

including the art exchanges and some of the fund-raising efforts. Adult testimony suggests that the values touted by the Lone Ranger helped guide a number of young people toward careers in public service. Against this, we are also treated to some questionable assumptions: “American children learned from this (the Lone Ranger) . . . that they were responsible for defending their nation’s unique history of freedom.” The fact is, we do not know what American children actually learned from this, or how the lessons were filtered by differences in location, class, gender, or race. The possibility of skepticism—or, perhaps even more likely, simple indifference—is not explored.

The result is a set of findings that should, indeed, be incorporated into our understanding of childhood in the 1950s and of Baby-Boomer adulthood. I wish Grieve had compared these findings with official messaging in later decades and addressed more, and more diverse, children’s voices.

—Peter N Stearns, *George Mason University, Fairfax, VA*

Paper Dolls: Fragile Figures, Enduring Symbols

Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene
Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2017. Introduction, images, conclusion, chapter notes, bibliography, and index. 217 pp. \$49.95 paper.
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In *Paper Dolls: Fragile Figures, Enduring Symbols*, coauthors Katherine H. Adams

and Michael L. Keene analyze the political, social, economic, technological, and religious influences on the creation of paper dolls. The authors examine the ways that these pieces of ephemera portray political satire, notions of womanhood, motherhood and family, the dictates of fashion, and self-image, among other topics. From discussions of ancient Chinese burial ceremonies and theatricals starring pantins (or puppets) at Versailles Palace under the reign of French king Louis XV to the cutout dolls of opera singer Jenny Lind and printable Kim Kardashians on the Internet, *Paper Dolls* proves a noteworthy source for readers interested in learning more about the rich history of paper dolls.

The authors trace the history of paper dolls and organize each of the thirteen chapters around a central theme. In “Political Satire and Change,” Adams and Keene show how pantins, a novelty thought to have been invented at the village of Pantin near Paris, proved a critical part of political commentary. Pantins were figures cut from heavy paper or light cardboard, the appendages were attached by thread, and the doll’s head was controlled by a set of longer strings. Many early pantins satirized kings, judges, aristocrats, and clergy. As pantins evolved into paper dolls with interchangeable outfits, they continued to serve as a means for political critique. The authors reference modern examples including a paper doll version of Justin Trudeau, Canada’s prime minister, as illustrated in 2015 by Kyle Hilton for *New York* magazine. Other satirical paper doll books comment on the circus and lack of substance in politics. Recent examples include *Newt!: A Paper Doll Book* (depict-

ing former leader of the U.S. House of Representatives Newt Gingrich), which offers a bible for thumping, a bullwhip, and a degree in military spending; *Bill & Al's Excellent Adventure*, which features an illustration of Bill Clinton and Al Gore dancing in their underwear on the lawn of the White House—Clinton holds a saxophone and Gore bangs a tambourine; and *The Donald Trump Paper Doll* complete with a Statue of Liberty costume.

In a chapter titled “The Myth of the American Family,” the authors articulate the importance of paper doll play in the late nineteenth century as the idea of a separate period of childhood gained popularity. Toys became vehicles to encourage child development. The authors give primary importance to psychologist G. Stanley Hall and Alexander Caswell Ellis’ 1897 *A Study of Dolls*, in which they asserted that doll play taught girls femininity and maternity. The authors notes that, “as Hall studied the link between child and doll, he noted that paper dolls held a special power and attraction, especially for older girls since their costume changes could easily reflect the complexities of social life” (p. 84). Throughout history, bridal dolls reflected the values and priorities of the American family. Paper doll wedding sets of the Great Depression offered affluent celebrations. In the 1950s, many paper dolls featured the all-American white couple of suburbia. Many paper doll families presented the mother as the American icon of the era—a homemaker. Paper doll families depicted social status through their clothing and accessories.

The authors also provide a critique of

representations of diversity in the chapter’s section “Various Versions of Us versus Them: The Best American Family.” During the second half of the twentieth century, the perfect family included gendered roles, a financially secure life, and moral success. Many paper doll sets project the myth of a perfect family with separate roles for men and women and an upper-class home life. Betsy McCall, for example, was a sweet, young girl, who lived with her mother, father, and a dog, in a white house with a porch and a yard. Betsy attended wholesome events with her friends, cousins, and her mother. Her life signaled one of affluence and family bliss that did not represent the majority of Americans. The authors note that, in an attempt to maintain the myth of the American family, paper doll sets also included negative connotations about different cultures and social status. Many early paper doll sets presented Aunt Jemima (a racist stereotype of the mammy figure), white families with African American maids, cooks, and butlers, and colonial families with slaves. Other early sets project stereotypes of Russians, Germans, Italians, Greeks, and so-called circus freaks. Adams and Keene conclude the chapter noting that “into the 1950s, paper dolls, more than any other type of toy or family purchase did the cultural work in defining and defending a powerful myth of American life” (p. 101). The size and scope of research on diversity in paper doll play is relatively small, and this type of scrutiny is a welcomed addition.

Chapters address the symbolism of paper dolls and how they provide unique perspectives on health care, gender roles, adolescents, and the LGBTQ community. Other sections introduce readers to

renowned paper doll artists, popular characters and icons, and contemporary paper doll projects.

Paper Dolls serves as a significant resource on paper dolls for those interested in scholarly pursuits and for those who collect the medium or other ephemera. The book is well researched and engaging. Although paper dolls are a fragile type of ephemera, they remain current and prove a unique cultural artifact.

—Michelle Parnett-Dwyer, *The Strong*,
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Families at Play: Connecting and Learning through Video Games

Sinem Siyahhan and Elisabeth Gee
Cambridge, MA, 2018. Series foreword, preface, appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. 200 pp. \$30.00 cloth.
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Individuals learn in contexts that depend on social and cultural connections to each other and to their environments. They are learning all the time, in fact, as they adapt to their changing environments—for learning is essentially a change in behavior often informed by a change in understanding contexts. Realizing this opens up the conversation to a new set of questions and makes moot many others when we talk about video games and children. Children are always learning. Asking do they learn with video games proves facile—the answer is always yes.

Families at Play: Connecting and Learning through Video Games, by Sinem

Siyahhan and Elisabeth Gee, helps readers understand the sociocultural nature of learning by presenting them with descriptive accounts of families and their relationships with video games. Siyahhan and Gee are especially adept at highlighting the nuance and diversity in each of the five family's experiences. Concentrating on families adds a much needed context for understanding children's experiences with games. Clearly, video game playing and other activities that stem from it are opportunities for families to nurture and learn together. Most importantly, the five families approached games with care and treated playing them as opportunities to bring family members closer together.

Families at Play begins with an overview of the authors' research agenda and then, just to get it out of the way first, quickly delves into dispelling myths associated with video game playing and its perceived negative effects. This book focuses on positive interactions between children and their family members with and around games. Negative experiences occur with some (other families not described in the book), but much of the dysfunction within families regarding video games comes from a lack of understanding video game play as a situated opportunity for sharing and learning (which is true with basically all media). Common mistakes include assuming that all video games are the same (not true) and that play is likewise monolithic. In fact, one individual's experience with a game (and whether it isolates him or her from family) may be drastically different from another's due to the social contexts of play. For family play, not the games, but the familial support around playing them matters.