

With horses, the Jumanos and Apaches—who “traded for, and stole, horses from New Mexico and Texas” and created in the 17th century the first distinct “horse culture” in the Great Plains—could hunt bison with ease and “travel farther to trade, raid, and wage war.”

But horses “also brought destabilization, dispossession, and destruction,” says Hämäläinen. In the southern plains, the Indian tribes’ vast herds of horses competed with bison for the limited riverine resources, helping to trigger a decline in the bison population in the 19th century. In the northern plains, the long, cold winters, which exposed the horses to starvation, kept most tribes chronically horse poor. The few owners of horses became rich. This scarcity, along with the expanding fur trade with Euro-Americans, says Hämäläinen, resulted in “constant warfare” among the northern tribes.

In the late 18th century, the Lakotas in the Mississippi Valley began to obtain horses and to expand westward across the Missouri River into the northern plains. The Lakotas’ aggressive movement and rise during the 19th century, says Hämäläinen, “supposedly encapsulates the full spectrum of Plains Indian experience from the adoption of horses to the exhilarating affluence of the buffalo days and from the fierce resistance against the American empire to the final, dreadful defeat.” In fact, he says,

the Lakotas’ wholly successful experience with horses was the exception, not the rule, among the Plains Indians.

Also in error is the conventional notion that Indians had “no immunity” to the diseases the Europeans brought to North America, maintains Jones, a resident in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. “With the exception of persons born with rare genetic immune diseases, all humans can mount a powerful defense against viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites.”

There’s no evidence of smallpox, measles, and influenza before Columbus, and Indians might indeed have been genetically vulnerable to them, but throughout history the physical and social environments have also been important in the spread of disease. “Any factor that causes mental or physical stress—displacement, warfare, drought, destruction of crops, soil depletion, overwork, slavery, malnutrition, social and economic chaos—can increase susceptibility to disease,” Jones writes. And incursions by whites exacerbated many of these conditions.

The relative contributions of genetics and other factors to the decimation of the Indians will probably never be known, Jones concludes, but the simplistic “no immunity” thesis lets the Europeans off the hook much too easily.

When Crime Goes to School

“Are Idle Hands the Devil’s Workshop? Incapacitation, Concentration, and Juvenile Crime” by Brian A. Jacob and Lars Lefgren, in *The American Economic Review* (Dec. 2003), 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

Getting kids “off the street” is a time-honored recipe for reducing juvenile crime and a commonsense rationale for everything from an extended school year to “midnight basketball” programs. But there’s a tradeoff involved, warn Jacob, a professor of public policy at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, and Lefgren, an economist at Brigham Young University.

In analyzing data from 29 cities, ranging in size from Minot, North Dakota (pop. 36,657) to Austin, Texas (pop. 656,562), they found a surprise. The level of vandalism and other property crimes in the community did de-

cline, by about 14 percent, on days when school was in session. But on those same days, assaults and other violent crimes—mostly among the kids themselves—*increased* by about 28 percent. Any parent could tell you why: Putting a bunch of kids together in one place increases the chance that some kind of mayhem will break out.

In a hypothetical city of 120,000, the authors calculate, lengthening the school year by a day would lead to a decrease of only 0.29 property crimes and an increase of only 0.25 violent crimes. Of course, there are other reasons for increasing the amount of

time kids spend in school, but if keeping them out of mischief is the goal, Jacob and Lefgren conclude, it would be better to

place them in summer jobs, small after-school programs, or other venues where their numbers don't reach critical mass.

Consuming Kids

"The Commodification of Childhood: Tales from the Advertising Front Lines" by Juliet B. Schor, in *The Hedgehog Review* (Summer 2003), Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, P.O. Box 400816, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. 22904-4816.

You've heard of focus groups, you've filled out surveys, you've been called by someone wondering what TV shows you watch. But chances are you've not heard of the GIA. The Girl's Intelligence Agency and other firms like it are a subtle and powerful new force in advertising aimed at understanding the likes and dislikes of kids—in the GIA's case, girls as young as six years old.

Marketing products to kids is nothing new: In the 1980s, Levi-Strauss even hired a 10-year-old to tell the company what he liked and didn't like about its jeans. What's different is the financial power kids now wield: In 2002, children between the ages of four and 12 spent as much as \$30 billion. So kids have become an increasingly enticing quarry for advertisers, who have responded with methods that strike Schor, a Boston College sociologist and author of *The Overworked American* (1992),

as a threat to both parents and children.

The GIA approach seems innocuous enough. With its trademark "slumber party in a box," the agency asks one of 40,000 "agents," recruited from kids who've registered on its website, to invite some friends over for a "party." There the girls are offered a sample product—anything from a new toy to a TV show—while researchers study their reactions.

That's where the new techniques become insidious, Schor argues. Though a "party" might be used to gather information, it can also be the launching stage for a "viral" marketing campaign: Kids recommend the featured products to their friends, who recommend them to their friends, and so on. Since each "agent" reaches an average of 512 other girls, the "research" has the potential to generate significant sales. Parents, the traditional "gatekeepers" for

EXCERPT

L.A.'s Lonely Police

The West Coast is generally more lightly policed than the East Coast, where police jobs were once important parts of political patronage machines. Los Angeles, however, takes the West Coast's penchant for small forces to an extreme. To police a city of 3.8 million people, the LAPD relies on approximately 9,200 officers—half the number per capita that New York City has. Moreover, these officers patrol an area nearly twice the size of New York. All in all, Los Angeles neighborhoods have only about one-quarter of the police presence that New York's neighborhoods do.

The small size of the LAPD has had a dramatic effect on the organization's culture. In New York, if an officer gets into trouble and calls for backup, he can expect a dozen cars on the scene in five minutes or less. In L.A., help may take three times as long to arrive. According to John Linder, a consultant who has worked closely with [L.A. Police Chief William] Bratton in both cities, understaffing in L.A. has over time created a police force whose officers worry more about personal survival than about community relations, and who go into every situation hard, fast, and expecting the worst.

—John Buntin, a staff correspondent at *Governing* (Dec. 2003)