

Housing Boom, Schooling Bust

Oct 4,
2015

Most Popular

Presented by

- [The Joyful, Illiterate Kindergartners of Finland](#)

“The changes to kindergarten make me sick,” a veteran teacher in Arkansas recently admitted to me. “Think about what you did in first grade—that’s what my 5-year-old babies are expected to do.”

The difference between first grade and kindergarten may not seem like much, but what I remember about my first-grade experience in the mid-90s doesn’t match the kindergarten she described in her email: three and a half hours of daily literacy instruction, an hour and a half of daily math instruction, 20 minutes of daily “physical activity time” (officially banned from being called “recess”) and two 56-question standardized tests in literacy and math—on the fourth week of school.

That American friend—who teaches 20 students without an aide—has fought to integrate 30 minutes of “station time” into the literacy block, which includes “blocks, science, magnetic letters, play dough with letter stamps to practice words, books, and storytelling.” But the most controversial area of her classroom isn’t the blocks nor the stamps: Rather, it’s the “house station with dolls and toy food”—items her district tried to remove last year. The implication was clear: There’s no time for play in kindergarten anymore.

[Continue Reading](#)

- [America Needs to Let Go of Its Reverence for the Bachelor's Degree](#)

Two years ago, my nephew was set to graduate from Maryland’s Towson University with a degree in political science. After six long years, both he and his parents were ready to breathe a sigh of relief—he had made it to the finish line. He had never been excited about school, and his parents had worried about his lack of enthusiasm, wishing he could be engaged in something that ignited his curiosity and provided him more of a motivation to focus, something more hands-on and practical. But they also knew that without a bachelor’s degree, my nephew’s ability to move into a rewarding career, earn a middle-class salary, and enjoy some economic security would be very limited. And they worried that if he didn’t complete that degree before he turned 25, he likely never would (a reasonable concern, given national statistics on college completion). Determined to launch him into adulthood with the strongest possible foundation they could, they persuaded him to go to college and crossed their fingers.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **Bernie Sanders, the Socialist Mayor**

*In 1985, when Bernie Sanders was in his second term as mayor of Burlington, Vermont, a writer named Russell Banks published his breakthrough novel, *Continental Drift*. It would earn Banks the John Dos Passos Prize, and make him a finalist for the Pulitzer for fiction. Sometime after the book came out, Banks accepted an assignment to profile the self-described socialist mayor. He followed Sanders around the city, watched him interact with constituents, and recorded his candid views. He produced a remarkable and compelling portrait of a distinctive politician, but it never found its way into print. Instead, it was filed away for three decades. With Sanders leading in the polls in New Hampshire, though, we now offer it to our readers, as a look at the senator before he became a national figure.*

[Continue Reading](#)

- **The Breakdown of the Black Family**

With the publication of “[The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration](#)” Ta-Nehisi Coates has added an elegant and forceful voice to the growing frustration with the inefficacy and injustice of America’s criminal-justice system. Mandatory-sentencing laws, the War on Drugs, juvenile-justice sentences that seem to do more to create than deter criminals, racial arrest and sentencing disparities: All are ready for a tough national cross-examination.

But even in the unlikely event that Washington and state legislatures successfully adapt the nation’s crime policies to a safer, more racially sensitive era, the nation will still look around to find more black men in prison than it might expect or want. There’s a simple reason for that, one that Coates himself notes: Relative to other groups, blacks commit more crimes. To understand why is to tackle some very hard-to-talk-about realities of black family life. And on that issue—and despite his announced interest in the topic—Coates has been the opposite of lucid.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **Why Japanese Kids Can Walk to School Alone**

It’s a common sight on Japanese mass transit: Children troop through train cars, singly or in small groups, looking for seats.

They wear knee socks, polished patent-leather shoes, and plaid jumpers, with wide-brimmed hats fastened under the chin and train passes pinned to their backpacks. The kids are as young as 6 or 7, on their way to and from school, and there is nary a guardian in sight.

A popular television show called *Hajimete no Otsukai*, or *My First Errand*, features children as young as two or three being sent out to do a task for their family. As they tentatively make their way to the greengrocer or bakery, their progress is secretly filmed by a camera crew. The show has been running for more than 25 years.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **The Rise of the Outrageously Long Commute**

A few years back, David Neeleman, the founder of JetBlue Airways, left his company and launched a new airline in Brazil. The airline, Azul, flies 22 million people a year, employs 12,000 people, and is the fastest-growing carrier in the region.

