

and twelve to fifteen months (labeled discovery seekers), toddlers between ten to fifteen and twenty-four months (labeled autonomy seekers), and those between eighteen to twenty-four and thirty-six months (labeled identity seekers). Chapter 2 (why) outlines the role of play and play materials for facilitating the three distinct but highly interrelated processes of growth and maturation, development, and learning. Chapter 3 (how) explains various methods for teaching and learning with infants and toddlers. Chapter 4 (what) describes play materials, the criteria for their selection, and the method for their presentation, which is by domain.

Parts 2, 3, and 4 each contain three chapters that suggest play materials for a different aspect of one domain—cognitive, social and emotional, and physical—followed by a brief essay titled “In Your Words” written by an infant and toddler professional. The authors note the possibility of overlap between ages or domains and encourage readers to be flexible and think creatively when considering the suitability of each play material included for individual children. The book concludes with the authors’ brief summary of key points and encouragement for further reflection along with two appendices—a table highlighting the characteristics of infants and toddlers during different stages and a list of children’s literature recommendations by domain.

Much like Martha B. Bronson’s *The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8: Selecting Play Materials to Support Development* (1995), the authors here recommend play materials to engage and enhance the abilities of children during a specific life stage. Rather than be comprehensive, their pre-

sentation of a few purposefully selected examples of appropriate play materials is “meant to inspire ideas about similar materials that could be used in different ways with different age groups” (p. 23).

The insights the authors share and the recommendations they make have much to offer anyone who cares about very young children. McMullen and Brody offer a trustworthy array of play materials, activities, and practical suggestions to enhance the quality of play experiences and enable very young children to thrive. Each idea invites adults to engage thoughtfully and responsively the hearts and minds of infants and toddlers with play materials and playful interactions that nurture the whole child.

—Rebecca M. Giles, *University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL*

Radical Play: Revolutionizing Children’s Toys in 1960s and 1970s America

Rob Goldberg

Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2023. Acknowledgments, introduction, epilogue, abbreviations, notes, bibliography, and index. 294 pp. \$28.95, paper. ISBN: 9781478025115

This book provides fresh insight into an important era in the history of American material culture. In it, Rob Goldberg deftly uses the child-centered society of post-World War II and Vietnam War America as the context for three campaigns that aimed to revolutionize the toys young children played with. One group of reformers,

taking inspiration from nuclear disarmament and anti-Vietnam protests, promoted a deemphasis on—or elimination of—toy guns and other war- and violence-related playthings. A second, inspired by the civil rights and Black Power movements, promoted the creation of dolls that could appeal to African American consumers. The third, influenced by second-wave feminism, introduced new dolls and toys that avoided gender stereotypes. In doing so, Goldberg introduces readers to several unsung but influential characters who endeavored to fashion cultural change through toys. This group includes Lou Smith, an African American civil rights advocate who teamed with Mattel to create a Black-owned company that produced dolls with representative Black physical features, and Barbara Sprung, an active feminist who promoted nonsexist toys as a vital component of early childhood education. These and other earnest progressives sought not only to alter the market for children's toys but also to use new toys—or, in the case of guns, their absence—to promote a new society.

Among his many gems of analysis, Goldberg identifies 1968 as a watershed year in the “revolutionizing” of toys. In the wake of the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy that year, reformers succeeded in prompting major retailers to remove toy guns from their shelves. That same year, manufacturers such as Mattel began marketing dolls with nonwhite skin color, and some even produced dolls with “ethnically correct” facial, hair, and body features. Mattel also helped finance—without any expectation of benefit to itself—the founding of Shindana Toys in 1968, a Black-owned Los

Angeles company that specialized in making “ethnically correct” Black dolls. The drive for nonsexist toys arose in force a few years later in 1973, when the National Organization for Women created the Public Action Coalition on Toys, but impulses for the movement arose in the late 1960s.

Goldberg convincingly shows this pressure by radicals on manufacturers, their trade association, the Toy Manufacturers of America, Inc. (TMA), and the annual marketing gala ToyFair altered what toy retailers displayed on their shelves, but these efforts marked a beginning, not a conclusion. In fact, Shindana Toys went out of business in 1983. Daisy Manufacturing continued unabated to produce BB guns and air rifles, and in 1974 the president of TMA responded to feminist attempts to impose nonsexist playthings by asserting, “The great mass of the American people doesn't want their little boys to play with dolls, or their daughters to be carpenters” (p. 185).

I sincerely appreciate the deep and original research Goldberg has accomplished, but it must be remembered that *Radical Play* is a book about intervention. It is about how adults endeavored to alter the content of what children played with and, by extension, how they played and, by further extension, how they absorbed the meaning of what they played with. Goldberg does not provide—and perhaps cannot provide—a full account of how successful the reformers were in influencing children's culture. Sales figures for new, “radical” toys are lacking and, probably, hard to find. It seems certain, however, that parents in the 1960s responded to children's demands and bought more Hula Hoops, Wiffle balls, and Whamo Flying

Saucers (frisbees) than they bought Shindana's Black Wanda career dolls or Milton Bradley Company's nonsexist figures in Our Helpers Play People. Children have been and are agents in their own play and their use of playthings, and it is difficult to discern how much they appreciated and amused themselves with new, radical toys.

Goldberg has fashioned an important and enlightening study. His prose is free of jargon and highly readable, though he occasionally weights down his narrative with extra-long sentences. The documentation is full, and the bibliography includes a comprehensive list of primary and secondary sources. Goldberg also peppers the narrative with useful illustrations. *Radical Play* opens a new window onto toy culture, but more analysis of how children created their own toy and play culture is needed.

—Howard P. Chudacoff, *Brown University, Providence, RI*

Dolls of Our Lives: Why We Can't Quit American Girl

Mary Mahoney and Allison Horrocks

New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2023. Contents, introduction, acknowledgments, and images. 249 pp. \$28.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781250792839

As The Strong National Museum of Play's curator of dolls, I was responsible for the museum's acquisition of more than one thousand artifacts related to the American Girl doll series. The donor began collecting in 1986 when Pleasant Rowland launched the line of eighteen-inch dolls representing an era of America's past paired with

historical narratives and reproductions of accessories and clothing. I quickly understood that American Girl presents complicated messages about history, race, class, gender, and ethnicity. I was interested to see how historians Mary Mahoney and Allison Horrocks presented these topics in *Dolls of Our Lives: Why We Can't Quit American Girl*.

Mahoney and Horrocks began their American Girl dialog in the form of a podcast back in 2019, and the book reads much like a podcast transcript. It crosses between history, travelogue, and memoir to explore the American Girl brand. The book leads with a brief introduction and includes a section titled "Meet the Original-Generation-American Girls," which provides an overview of the six dolls that the authors were aware of during their own childhoods. Chapter 1, aptly called "Meet Us," continues with a lengthy discussion of what led Mahoney and Horrocks to write the book. It is evident that the authors intended to make history accessible and digestible, but much of the information in this chapter adds little value to the narrative, and the tone depreciates their scholarship and the aptitude of their readers. For example, the authors end the chapter with fictitious social media profiles for six of the historical dolls.

In the following chapter, the authors detail what they refer to as a "sentimental (and literal)" (p. 33) trip to Colonial Williamsburg to better understand one of the places that inspired Rowland to create American Girl. The most compelling discussion in chapter 2 relates to how Rowland's work and media appearances positioned her as a curator of good morals through positive influences. In a com-