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## Review of *Adult Sibling Relationships*. Geoffrey L. Greif and Michael E. Woolley. Reviewed by Teri Kennedy.

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According to neoliberal logic then, those who have money and wealth will utilize it with increasing precision to create for themselves even more money and wealth. This being the case, we are not now simply in need of better social and economic policies. We are in need of a rather thoroughgoing spiritual revolution, a broadly cultural change in values throughout our entire society away from neoliberal exaltation of money, profits and wealth display. Frankly, I don't see anything nearly so fundamental coming from these authors. They seem confident that the reward of a future sustainable and pleasantly civil society shared by all is sufficient to maintain allegiance to their vision. I am much less confident. It is a replay of the old commons dilemma, in which the common good of all is pitted against the selfish good of individuals. The results when such games are played out in human history are not usually very encouraging.

Nevertheless, we do need to be thinking in terms of common good social policies, and this book is at least one potent starting point for diagnosing our current problems and pointing a finger in a positive direction forward.

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Geoffrey L. Greif and Michael E. Woolley, *Adult Sibling Relationships*. Columbia University Press (2016), 301 pages, \$29.99 (paperback).

Whether approaching this book as a family therapist, social work educator, policy analyst or simply as a sibling, this presentation of adult sibling relationships is a highly readable and accessible contribution to the literature on family relationships. The book shares key findings and in-depth case studies gleaned from interviews and questionnaire data from 262 siblings aged forty and older, with at least one living sibling.

The authors provide a comprehensive contextualization of the study of sibling relationships, long overlooked in favor of parent-child and spousal interactions within the family, taking the reader through a review of relevant studies on family relationships ranging from biology to history, social sciences to culture,

and fast-forwarding to families in popular culture. The overarching framework spotlights themes of affection, ambivalence, and ambiguity, which are viewed as intrinsic to adult sibling interactions. Additionally, these interactions are examined through a life course perspective in which family history can be seen to repeat itself in subsequent generations, and within a theoretical perspective focusing on families as systems applying concepts borrowed from Bowen's family systems, Minuchin's structural family therapy, and Satir's experiential family therapy.

Key lessons are drawn from the author's wide-ranging review of the literature on family relationships. These include the importance of sibling relationships as sources of affection and support that enhance well-being from middle through late adulthood; the need of older siblings to seek reciprocal relationships with younger siblings, and the desire of younger siblings to seek comfort and support from older siblings; the impact of parental favoritism on both the favored and unfavored child and its lasting impact on sibling relationships across the lifespan; the need to create a positive bond between siblings when one lives with or faces a significant life challenge (e.g., health, disability), as well as a recognition by professionals of the needs of siblings serving in a caregiving role; the lasting impact and grief resulting from the loss of a sibling at an early age, even in instances when the death preceded the surviving sibling's birth; and the greater emotional connection of sisters, which creates an opportunity for professionals to develop such capacity among brothers.

The author's findings support ambivalence as an important characteristic describing adult sibling relationships from middle to late adulthood, pointing to a need to further study the "components of closeness" (p. 72) to include feelings, behaviors, and expectations in an age-informed context. Insights for potential child-rearing best practices were shared, with a nuanced understanding of the need for all things in moderation when it comes to both children's behaviors and parental practices. The generational context of strained sibling relationships is addressed, ranging along a continuum from the desire to reconnect or to maintain distance, and to feelings of ambivalence in between. While opportunities to improve connections later in life may occur as a result of an important event in the life of the family was noted, it may be necessary for siblings to learn to

accept current circumstances and adjust their expectations. The experience of siblings in blended families was also addressed, with a suggestion for use of genograms and family maps to facilitate identification of and changes to historical patterns.

The book concludes with a review of practice approaches suggested by research findings on adult sibling relationships, including contributions from practitioners and advice from siblings. Practitioners described processes seen while treating siblings in emergency situations and over time. A smaller number recommend therapy for improving boundaries when other efforts fail.

Siblings focused on the importance of communication, forgiveness and acceptance, as well as the importance of personal effort generally in improving and maintaining positive adult sibling relationships. While sensitive to and seeking to avoid overgeneralization of cultural considerations, the authors do address the level of culture. An in-depth, culturally grounded approach would provide important contributions to the literature on adult sibling relationships.

Noteworthy were the voices of adult siblings, through case studies and quotations, as well as analysis of qualitative data. According to adult siblings in the study, improving challenging sibling relationships ultimately requires a willingness to be vulnerable, acceptance that each sibling has a point of view, and a sense of “hope that, with effort, a better relationship can be achieved” (p. 243).

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Adam Gaffney, *To Heal Humankind: The Right to Health in History*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group (2017), 240 pages, \$36.00 (paperback).

My interest in healthcare had brought me to this book by Adam Gaffney. I wanted to learn more about how the modern-day health care laws and rights evolved. The book starts in the early 1700s and ends at the start of the Trump administration in 2017. The debates over whether healthcare is a right