You'd think running such a large, complex operation would require a move to South America. But Neeleman commutes to Azul's Sao Paulo headquarters every week from his home in Connecticut, taking the 10-hour redeye on Sunday nights and returning on Thursdays. This way, he says, he doesn't have to uproot his family of 10 kids.

"My wife wasn't so interested in moving," said Neeleman, who [recently bought TAP](#), Portugal's national airline and is now commuting there as well. "We had all these kids playing [American] football and lacrosse. They don't have those sports in Brazil."

In the movie *Up in the Air*, George Clooney successfully captures the road-warrior ethos that has long been associated with, say, business consultants from firms like McKinsey & Company who work on projects outside their hometowns and spend most of their week in hotels. But now, more and more executives around the world are choosing to take on lengthy commutes on a permanent basis, even if their jobs don't demand it. Increasing globalization and tech-enabled workplace flexibility are certainly part of the reason why. But a more child-centered approach to parenting also seems to be a factor, as these executives make other major sacrifices in order to balance their professional and home lives.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **The Shame of Yale's Calhoun College**

Yale's Calhoun College, one of 12 residential colleges where undergraduates live, is named for John C. Calhoun, the South Carolina politician and an 1804 graduate. It's not the only memorial to Calhoun. In Charleston, an 80-foot-tall statue of him overlooks Calhoun Street. In the wake of the church murders in that city last June, students at Yale petitioned the university to change the college's name.

The students' [petition](#) recognizes that Calhoun "was respected during his time as an extraordinary American statesman," but stresses that he was "one of the most prolific defenders of slavery and white supremacy" in the history of the United States. It declares, "The monumental task of eliminating the vestiges of racism must include all monuments and symbols dedicated to people and institutions that fought to preserve slavery and white supremacy."

[Continue Reading](#)

- **Why It Was Easier to Be Skinny in the 1980s**

There's a meme aimed at Millennial catharsis called "Old Economy Steve." It's a series of pictures of a late-70s teenager, who presumably is now a middle-aged man, that mocks some of the messages Millennials say they hear from older generations—and shows why they're deeply janky. Old Economy Steve graduates and gets a job right away. Old Economy Steve "worked his way through college" because tuition was \$400. And so forth.

We can now add another one to that list: Old Economy Steve ate at McDonald's almost every day, and he still somehow had a 32-inch waist.

MemeGenerator.net

A [study](#) published recently in the journal *Obesity Research & Clinical Practice* found that it's harder for adults today to maintain the same weight as those 20 to 30 years ago did, even at the same levels of food intake and exercise.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration**

By his own lights, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, ambassador, senator, sociologist, and itinerant American intellectual, was [the product of a broken home and a pathological family](#). He was born in 1927 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but raised mostly in New York City. When Moynihan was 10 years old, his father, John, left the family, plunging it into poverty. Moynihan's mother, Margaret, remarried, had another child, divorced, moved to Indiana to stay with relatives, then returned to New York, where she worked as a nurse. Moynihan's childhood—a tangle of poverty, remarriage, relocation, and single motherhood—contrasted starkly with the idyllic American family life he would later extol.

[Continue Reading](#)

- **An Insane Collection of 1990s GIFs**

People of the Internet, join me, as we travel back to the year 1997. It was an era of yowling modems, [AOL chatrooms](#), and websites under construction.

And you knew they were under construction because they told you. With GIFs. Glorious, blinking, yellow-and-black GIFS.

Like this one:

And this one:

And this one:

And this one:

And this one:

And, well, you get the idea. If the mere glimpse of those things gives you twinges of longing, you remember a time when they were *everywhere*. The web was littered with them. Simple as they may appear, seeing those “under construction” GIFs in 2015 underscores a profound shift in the way people think about the web.

“It represents this utterly different philosophy that you need to know that this site is under construction, it's not done yet,” said Jason Scott, a historian at the Internet Archive. “Now, we know all sites are not done. If your site is done, something is *wrong*. It's bad. You're either out of money or you're boring.”

[Continue Reading](#)

- **Angola for Life**

- [Jeffrey Goldberg](#), [Sam Price-Waldman](#), and [Kasia Cieplak-Mayr von Baldegg](#)

Rehabilitation and reform in America's largest maximum security prison

[Watch Video](#)

- **The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality**

In his October cover story, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores how mass incarceration has affected African American families.

[Watch Video](#)

- **Mass Incarceration, Visualized**

- [Jackie Lay](#), [Bruce Western](#), [Kasia Cieplak-Mayr von Baldegg](#), and [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)

Coming soon: *The Atlantic's* October cover story on the effects of the disproportionate imprisonment of black men

[Watch Video](#)