/blog/why-culture-matters>.

There is good and bad in contemporary American culture. The analogy to the big city. A big city has many great things: a beautiful art museum, a great science museum, a museum of history. But a big city also has dangerous, high-crime neighborhoods. You wouldn't let your kid loose in a big city without adult guidance. By the same token, you shouldn't let your kid loose on the Internet without setting some limits.

Your job is to be a parent, not a best friend. A best friend can't tell you what to eat, or forbid you to watch WAP or listen to Drake, or take away your phone at 9 pm; but a parent can, and must.

Longitudinal cohort studies demonstrating the importance of Conscientiousness:

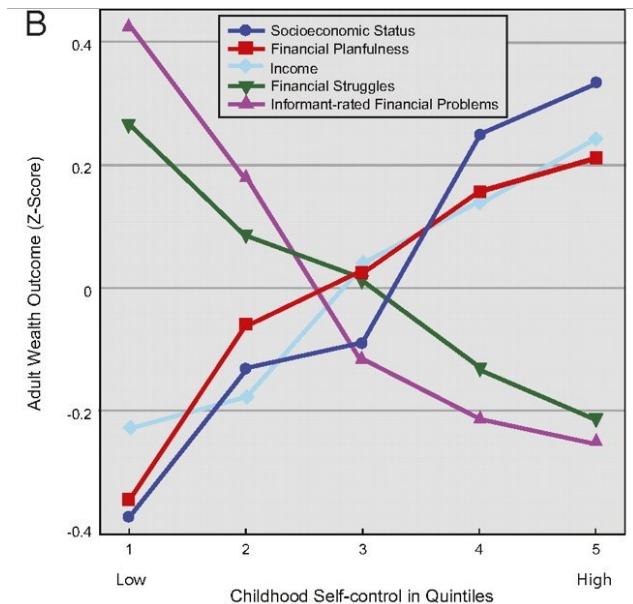
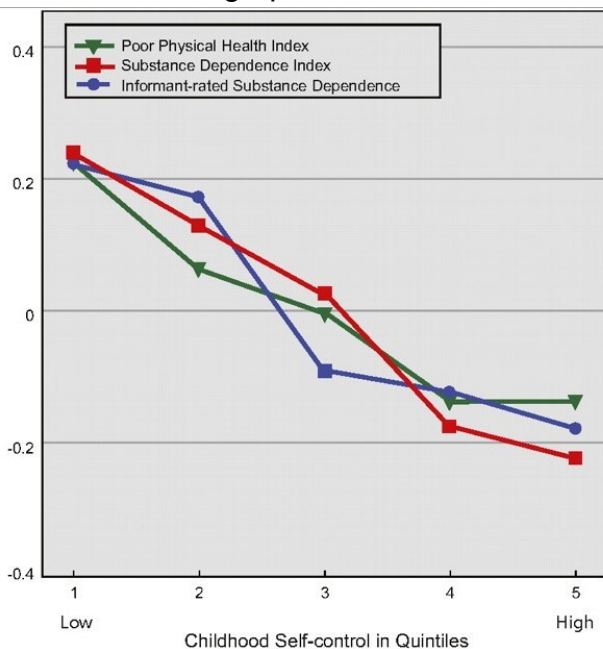
Brent W. Roberts and colleagues, "The Power of Personality: The Comparative Validity of Personality Traits, Socioeconomic Status, and Cognitive Ability for Predicting Important Life Outcomes," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2:313-345, 2007, full text at

<http://classdat.appstate.edu/COB/MGT/VillanPD/OB%20Fall%202012/Unit%202/Personality%20Articles/The%20Power%20of%20Personality%202007.pdf>.

See Terrie E. Moffitt and colleagues, "A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108: 2693 – 2698, 2011, full text online at

<http://www.pnas.org/content/108/7/2693.full.pdf+html>.

These two graphs come from Moffitt et al.:



Teaching virtue should be your top priority for your daughter or son. That's not a sermon; it's a robust empirical finding.

Jennifer Finney Boylan, "A Common Core for All of Us" *New York Times*, March 23 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/opinion/sunday/a-common-core-for-all-of-us.html>. She asserts that you should set your child free so they can discover their own right and wrong. For a rebuttal, including my exegesis of Deuteronomy 6, please see *The Collapse of Parenting*, pp. 133 – 134.

Conscientiousness is the only trait which achieves the hat trick: more health, more wealth, and more happiness. See Angela Duckworth and colleagues, "Who does well in life? Conscientious adults excel in both objective and subjective success," *Frontiers in Psychology*, volume 3, article 356, September 2012, online at

<http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00356/full>.

