

Who's in charge here?

What parents need to know

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*Please note: this hand-out is intended as a **supplement to** the presentation, not as a **substitute for** the presentation. It is intended to assist those who attend my presentation in San Francisco on September 21, 2015, to spare them the distraction of taking excessive notes. 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 second book **Boys Adrift** especially chapter 8, and my third book **Girls on the Edge** especially chapter 7. More information and resources will be in my fourth book **The Collapse of Parenting**, to be published in 3 months (December 2015) by Basic Books. You can reach me at mrcrad@verizon.net but please also send a copy to my personal email leonardsax@gmail.com.*

Which of the following, measured when a child is 11 years of age, is the best predictor of happiness and overall life satisfaction roughly 20 years later, when that child has become an adult 31 or 32 years old?

- A) IQ
- B) Grade point average
- C) Self-control
- D) Openness to new ideas
- E) Friendliness

The established consensus in 1965: 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.”

The immigrant paradox:

Here are some citations demonstrating that girls and boys whose families have recently

immigrated to the United States are less likely to be anxious, or depressed, compared with girls and boys born and raised in the United States:

- 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.

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

Every enduring culture is characterized by strong bonds across generations.

See e.g. David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making*, Yale University Press 1991.

Navajo: Kinaaldá

Orthodox Judaism: not only Bar Mitzvah, but every religious holiday

Connections across generations

- Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

American T-shirts: “*Do I look like I care?*”

“*I’m not shy. I just don’t like you.*”

“*You looked better on Facebook.*”

You will rarely find such T-shirts worn outside of North America.

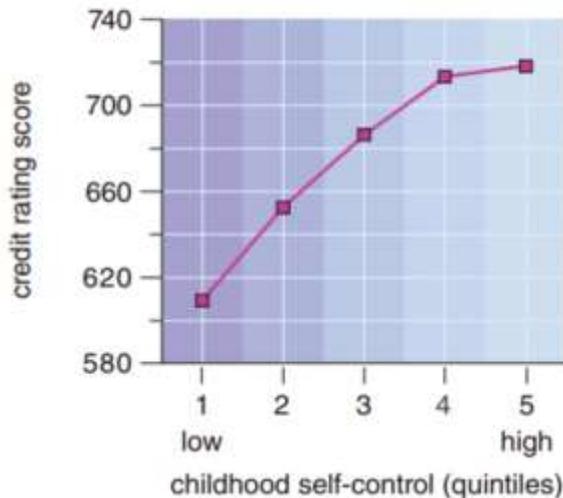
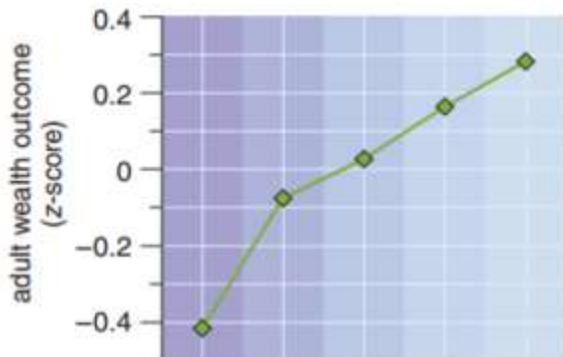
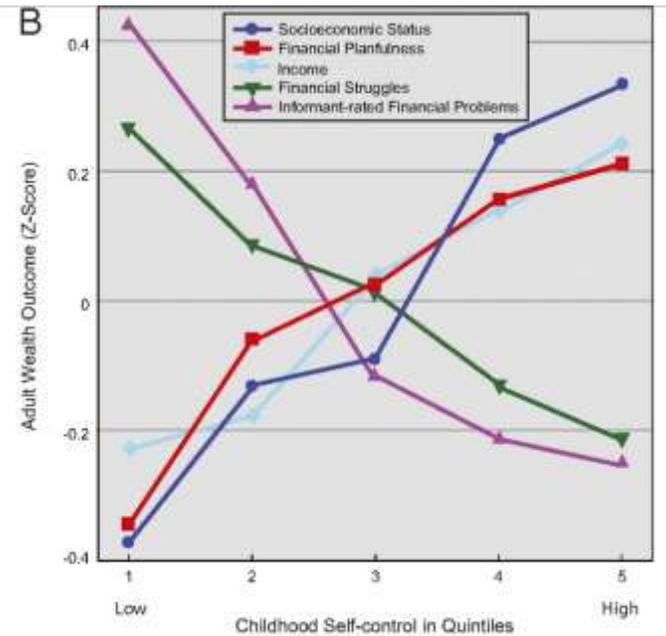
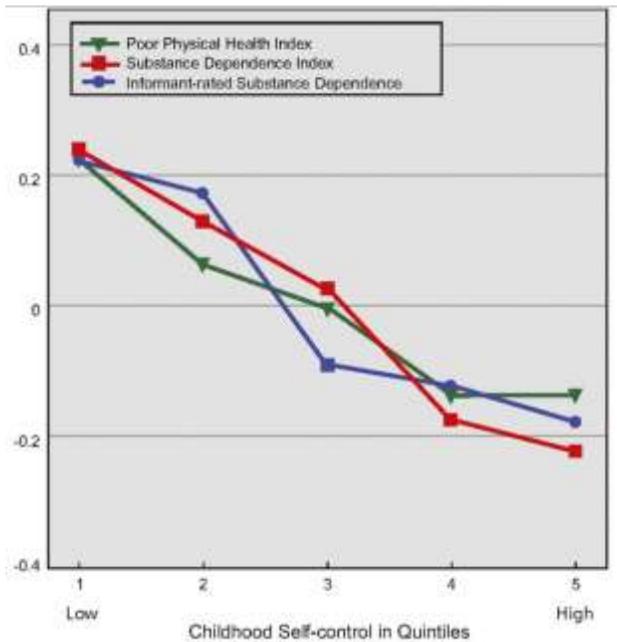
Megan Fox, Angelina Jolie, Drew Barrymore, Lindsay Lohan, and Lady Gaga all claim a history of cutting.

