

even if the reader is not a scholar but merely a grown-up veteran of the summer-camp experience. The writing is accessible to the general reader, and when Paris does introduce some key ideas (e.g., the child's body as a cultural "text"), she does so clearly and without jargon. I do wish she had used the photographs more as evidence than as mere illustration, but overall Paris performs in this book precisely the scholarship we need on the history of American children's lives.

—Jay Mechling, *University of California, Davis*

No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society

Tim Gill

London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007. Illustrations, notes, select bibliography. 94 pp. \$12.50 paper. ISBN: 9781903080085.

The extended essay *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society* presents a coherent, well-documented description of the interacting forces (especially parents, schools, judges, recreation workers, regulators, and the media) that severely limit five- to eleven-year-old children in their development of confidence, agency, knowledge, and happiness. The essay considers children of the United Kingdom in particular but, by extension, children in

the United States too. These encroachments of the adult world include excessive monitoring, placing of some experiences and spaces off limits, the loss of natural environments, and the reduction of recess and other free time. Tim Gill bases his argument on child development theory and research and on practical experience. He also notes that children in northern European countries (particularly Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Germany) have more opportunities for play.

Gill credits the playground-improvement movement of the 1970s and 1980s with reducing the number of truly dangerous situations for children, but he argues that it has gone to an extreme. In the case of soft surfacing, he claims, not only has the movement produced a prohibitively expensive change but also one that contributes to more, rather than fewer, broken limbs. Furthermore—and he particularly blames the popular media for this—the culture has become paranoid about stranger danger in a period when in both the United States and the United Kingdom kidnapping by strangers is not only statistically low but has remained unchanged in the last fifty years. In both countries, murder and the serious injury of children is much more likely at the hands of family or friends than of strangers. Death in a car accident is much more likely than either abduction or murder.

No Fear discusses the fear adults in both the United States and the United Kingdom have of being sued for incompetence or neglect if a child is injured. The United Kingdom, unlike the United States, has placed a limit on judicially awarded compensation, but in both countries, adults typically try to protect their positions by hewing to the most safety-minded line. Trained playworkers and pedagogues realize that children need challenge—and some risk—to develop their confidence and judgment. Gill argues for more teachers and recreation workers to reflect this perspective.

No Fear offers full-page color photographs of great play spaces that encourage the reader to think, “We could do that.” They also invoke the possibility of forest schools, which are more common in Northern European countries than in the United Kingdom. Forest schools provide wooded areas for young children to explore freely and at length, building shelters and playing with loose parts. The United States might well try a few of these. Adventure playgrounds are in decline in most countries, but even in the United States, you can find a few—in Berkeley, California, for example.

Gill calls for a significant cultural shift from our current culture of protection, which considers children as fragile liabilities, to one of resilience, which considers children as agents of

their own development, safety, and happiness. I grow alarmed looking at the fifty-foot sandstone cliffs in Larrabee State Park in Washington State, but I remember that my mother sat serenely as her several children clambered up them. She believed in our need for adventure as well as our need for protection. Gill believes attitudes like my mother’s should be encouraged where they still exist and widely revived where they do not.

U.S. readers can learn about legislation, policies, and play provisions in other countries from *No Fear*. The country already has a robust children and nature movement inspired by Richard Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods*, which might be a linchpin for creating a more resiliently minded culture. The dangers associated with nature, such as disease-carrying ticks and mosquitoes and poisonous snakes, are manageable. In 2008, the U.S. Congress considered (but failed to act on) the No Child Left Inside bill that would have provided new funding for expanding environmental-education programs, and this legislation in some form is likely to appear again. Several states have organizations, movements, and environmental-education programs to reconnect children and nature.

No Fear is an excellent resource for advocates of better outdoor experiences—concise and well researched

with great color photographs on high-quality coated paper. It boasts a text with generous margins and clear writing, including summaries and conclu-

sions. In short, *No Fear* is a book to share with the as-yet unconvinced.

—Mary Rivkin, *University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD*