



Recess Battles: Playing, Fighting, and Storytelling

Brian Sutton-Smith, Anna R. Beresin

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As children wrestle with culture through their games, recess itself has become a battleground for the control of children's time. Based on dozens of interviews and the observation of over a thousand children in a racially integrated, working-class public school, *Recess Battles* is a moving reflection of urban childhood at the turn of the millennium. The book debunks myths about recess violence and challenges the notion that schoolyard play is a waste of time. The author videotaped and recorded children of the Mill School in Philadelphia from 1991 to 2004 and asked them to offer comments as they watched themselves at play. These sessions in *Recess Battles* raise questions about adult power and the changing frames of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. The grown-ups' clear misunderstanding of the complexity of children's play is contrasted with the richness of the children's folk traditions.

Recess Battles is an ethnographic study of lighthearted games, a celebratory presentation of children's folklore and its conflicts, and a philosophical text concerning the ironies of everyday childhood. Rooted in video micro-ethnography and the traditions of theorists such as Bourdieu, Willis, and Bateson, *Recess Battles* is written for a lay audience with extensive academic footnotes. International scholar Dr. Brian Sutton-Smith contributes a foreword, and the children themselves illustrate the text with black and white paintings.

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