Bottom line: *personality can change and increased Conscientiousness is beneficial.*

See Christopher Boyce and colleagues, "Is personality fixed?

Personality changes as much as 'variable' economic factors and more strongly predicts changes to life satisfaction," *Social Indicators Research*, volume 111, pp.

287 – 305, 2013; and also Christopher Magee and colleagues, "Personality trait change and life satisfaction in adults: the roles of age and hedonic balance,"

Personality and Individual Differences, volume 55, pp. 694 – 698, 2013.

UCLA study: shift from community to individual. From 1967 through 1997, the most popular TV shows emphasized *community* values, doing the right thing, being a good friend. In 2007 and in 2017, the most popular TV shows – especially reality TV shows – emphasized *individual* values, with a focus on fame, fortune, and winning. See "The Rise of Fame: An historical content analysis," online at <http://www.cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2011061601> and the update to 2017 at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XwBbghx1fqU_97aYWRoD-SptVeOD74sq/view.

Having a meal with a parent greatly decreases the risk of problems, and improves satisfaction, in a "dose-dependent" fashion from days 1 through 7 (there are 7 days in a week). See Frank Elgar and colleagues, *Journal of Adolescent Health*. The graph I showed is Figure 1 from their paper, online at

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23299005/>.

No devices allowed at the dinner table. Limit social media. Prioritize family.

Limit, govern, and guide your child's exposure to American popular culture.

No earbuds, no headsets in the car or anytime you are with your child.

Prioritize character and Conscientiousness over extra-curriculars and being amazing.

There is a false dichotomy between the “Tiger Mom” and the “Irish Setter Dad.” The Tiger Mom is all about achievement. The Irish Setter Dad just wants kids to have a good time. Both are mistaken.

The search for meaning. Without meaning, life has no point. The result is anxiety, depression, and disengagement. Your job as a parent is **to educate desire**: to instill a longing for things higher and deeper. In the arts, in music, and in your child’s character.

When I visited the Shore School in Australia, I met with Dr. Wright. I asked him: what is school for? He answered: it is preparation for life. I asked him: what is life for? He answered: life is for three things:

- ***Meaningful work***
- ***A person to love***
- ***A cause to embrace***

I am not saying that Dr. Wright is the guru. You don’t have to embrace his answers. But you must have an answer.

Why are so many girls and boys today more likely to be anxious, depressed, and/or fragile? My answers:

- ⊙ Parents have allowed relations with same-age peers to displace the family
- ⊙ **You can change that**
- ⊙ Parents have allowed social media and video games to displace real world experience
- ⊙ **You can change that**
- ⊙ American culture now prioritizes fame and wealth over virtue and character
- ⊙ **You must challenge that**

Here are some comments about my books:

Why Gender Matters “. . . is a lucid guide to male and female brain differences.”

New York Times

Boys Adrift “. . . is powerfully and persuasively presented. . . Excellent and informative references and information are provided.”

Journal of the American Medical Association

Girls on the Edge: “Packed with advice and concrete suggestions for parents, *Girls on the Edge* is a treasure trove of rarely-seen research on girls, offering families guidance on some of the most pressing issues facing girls today. Dr Sax’s commitment to girls’ success comes through on every page.”

Rachel Simmons, author of Odd Girl Out

Girls on the Edge: “This is essential reading for parents and teachers, and one of the most thought-provoking books on teen development available.”

Library Journal

Girls on the Edge: “The best book about the current state of girls and young women in America . . . offers astonishing and troubling new insight . . .”

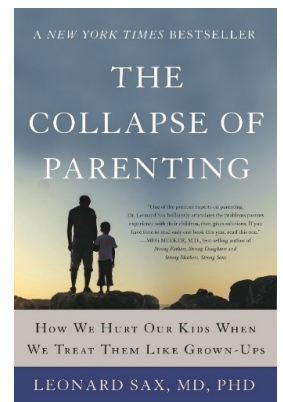
The Atlantic

The Collapse of Parenting: “One of the premier experts on parenting, Dr. Leonard Sax brilliantly articulates the problems parents experience with their children, then gives solutions. **The Collapse of Parenting** is academic but practical, simple but deep. If you have time to read only one book this year, **read this one.**”

Meg Meeker MD, author of Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters and Strong Mothers, Strong Sons

The Collapse of Parenting: “With years of experience and research working directly with parents and children, Dr. Leonard Sax provides an important glimpse into parenting in modern times, where it’s gone wrong, and how to fix it. Being a parent has never been more important and Dr. Sax explains how to avoid parenting pitfalls and raise your children well.”

