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Childhood, Youth and Social Work in Transformation: Implications for Policy and Practice. Lynne M. Nebell, Jeffrey J. Shook, and Janet L. Finn. Reviewed by Ann Reyes Robbins.

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community-based prevention strategies deserves to be carefully considered when child welfare prevention policy is being formulated in the United States.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Lynn M. Nybell, Jeffrey J. Shook, and Janet L. Finn (Eds.), *Childhood, Youth and Social Work in Transformation: Implications for Policy and Practice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. \$60.00 hardcover.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the world's most widely ratified human rights treaty, became the first legally binding international document to incorporate civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights into child welfare more than two decades ago. Although the United States has signed the convention, it continues to share the distinction with Somalia as being one of only two countries that have not yet ratified the document. Lynn Nybell, Jeffrey Shook, and Janet Finn contend that not only has there been a notable absence of domestic debate or discussion about the convention but, in their experience, most social workers in the United States have little or no familiarity with this treaty. Readers may find that having a general understanding of the Convention's history, and the resulting standards that were negotiated for a decade by an interdisciplinary group of international stakeholders, will assist them with accepting the fundamental premises of the text—that concepts of childhood and youth are socially and culturally constructed and that traditional developmental psychological notions of childhood are insufficient for understanding children's voice and agency.

The text is organized thematically into three parts with a shared set of underlying premises. Each of these premises challenges the social work profession's ideas about childhood that are grounded in developmental psychology literature. The first premise rejects the notion of biological universality and instead embraces nonlinear socially and culturally constructed discourses about youth and childhood. The editors challenge policymakers and those charged with policy implementation

to acknowledge that a child's needs and perspectives must be identified and respected, and that the child and family do not function as a single unit.

The second premise recognizes children and youth as being entitled to their own voices and the right to be active agents in their lives. The editors and contributors further posit that social workers in the United States have largely failed to examine questions about children's voice and agency, unlike their international counterparts who have grappled with these issues for some time, due in part to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by their respective countries.

The third premise involves the contention that concepts of childhood and youth should be analyzed within the context of their relationship to political and economic power. The contributions to the text clearly support the editors' argument that the daily practice of social work involves ongoing struggles over conflicting understandings about the notions of childhood and youth—struggles that extend beyond the individual and the family and that are intertwined with the cultural politics of childhood that vary by place and space.

The editors specifically target social work practitioners and students; however, the interdisciplinary collection of scholarship extends beyond the social work literature to include legal, sociological, anthropological, and geospatial analysis concepts applied as theoretical lenses for interpreting social work practice and policies affecting children and youth. As a result, the text may be of interest to practitioners and students in other fields as well. The editors aptly describe the twenty case studies used in the book as social work practice portraits. Although there is noticeable variance in the writing styles and formality of the scholarship, each chapter is thoughtfully placed within the three sections of the text to assist the reader with the progression from cases addressing the transformation of the discourse surrounding childhood and youth, to a focus on contexts and settings and their correlation with risk and resilience, ending with descriptions of projects that challenge practitioners to re-think their existing paradigms and reinvent social work with children and youth in a manner that embraces children's voice and agency. The sets of questions at the end of each chapter

force the reader to think critically about social work practice and also the philosophy of social work—both historically and prospectively—as it pertains to children and youth.

Ann Reyes Robbins, University of Southern California

Margaret A. Zahn (Ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009. \$54.50 hardcover, \$31.95 papercover.

Delinquency among adolescent girls, while not uncommon, is often understudied. *The Delinquent Girl*, edited by Margaret A. Zahn, offers a comprehensive review of empirical evidence related to delinquent behaviors among girls. With evidence supporting increasing rates of girls' involvement with the juvenile justice system, this book presents a timely, multidisciplinary evaluation of the causes and related factors associated with delinquency.

The book opens with two chapters rooting female delinquency within a theoretical context. Contributing authors cite mainstream and feminist theory as foundations with which to define and contextualize delinquent behaviors among girls. This is followed by a review of recent growth trends in female delinquency coupled with possible explanations for the decreasing gender gap in delinquency rates. Chapter 4 offers an interdisciplinary perspective on the influence of various biopsychological vulnerability factors on high risk behaviors among girls. These factors include exposure to stress, the presence of Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity and Conduct Disorders, intellectual deficits, early onset of puberty, and other mental health issues.

Next the book considers the impact of family, peers, school and the community. The chapter on family influences suggests that negative family experiences and parental deviance affect females and males equally. However, the study of emotional processes and gender roles in the family context requires more research if it is easy to provide more explanative power. Chapter 6 addresses peer influences. The author highlights the importance of peer groups for females and indicates the role of mixed-gender peer groups in the development of delinquent