

the role of children's play. By showing us what happens when children are denied opportunities to play, the books allow us to see that the alternatives to play are not good alternatives. In the final analysis, then, we may not have good measures to establish that play is essential for children's overall development, but we do have measures to establish that the alternatives to supporting children's playing are not so good for children. From these three books, we gather that when children do not enjoy play, when they do not control how they spend their free time, they will never—to use Honoré's reference to the poet William Blake—"see a world in a grain of sand."

As sensible and wise as these three books are, however, they do not make an ironclad case that this generation of children is in any more trouble than previous generations. While today's problems are real problems, without good data on previous generations, we have no way of knowing for sure whether children today are in fact headed downhill or whether they will eventually do as well as previous generations. If, then, parenting today really puts children more at risk, one can still hope that, with respect to children's long-term development, parenting is not destiny.

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The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion

Marjorie Harness Goodwin

Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. Appendices, notes, illustrations, references. xi, 329 pp. \$31.95 paper. ISBN: 9780631234241.

Sugar and spice and everything nice—far from it. Marjorie Harness Goodwin's ethnographic account of the interpersonal behavior of preadolescent girls shatters the antiquated stereotype. In this well-researched book, we witness firsthand the Machiavellian politics of the playground, where scheming behavior is the rule rather than the exception. What clearly emerges from this important research is that the negotiation of power among middle-school girls is complicated and clumsy. For example, Goodwin's systematic account of a seemingly benign childhood activity such as hopscotch reveals intricate details about rules, status, and competition. Clearly the play of girls is highly circumscribed, and what looks like play to an adult outsider is in effect a convoluted series of interactions. In these interactions, games act as a pretext for trying out, albeit awkwardly, different social roles.

This book makes it obvious that when girls play, they compete for hegemony, and their bids for status often result in hurt feelings. Indeed,

girls gossip about other girls, purposefully exclude them, and openly criticize and reprimand them for thinking too highly of themselves. Yet ironically, in these exchanges, the constant social comparisons they make are intended to ameliorate their social standing at the expense of others. The result is an unmistakably defined hierarchy, one in which economically privileged girls set the agenda and subordinated peers tolerate mistreatment in order to belong.

Using ethnographic data spanning nearly forty years, the study documents that the obsession girls exhibit with who is included in and who is excluded from the peer group is no exclusively contemporary phenomenon. Goodwin's book highlights a curious paucity in the research literature on the social lives of girls. Considering how competitive and status-oriented girls are, why have scholars all but ignored this important facet of female personality? Their lack of attention resembles another traditional scientific omission only recently rectified, namely the mistaken belief that female aggression is rare and inconsequential. Goodwin's work calls for the need to further examine competition and power among girls (and women), because competition and power are not just the prerogatives of males. We need to understand how girls negotiate power because these early lessons

lay the foundation for future successes in their social interactions or for future abuses of power. Interestingly, Goodwin's work parallels findings from the nonhuman primate studies on social status as well as recent quantitative studies on popular-aggressive children, though she mentions neither in the book. Perhaps, the games of stance, status, and exclusion played by the girls in this compelling book are not part of a cultural trend but rather part of the human condition. I strongly suspect that girls all over the world organize their peer groups and negotiate power in ways similar to the American girls depicted by Goodwin.

The social lives of girls depicted here are multifaceted. And though it may seem from my review as if the only socializing girls engage in with each other is pathological, there is, in fact, some hope. Readers can also observe beyond the manipulative behavior of preadolescent girls numerous examples of girls being strong and acting virtuous, persuasively advocating for their rights and articulating very well a sense of fairness.

The implications of Goodwin's work for intervention efforts and policy development seem unmistakable. We cannot change what we do not acknowledge. As implied in the title of the book, the social lives of girls have largely been hidden from scholars. It

seems time to accept that girls actively compete for status and that their attempts are often awkward and take place at the expense of others. The mainstream media has certainly not ignored these facts. Reality television mirrors the governance of the school playground described in this book where beautiful, wealthy girls set the parameters for inclusion and closely guard the social landscape with an acute awareness of the precarious nature of their own hold on the catbird seat. For me, reading this book was like reliving the fifth grade, which probably speaks to the stability, pervasiveness, and validity of Goodwin's findings.

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Popular Culture in Counseling, Psychotherapy, and Play-Based Interventions

Lawrence C. Rubin, ed.
New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008. References, index, tables. xlii, 372 pp. \$48.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780826101181.

Popular Culture in Counseling, Psychotherapy, and Play-Based Interventions is a collection of works written by researchers, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and persons with specialized training in public relations, advertising, and the arts. The book

takes a fresh look at the use of popular culture, innovative approaches, and creative techniques in research and counseling practices with clients of all ages. Although less a focus, the book also integrates popular culture with clinical training and supervision.

Having multiple authors ensures that each chapter boasts a distinct literary style; many include personal stories and humorous anecdotes and imaginative titles; and they are generally well grounded in research and cover their topics thoroughly. This combination of innovation and scholarship engages the reader and enriches the final product. It helps, too, that any discussion of popular culture is inherently entertaining. And though the authors concentrate on the characteristics of popular culture they value personally, as a whole they certainly establish its therapeutic potential.

In each chapter the author presents concerns, case conceptualizations, and treatment plans and interventions using popular-culture references. Some authors lay a foundation of research and theory for their case studies before demonstrating how specific techniques could be used with individual clients. Others employ a more integrated approach, treating discussions of clients as the starting point for examining relevant theories and techniques. No matter what the approach, most chapters are clear and effective.