

Several authors assert that their use of popular culture in therapeutic interventions is not intended to replace traditional approaches. Rather, the techniques they use provide additional resources for mental-health practitioners. Popular culture can help make connections between the client's real-world experiences and the therapeutic process. The goal is to make the therapy more accessible to the client as she integrates her outside reality with a new understanding of self.

Since popular culture is often an integral part of a client's past and present, the therapeutic methods discussed in the book can be applied to a client of any age. There is also no reason why mental-health practitioners of any theoretical approach could not use these techniques, although some of the techniques are likely to prove most attractive to more directive therapists. The material here seems less appropriate for cross-cultural interventions. Although you can find some reference in this work to international popular-culture symbols such as Japan's *Naruto*, the authors do not much address multicultural issues or the potential problems of using popular culture with diverse client groups. Multicultural concerns, however, are examined within the framework of clinical training and supervision. Authors note that trainees from immigrant cultural groups were less

familiar with the popular-culture references used in the training process.

Overall, this book offers a valuable contribution to counseling, psychotherapy, and the study of play-based approaches. It can be used as a resource for mental-health practitioners, researchers, and educators to supplement traditional interventions and facilitate healing through relevant and current therapeutic processes. The authors challenge the reader to take risks and think beyond conventional approaches. Through sound reviews of the literature, research, and case studies, they inspire a creative therapy free of whimsy.

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**A Place for Play:  
A Companion Volume  
to the Michigan Television Film  
"Where Do the Children Play?"**

*Elizabeth Goodenough, ed.*

Carmel Valley, CA: National Institute for Play, 2008. Notes, illustrations, xvii, 266 pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780615202822.

It is rare to find a collection of selected writings focusing on the topic of children's play that can hold a reader's interest from article to article. After all, the topic is usually embedded in nostalgia and personal reflections, and the

typical reader will likely doze off in a comfortable chair after pondering fond memories of childhood activities. However, *A Place for Play* is an anthology of articles, research summaries, essays, and poems that blend the works of more than twenty national and international experts into a captivating rationale for restoring and preserving child's play. The book makes a convincing argument that as society has become more complex, play has also become more regulated and regimented with fewer opportunities for children to interact in a natural setting. This change has strong implications for a child's normal, healthy development.

Elizabeth Goodenough's *A Place for Play* is the last of a trilogy about play, which also includes a highly respected, one-hour documentary entitled *Where Do the Children Play?* which was released in 2007 by Michigan Public Television and which won a Regional Emmy Award. The second work in the trilogy was the 231-page handbook that accompanied the television program—*Where Do the Children Play: A Study Guide to the Film*. All three are scholarly works aimed at educating the public regarding the benefits of play for young children throughout the world. As Goodenough's introduction to *A Place for Play* points out, "childhood is increasingly under fire as a worldwide demographic, cultural invention, and social

institution." She warns that we cannot predict the result if children continue to grow up in "a society disrupted by violence, driven by competition, and divorced from nature."

The book will surely interest child-care professionals and elementary-school teachers searching for funding and rationales to make their playgrounds and school yards more educational and dynamic for their students. Teacher trainers in childhood development and early childhood education will discover a powerful aid in conveying the character of childhood and in creating innovative approaches to teaching environmental skills and concepts. Individuals working within an inclusive setting or in a self-contained classroom will learn how play activities can address the requirements of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and programs designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504. Recess and after-school specialists will find the easy-to-read format very practical for training volunteers. Parents will gain insights into their children's learning experiences and social exchanges with peers—and they may also come to understand the importance of schools rich in outdoor environments and natural physical challenges. Curriculum specialists and school administrators will glean novel outdoor experiential activities and creative drama and art

projects to enhance their existing programs. And unquestionably, *A Place for Play*, laced with relevant and alluring photographs and helpful graphics, is a welcome resource for all play environment specialists, landscape architects, playground-design experts, and city planners.

Part 1 of the book offers a generally agreed-upon definition of play as freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. The authors of the section then discuss how play, so defined, can serve as a medium for children to learn basic academic concepts and how uninterrupted episodes of such play increase children's independence. Essays also discuss play as a healing tool, a vehicle for increased language skills, and a means to increase a child's self-expression through playful drama activities.

In part 2, the contributors summarize contemporary research and proffer several reasons for the decline in outdoor and indoor leisure time, including this generation of schoolchildren's limited experience with physical play and its growing dependence on home technology, electronic diversions, and television. The writers also discuss gender differences. They note the research that supports a child's strong connection to the natural environment, as well as the benefits children gain from manipulating natural objects in childhood gardens. Using

survey results, findings from local governments and city planners, and a discussion of the UNESCO-sanctioned *Growing Up in Cities* Project (GUiC), Goodenough's contributors address the impact of where children play. The section closes with disturbing but influential research on the total absence of normal play in the lives of children who grow up to become convicted mass murderers.

In part 3, the book identifies six dynamic school-based play projects or programs, some initiated and embraced by individuals, some by small groups, some by both, but all educators who saw the need for schoolwide change. One undertaking sprang from one person's desire to enhance the recess experience for students, another from, say, a state mandate providing for more play in schooling itself. Colorful drawings created by children and photographs taken by them accompany these essays and grab the reader's attention.

Part 4 reacquaints the reader with the history of playgrounds, children's gardens, and children's museums. Authors reveal how a school yard can be transformed into a setting for creativity, problem solving, and invigorating physical activity. Admitting—despite (maybe even because of) all the opportunities the school yard offers for climbing, stretching, reaching, and exploring—that playgrounds do hold

some physical danger, authors argue this possibility of risk does not warrant the creation of structures free from potential harm. Such attempts produce structures so predictable in their design that they fail to arouse a child's imagination and curiosity. Thus, some assumed risk should not impede school administrators and public-park designers from refurbishing old playgrounds or building new natural play settings with raw materials and loose parts. The section closes with vibrant photographs that show how flowers, sod, natural groundings, shrubbery, and mounds of dirt and grass heighten the sensory experiences of children and help them create their own places for play.

A thought-provoking part 5 centers around the term "child-centered city," tracking how children interact, how they negotiate group play and its leadership roles, how they draw upon cultural experiences, how they develop a quest for adventure, and how they create restriction-free play scenarios. Several discussions validate the benefits children derive from play, even in densely populated areas with congested neighborhoods. The simple answers to apparently complex problems that characterize this section of the work inspire the hope that even one person can initiate a major change regarding play in urban settings. City planners and park departments will

find the information related to "shared outdoor space" especially useful.

*A Place for Play* can successfully stand alone. However, when used in conjunction with the previous works, the trilogy becomes a comprehensive curriculum package appropriate for college students. *A Place for Play* is also ideal for park departments seeking strong rationales for existing play and leisure programs threatened by other city projects and commercial ventures. The trilogy addresses misguided attitudes and offers good arguments for increasing prudently priced and practical efforts to protect children's play. It is a goal certainly possible to achieve and one, as this book asserts, that children deserve.

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### **Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp**

*Leslie Paris*

New York: New York University Press, 2008. Notes, index, photographs. 363 pp. \$39.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780814767078.

Historians of childhood and youth are forever in search of the agency of their young subjects, the ability of children and youth to have some control over their lives in a world where they are relatively powerless. Our own experiences as children tell us that the adult