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 also 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>. The graphs below come from Moffitt et al. 2011:



Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics, University of Chicago: character skills matter more. See Dr. Heckman’s essay, “Lacking character, American education fails the test,” full text online at

http://www.heckmanequation.org/sites/default/files/F_Non_cognitive%20skills_V3.pdf.

Teaching self-control should be among your top priorities for your daughter or son. Character matters as much or more than academic achievement.

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

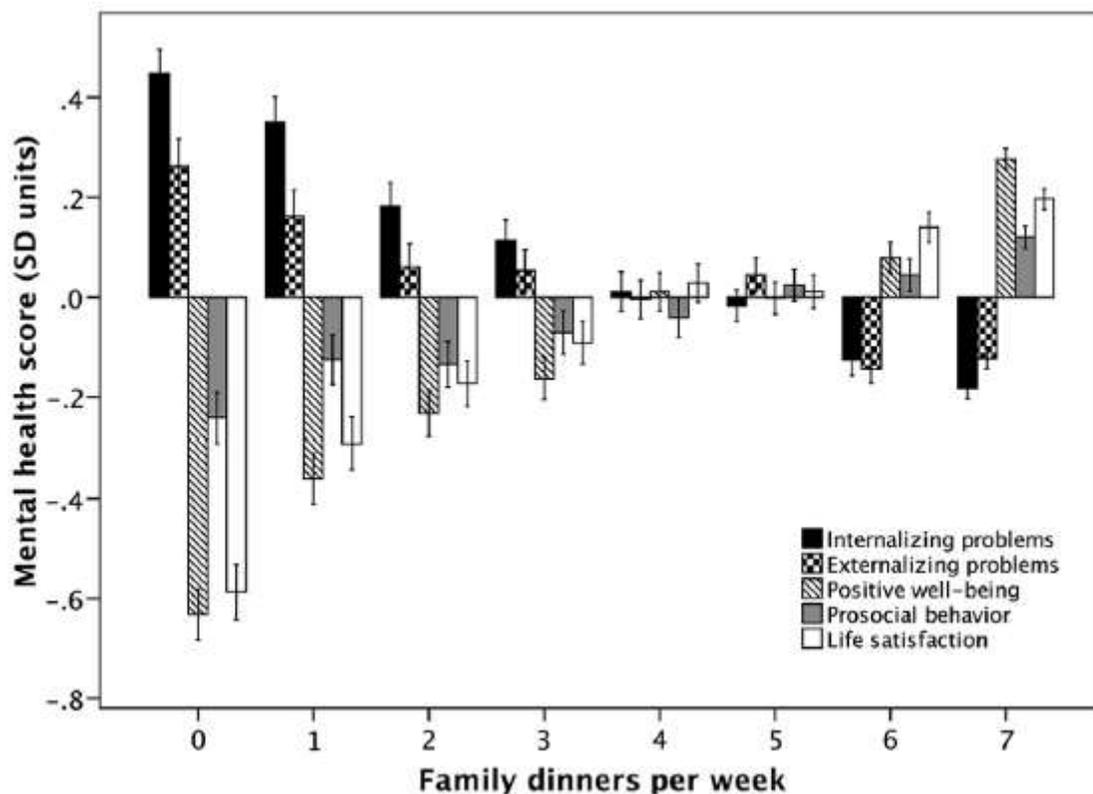
<http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00356/full>

