

Marvin R. Koller and Oscar W. Ritchie. *Sociology of Childhood*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978, 312pp.

The first edition of *Sociology of Childhood*, principally authored by Oscar W. Ritchie, was published in 1964. Marvin R. Koller has revised this earlier publication following Ritchie's death and has dedicated the 1978 edition to him.

Koller provides an exhaustive description of many aspects of sociology which are relevant to childhood and children, as well as some discussion which is not essential, it would seem, to an analysis of the sociology of childhood. While Koller cannot be faulted for his attempt to illustrate the significance of children in various realms of the discipline, what has emerged, unfortunately, is merely an introductory style text in which children are highlighted.

Particularly in the first chapters of introduction and analysis of various social issues that relate to childhood, such as sexuality, religion, and racism, Koller has relegated the narrative to one of ingratiating metaphorical language. Throughout the text, there is a tendency towards general, commonsensical interpretations. Indeed, Koller at one point states: "We are dealing, or course, in generalizations, admitting always to exceptions" (1978:162). It is consistent with Koller's style to focus on the generalizable while ignoring or minimizing the exceptions. Certainly, an approach towards general interpretations cannot always be faulted, especially if such an approach is in some way unique. Koller, however, offers primarily the sort of everyday interpretations of reality that could be made by a beginning student in the social sciences. The most distressing aspect of this approach is that general statements of fact are often made without specific references or suitable analysis. This could prove disconcerting to the well-informed reader.

Although Koller's treatment of the various subareas within the sociology of childhood is often illuminating, on occasion it must be called into question. In one case, for instance, Koller misdefines pedagogy as strictly "the study of children" (1978:13). Moreover, while Koller does include many recent references

throughout the text, noticeable voids occur in the nontreatment of Freud and Piaget, for example, in a discussion of the "Psychological Approach" to the study of childhood. In addition, the classic work on children by Philippe Aries is not even footnoted in a discussion of the "Historical Approach" to the study of childhood. Many of the sources discussed could prove helpful, but only as a supplementary review of the recent literature.

In all fairness, though he may have overextended himself, Koller must be commended for his attempt at illustrating the often forgotten importance of children in society. Certain subjects are quite effectively surveyed and provide a straightforward approach. Koller's treatment, for instance, of the politicalization of children is enlightening in its analysis of the political socialization process and in a discussion of the pros and cons of children's rights. In his discussion of the the social psychology of childhood, as well, Koller reviews the various themes of social psychology and their applicability to children quite adequately. These topics, which are often overlooked in the sociology of childhood, are dealt with in a succinct fashion that is sorely missed in other areas of Koller's discussion.

This book would be a useful, though not exclusive, source book for an undergraduate course on the sociology of childhood. Many divisions of sociology—religion, minority groups, education, family, social psychology, and deviance—are covered briefly, primarily as they relate to childhood. A glossary, as well as a summary chapter and summations following each chapter, is included and could be useful to the introductory student. Perhaps, however, this book could best be utilized in a course which emphasizes critical thinking and evaluation. For Koller's *Sociology of Childhood* would provide a worthwhile target for the scholarly marksperson.

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Mary Knapp, and Herbert Knapp. *One Potato, Two Potato: The Folklore of American Children*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976.

*One Potato, Two Potato* is a lengthy, often-entertaining volume that is surprisingly short on interpretation and analysis. Unfortunately, the purpose of the book is not entertainment. The authors make their objectives clear, stating "Our purpose is to show how children use their traditional lore to cope with the stresses of their lives and to learn what it means to be a member of a human society" (p. 13). The data base is extensive, using questionnaires, essays, personal interviews and observations of more than 800 children. The subjects' ages ranged from grade-school children through college freshman, located in forty-three states, the Virgin Islands, the Canal Zone, American Military bases abroad, India, England, Germany, Taiwan, and Iran. Bibliographies follow each chapter and are comprehensive.

The material is organized into six chapters beginning with some historical background and methods of transmission, moving through games and chants the authors feel are used to establish rules and regulations, those used for release, for prestige or power, as coping mechanisms for day-to-day situations, and those used as coping mechanisms for the unknown. The final chapter briefly attempts to demonstrate how the folklore of childhood is used and retained by adults, but the point is weakly made and not well illustrated.

Lack of illustration is not, however, a fault of the first five chapters. Just the opposite is true of these chapters. The body of the book becomes almost strictly an anthology, with page upon page of jeers, jokes, chants, loosely and tightly organized games, parodies, and performances. At times such repetition becomes simply boring, as when examples are given of the same general chant from several areas of the United States, the Canal Zone and even other countries. At times they are hilarious and well-documented. A short section on "fartlore" is included (p. 211-216), and the authors do no editing for the sake of delicacy in quoting such examples as: