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Ready Or Not: What Happens When We Treat Children As Small Adults

Kay Hymowitz

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Asking how we can raise morally responsible children while nurturing their individuality, Hymowitz critiques the radical individualism that seems to have subsumed concern for the common good, the narrow vocationalism of much education, a vulgar and sensationalized media and the insidious ways in which such natural childhood activities as play and exploration have been channeled toward enhanced cognition and academic achievement. The author, a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, advocates somewhat nostalgically for a return to the republican childhood of the 19th centuryA"a profound moral achievement"Athat she believes effectively socialized the young into life as active democratic citizens. In a clear and accessible style, Hymowitz draws on the work of educational and psychological theorists, as well as popular culture, to develop her arguments. Unfortunately, the book suffers from a number of conceptual weaknesses, including the notion of "anticulturalism" (the belief that today's youth are being raised outside the influence of culture) and that we can overcome anomie and nihilism by constructing and transmitting a "common culture" (whose culture this would be remains largely unaddressed). Those readers who believe that contemporary social problems can be solved with a renewed emphasis on old-fashioned family values, back-to-basics schooling and rejuvenated adult authority will find much in this book resonant. Those who question the viability of returning to a romanticized past will find the complex issues addressed here oversimplified and framed in rather tired ideological terms. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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