For a survey of interventions to boost self-control in young children, see the review by Alex Piquero and colleagues, “Self-control interventions for children under age 10 for improving self-control and delinquency and problem behaviors,” *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 2010, #2 (117 pages). Piquero and colleagues accept Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi’s assertion that interventions to boost self-control are not effective for children over 10 to 12 years of age. I don’t accept that assertion. Gottfredson and Hirschi are basing their assessment on their experience (pre-1990) with teenage juvenile delinquents. I concede that there is evidence that the criminal justice system is not effective in boosting self-control in incarcerated teenagers: see for example Ojmarrh Mitchell and Doris Mackenzie, “The stability and resiliency of self-control in a sample of incarcerated offenders,” *Crime and Delinquency*, volume 52, pp. 432 – 449, 2006. But data based on incarcerated juvenile offenders may not be valid for parents of children who are living in the community. More to the point: I have personally seen numerous cases in my own practice where kids of every age, under age 10 and over age 10, have reformed and become more Conscientious because parents implemented some of the strategies we have discussed. Even very simple interventions, such as repeatedly telling a child to Stop and Think! before you act, can have profound and lasting beneficial consequences, even in kids who have been diagnosed with ADHD: see for example Molly Reid and John Borkowski, “Causal attributions of hyperactive children: implications for teaching strategies and self-control,” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, volume 79, pp. 296 – 307, 1987.

The more general premises here are that *personality can change at any age* and that *increased Conscientiousness is beneficial*. For evidence supporting these premises, see the study by 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. Magee and colleagues find, not surprisingly, that the older you are, the less likely your personality is to change. I am not asserting that it is easy for a 65-year-old to

become more Conscientious. But I have seen 5-year-olds and 15-year-olds who have become more Conscientious.

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, 2013, *Journal of Adolescent Health*. This graph is Figure 1 from their paper.



Full text available at no charge at <http://bit.ly/190oX48>.

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

Choose vacations with no Internet access (Google search for “**unplugged** vacations”).

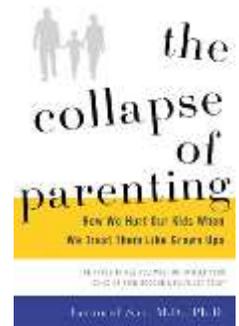
Prioritize family. If you have a connection to another culture, nurture and strengthen that connection.

Speak a language other than English at home (if you are fluent in that language).

Read Dr. Gordon Neufeld’s book, *Hold On To Your Kids* (terrible title, great book).

And be brave: have the courage not to be a typical 21st-century American parent.

My fourth book will be published in three months (December 2015) by Basic Books. The title is *The Collapse of Parenting*. Topics will include the abdication of authority by American parents: why did this happen *here* in the USA so much more than in other countries; and what can individual parents do about it? Please visit my website www.leonardsax.com for updates.



Why Gender Matters, Boys Adrift, and Girls on the Edge:

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

Boys Adrift: “A must-read for any parent of boys. This is real science, and Dr. Sax thoroughly uncovers the important health issues that parents of boys need to be tuned into.” Dr. Mehmet Oz, host of “The Dr. Oz Show”

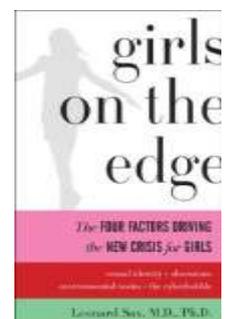
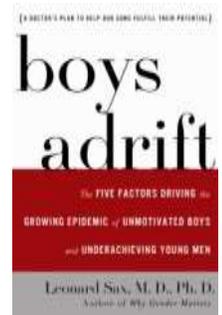
Boys Adrift: “I know someone who knows what to do [about bullying]. His name is Dr. Leonard Sax. . . [Boys Adrift] is informative and eminently readable. . . I strongly recommend that you read **Boys Adrift**.”

Bishop Robert Barron, video at “Word on Fire”, similar comment at wordonfire.org

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

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