



Protecting Home

Sherri Grasmuck

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What can neighborhood baseball tell us about class and gender cultures, urban change, and the ways that communities value public space? Through a close exploration of a boys' baseball league in a gentrifying neighborhood of Philadelphia, sociologist Sherri Grasmuck reveals the accommodations and tensions that characterize multicultural encounters in contemporary American public life. Based on years of ethnographic observation and interviews with children, parents, and coaches, *Protecting Home* offers an analysis of the factors that account for racial accommodation in a space that was previously known for racial conflict and exclusion. Grasmuck argues that the institutional arrangements and social characteristics of children's baseball create a cooperative environment for the negotiation of social, cultural, and class differences.

Chapters explore coaching styles, parental involvement, institutional politics, parent-child relations, and children's experiences. Grasmuck identifies differences in the ways that the mostly white, working-class "old-timers" and the racially diverse, professional newcomers relate to the neighborhood. These distinctions reflect a competing sense of cultural values related to individual responsibility toward public space, group solidarity, appropriate masculine identities, and how best to promote children's interests—a contrast between "hierarchical communalism" and "child-centered individualism."

Through an innovative combination of narrative approaches, this book succeeds both in capturing the immediacy of boys' interaction at the playing field and in contributing to sophisticated theoretical debates in urban studies, the sociology of childhood, and masculinity studies.

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