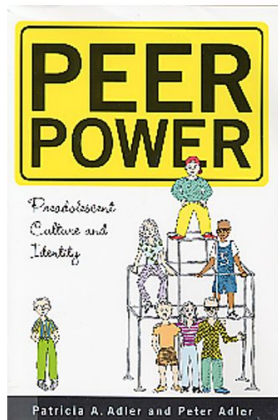


Peer Power

Preadolescent Culture and Identity

by Peter Adler and Patricia Adler



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DESCRIPTION

Peer Power seeks to explode existing myths about children's friendships, power and popularity, and the gender chasm between elementary school boys and girls. Based on eight years of intensive insider participant observation in their own children's community, Peter and Patti Adler discuss the vital components of the lives of preadolescents, popularity, friendships, cliques, social status, social isolation, loyalty, bullying, boy-girl relationships, and afterschool activities. They describe how friendships shift and change, how people are drawn into groups and excluded from them, how clique leaders maintain their power and popularity, and how individuals' social experiences and feelings about themselves differ from the top of the pecking order to the bottom. In so doing, the Adlers focus their attention on the peer culture of the children themselves and the way this culture extracts and modifies elements from adult culture. Children's peer culture, as it is nourished in those spaces where grown ups cannot penetrate, stands between individual children and the larger adult society. As such, it is a mediator and shaper, influencing the way children collectively interpret their surroundings and deal with the common problems they face.

The Adlers explore some of the patterns that develop in this social space, noting both the differences in boys' and girls' gendered cultures and the overlap in many social dynamics, afterschool activities, role behaviour, romantic inclinations and social stratification. For example, children's participation in adult-organized afterschool activities - a now-prominent feature of many American children's social experience - has profound implications for their socialization and development, moving them away from the negotiated, spontaneous character of play into the formal systems of adult norms and values at ever-younger ages. When they retreat from adults, however, they still display distinctive peer group dynamics, forging strong ingroup/outgroup differentiation, loyalty and identification. Peer culture thus contains informal social mechanisms through which children create their social order, determine their place and identity, and develop positive and negative feelings about themselves. Studying children's peer culture is thus valuable as it reveals not only how this subculture parallels the adult world but also how it differs from it.

AUTHOR/EDITOR BIOGRAPHY

Peter Adler, Professor Emeritus, received his PhD in Sociology from the University of California, San Diego, in 1980. He is the author, along with his wife, Patti, of over 100 scholarly articles and chapters, as well as several books, including *Momentum*, *Membership Roles in Field Research*, *Backboards & Blackboards*, *Peer Power*, and *Paradise Laborers and The Deviance Society* (in Italian). His most recent book, *The Tender Cut*, was released in 2011 by NYU Press, which was awarded Honorable Mention for the Cooley Award from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction (SSSI) for outstanding book of the year (2012), as well as from the Midwest Sociological Society (MSS; 2013). He is also the co-editor of *Constructions of Deviance* (7th edition, 2011), *Sociological Odyssey* (4th edition, 2013), *Drugs and the American Dream* (1st edition, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior* (V. 1), and *The Social Dynamics of Financial Markets*. For eight years, he served as editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, and he was the founding editor of the research annual, *Sociological Studies of Child Development*. In 1997-98, he was selected as the Distinguished University Lecturer at the University of Denver, one of the highest honors that the University bestows on its faculty, and in 2005, the University named him the United Methodist Church Scholar/Teacher of the Year. Also in 2005, he was given the Excellence in Mentoring Award by the SSSI. In 2006-2007, Professor Adler was Co-President of the Midwest Sociological Society (MSS). In 2010, the SSSI honored him, along with Patti, with the George Herbert Mead Award for Lifetime Achievement. His students have won such prestigious awards as the Blumer Award from SSSI, and the outstanding undergraduate papers from the Midwest Sociological Society, Pacific Sociological Society, and Alpha Kappa Delta. In 2011-12, he was included in *Who's Who in America*. His areas of specialization include qualitative methods, social psychology, sociology of work, sport, and leisure, deviant behavior, and sociology of children. He has taught courses in race and ethnicity, sociology of sport, deviant behavior, sociology of drugs, ethnographic methods, symbolic interactionism, as well as introduction to sociology.

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