Bill Bennett PhD, former US Secretary of Education



The Collapse of Parenting: *"A comprehensive breakdown of where parents have gone awry and how they can get back on track to teach virtue and character to their children. Sax provides a series of easy-to-follow solutions that help bring parents and children back to the same page, working toward a healthier, more respectful, and conscientious attitude. With the author's solid advice, parents have a good shot at achieving these goals."* Kirkus Reviews

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Documentation of the immigrant paradox:

Here are some citations demonstrating that girls and boys whose families have recently immigrated to North America are less likely to be anxious, or depressed, compared with girls and boys born and raised in North America:

- Margarita Alegria and colleagues, "Prevalence of mental illness in immigrant and non-immigrant Latino groups," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, volume 165, pp. 359 – 369, 2008, full text online at no charge at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2712949/>.
- Huong Nguyen, "Asians and the immigrant paradox," in *Asian American and Pacific Islander Children and Mental Health*, edited by Frederick Leong and Linda Juang, volume 1, pp. 1 – 22, 2011.
- Liza Suárez and colleagues, "Prevalence and correlates of childhood-onset anxiety disorders among Latinos and non-Latino Whites in the United States," *Psicologia Conductual / Behavioral Psychology*, volume 17, pp. 89 – 109, 2009, full text available online at no charge at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2800359/>.
- David Takeuchi and colleagues, "Immigration and mental health: diverse findings in Asian, Black, and Latino populations," *American Journal of Public Health*, volume 97, pp. 11 – 12, 2007. This article is an introduction to a special issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* (AJPH) devoted to documenting and understanding the interaction between immigration status and mental health in the United States. Full text online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1716240/>. From that special issue of AJPH, see for example "Immigration-related factors and mental disorders among Asian

Americans,” *American Journal of Public Health*, volume 97, pp. 84 – 90, full text at <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2006.088401>. This article documents a peculiar gender quirk in the immigrant paradox: while the immigrant-paradox effect was generally stronger for females than for males (i.e. being born outside the U.S. was more protective for females than for males), English-language proficiency was a greater risk factor for males than for females. If you are male, and you were born in Asia, and you move to the United States, then mastering English puts you at greater risk of mental disorder; but that’s not true if you are female. Go figure.

Here is some of the evidence that girls and boys whose families have recently immigrated to the United States are less likely to engage in binge drinking or other forms of alcohol abuse, and/or substance abuse:

- Michele Allen and colleagues, “The relationship between Spanish language use and substance use behaviors among Latino youth,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, volume 43, pp. 372 – 379, 2008.
- Donald Hernandez and colleagues, “Children in immigrant families: demography, policy, and evidence for the immigrant paradox,” in Cynthia García Coll and Amy Kerivan Marks (editors), *The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents: is becoming American a developmental risk?* Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2011.
- Guillermo Prado and colleagues, “What accounts for differences in substance use among U.S.-born and immigrant Hispanic adolescents? Results from a longitudinal prospective cohort study.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, volume 45, pp. 118 – 125, 2009. Prado and his colleagues document that foreign-born Hispanic adolescents are significantly less likely to engage in drug abuse, compared with similarly-situated U.S.-born Hispanic adolescents. They conclude that the key difference is that the U.S.-born Hispanic teens are looking to their same-age peers for guidance, while the foreign-born Hispanic teens are looking to their parents and to other adults for guidance.
- William Armando Vega and colleagues, “Illicit drug use among Mexicans and Mexican Americans in California: the effects of gender and acculturation,” *Addiction*, volume 93, pp. 1839 – 1850, 1998.

For more documentation of the immigrant paradox with regard to adolescent sexuality, and intercourse before 15 years of age, see Marcela Raffaelli, Hyeyoung Kang, and Tristan Guarini, “Exploring the immigrant paradox in adolescent sexuality: an ecological perspective”, chapter 5 in Coll and Marks, *The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents: is becoming American a developmental risk?* See also Tristan Guarini and colleagues, “The immigrant paradox in sexual risk behavior among Latino adolescents: impact of immigrant generation and gender,” *Applied Developmental Science*, volume 15, pp. 201 – 209, 2011.

North American popular culture in 1964 was a culture which endorsed respect for parents.

North American popular culture in 2023 is a **culture of disrespect** (see chapter 1 of my book *The Collapse of Parenting*, “the culture of disrespect”).