



American Childhood: Risks and Realities

Dona Schneider Ph.D. M.P.H.

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What is happening to American youth today? There is a mountain of statistics gathered about our children, but it is often hard to know what the numbers mean. Dona Schneider argues that "sound- bite statistics" on teenage pregnancy or child abuse can mislead us and create bad public policy. But a closer look at those same statistics can give us a window on tomorrow's public health and social problems.

To show how the statistics can both disguise and highlight problems, Schneider alternates a discussion of the numbers with vivid encounters with individual children and adults: the middle-class black high school student's offhand explanation about how to get a gun; a vital statistics bureau worker's astonishment at his own classification as Hispanic; a young woman's pleasure in holding down a job after teachers dismissed her as learning disabled; and a latchkey child's nightmare of coming home from school to an empty house when she was sick.

This book guides us through the morass of numbers bandied about to describe the state of America's children—what the numbers tell us and what they don't—and it offers a call for action. Comprehensive in its treatment of all groups of children and accessible in style, this book is essential for anyone concerned about children in American society.

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