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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

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Volume 35  
Issue 2 June

Article 23

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2008

## *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection.* Michael Wessells.

David K. Androff  
*University of California, Berkeley*

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### Recommended Citation

Androff, David K. (2008) "*Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection.* Michael Wessells.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 35: Iss. 2, Article 23.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3350>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol35/iss2/23>

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workplaces in Chicago and San Francisco. Furthermore, her core premise is persuasive—the decline of the United Way and rise of alternative funds reflects the increasing importance of new, non-place-based conceptions of community. However, in the drive to support her thesis, Barman glosses over the complexity of some of the issues she raises. For example, the book touches on other factors besides cultural conceptualizations of community that have contributed to the decline of the United Way, such as financial management scandals and donors' demands for individual control over the use of their contributions. Such issues suggest that the landscape of workplace charity has been shaped by multiple complex factors, beyond just changing definitions of community, but Barman does not explore these other factors in depth. Overall, though, the book makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of both the evolving meaning of community and the field of workplace charity in the United States.

*Sara E. Kimberlin, University of California, Berkeley*

Michael Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. \$45.00 hardcover.

The UN estimates that 300,000 children around the world are exploited as combatants in armed conflicts. Although the plight of child soldiers remains an under-researched field, children have become increasingly drawn into the violent chaos of war. The development of lightweight weaponry, children's psychological and physical vulnerability, and their innate desire to please adults all conspire against their welfare. International law struggles to address this severe problem, which is linked to other major issues of child labor, ethnic violence, political instability, and poverty. Attempts to free children from armed conflict are frequently undermined by the re-recruitment of children back into their former fighting groups.

These issues and more are effectively addressed in Michael Wessells's *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*. Drawing upon over 400 field interviews with child soldiers, Wessells

uses examples from Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America to describe the pathways in and out of being a young combatant, from recruitment to reintegration back into their communities. An introductory chapter provides an overview of the definition and prevalence of child soldiers. Chapters 2 and 3 confront the complexity of children's coercion and agency in their recruitment, and document adaptation to life as a child soldier. Chapter 4 explores the unique dilemmas of girl soldiers, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Chapters 5 and 6 cover the health and psychological consequences of child soldiering. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and rehabilitation programs, linking the success of these programs to social development and peace building, with case studies illustrating approaches and lessons learned. Chapter 9 juxtaposes the demand for justice with the need to reintegrate child perpetrators into post-conflict communities. A final chapter on prevention discusses international law's role in ending impunity for adults that exploit children in war, addresses the structural factors related to child soldiers, and outlines regional and global prevention strategies.

Given the recent bestselling memoir of a child soldier, Wessells's empirically driven book is a timely contribution of psychological insight that debunks gloomy notions of child soldiers as damaged goods beyond repair. Wessells's optimism is buoyed with accounts of former child soldiers successfully reintegrated into civilian life. He links the need to protect children in conflict to the foundation of peaceful societies. Wessells debates the merits of retributive and restorative justice approaches to meeting community demands to hold child perpetrators accountable for their role in violence. The discussion on the difficulty of separating victims from perpetrators underlines Wessell's main point that children soldiers are the result of adult exploitation of children. Restorative justice interventions promoting dialogue and cooperation are highlighted as being well-suited to fit local conditions and cultures. This is an important book for students of all levels interested in children's rights and post-conflict reconstruction, and serves as a guide to practitioners working in this area.

*David K. Androff, University of California, Berkeley*