

Parsons, K, J. (2020) book review of Ergler et al (2017) Children's health and wellbeing in urban environments, *Children's Geographies*, 18:6, 744-745

If you want a book to take you on a journey around the world which provides a range of experiences of the different lived realities of children in today's urban environments, then this is the book for you. The editors have beautifully assembled a series of papers which offer the reader a window into primary school aged children's worlds. Telling a story of 'subtle yet potent influences upon young lives' (p.7), the editors acknowledge that this book is not just for Health Geographers but has a scope that spans multiple subjects and '... acknowledge the need for interdisciplinary perspectives to help create a better world with health and wellbeing outcomes for children and future generations' (quote from preface). As someone who personally and professionally straddles various disciplines of children's geographies, education, children's social care and children's health, I view this interdisciplinary breadth as a key strength of the book, and because it engages so well, I believe anyone could pick it up and feel at ease with the content and the way in which it is assembled.

Children's Health and Wellbeing in Urban Environments is part of the *Geographies of Health Series*. The research presented within the book uses child-centred methods throughout and has ensured that the children involved have been able to voice their own experiences, highlighting '... the diversities of childhoods within and across different socio-cultural contexts' (p.3). The book neatly brings together a set of sixteen substantive chapters that explore the influences, interactions and the relationships between health, wellbeing and place on twenty-first century children in today's rapidly changing societies. The book has been broken into four thematic sections: i) *Neighbourhood Environments*; ii) *Home and Away*; iii) *Gardens, Greens and Nature*; and iv) *Viewing Wellbeing*. These sections provide a coherent structure for an internationally diverse set of interdisciplinary perspectives on children's health and wellbeing in relation to everyday geographies. You could choose to read these sections in any order; however I think the way it has been set out allows you to not only read the research but to also embark on a thematic and cultural journey that progressively expands your thoughts, knowledge and horizons sequentially through the text.

Chapters in the first section on *Neighbourhood Environments* consider how geographical experiences, across physical, economic and societal gradients influence feelings of belonging and relationships between children, their development and the built environment. The second section, *Home and Away* presents a set of chapters that explore the meaning and importance of lived experiences such as the meaning of 'home' for children, and their sense of safety, health and wellbeing. In section three, *Gardens, Greens and Nature*, the focus shifts across three chapters that investigate the attainability and accessibility of green spaces, and how these spaces can aid healthy living, educational outcomes and enhanced wellbeing. The final section, *Viewing Wellbeing*, expands and explores children's wellbeing through the diverse and intersecting lenses of health promotion, indigenous populations and political ecology during a time of significant environmental and societal change.

Alongside the chapters, the editor's introduction provides a thoughtful critique of the child's place in Health Geography, and together with a conclusion chapter that summarises outcomes, they synthesise views expressed within and across the chapters and provide a focus on addressing issues of children's health and wellbeing into the future. The editor's synthesis suggests a need to rethink the range of analytical and critical processes at play in shaping our children's shared future with some thought-provoking conclusions.

So how could this book be improved? I am not sure it could. It has provided the perfect snapshot of the many issues our children are facing today and the world around them, whether that be in chapter 4: '*Changing Geographies of Children's Air Pollution Exposure*', which explores the direct cost of 'one of the most significant public health challenges of the twenty-first century' (p.59) through understanding how children negotiate their movement and exposure through polluted environments. Concluding that more needs to be done to evaluate '... children's understanding, awareness and response to air pollution'; through to the devastating contents explored in chapter 10: '*Cycles of Violence, Girlhood and Motherhood: Family Formation in Guyana's Shantytowns*' which provides a thought-provoking analysis of some critically important issues that question the repetitive relationship cycles that generations of mothers and their daughters face. Both chapter 15: '*Identity, Place, and the (Cultural) Wellbeing of Indigenous Children*', and chapter 16: '*Ecological Wellbeing, Childhood and Environmental Change*' explore intersections of culture and environment across childhood with the lens of the climate emergency close throughout. You only have to glance at current affairs coverage to see the relevance of these chapters and their lived reality, with the uprising of the youths #FridaysForFuture movement and the fight for voice and protection of Indigenous activists such as Autumn Peltier, who fights for water rights and the access to clean water in Canada. The book constantly brings home the importance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, educating and reminding oneself on why they are so important. This is a book that can easily be read from undergraduate to the most senior academic or professional, with all equally being educated with an all rounded and balanced international perspective on Children's Health Geographies. A book that will have a prominent position on my shelf, and re-read, for years to come.

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