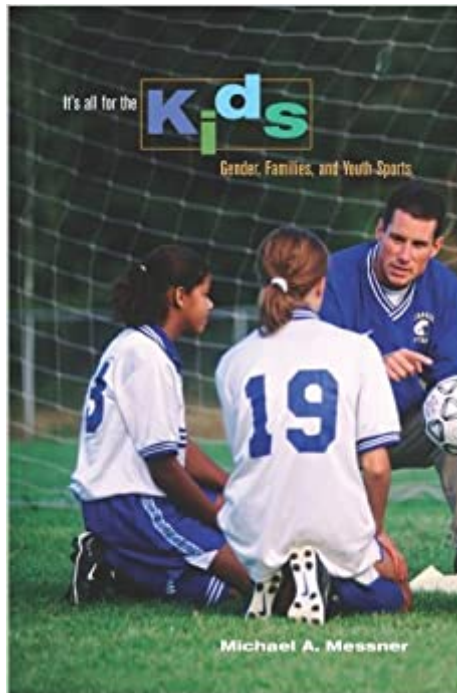




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It's All For The Kids: Gender, Families, And Youth Sports



Synopsis

Today, in a world quite different from the one that existed just thirty years ago, both girls and boys play soccer, baseball, softball, and other youth sports. Yet has the dramatic surge in participation by girls contributed to greater gender equality? In this engaging study, leading sociologist Michael A. Messner probes the richly complex gender dynamics of youth sports. Weaving together vivid first-person interviews with his own experiences as a volunteer for his sons' teams, Messner finds that despite the movement of girls into sports, gender boundaries and hierarchies still dominate, especially among the adults who run youth sports. His book widens into a provocative exploration of why youth sports matter—how they play a profound role in shaping gender, class, family, and community.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (March 18, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520257103

ISBN-13: 978-0520257108

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #917,656 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Coaching > Children's Sports #393 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Sociology of Sports #2578 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Gender Studies > General

Customer Reviews

â€œAmazing. . . . A heartfelt, perceptive, and thoroughly enjoyable study.â€• (Choice

2010-07-08)â€œThis book is a treat.â€• (Howard P. Chudacoff American Studies Journal

2011-07-18)â€œMessnerâ€™s engaging writing style draws the reader into the fine details of what he observes.â€• (Men & Masculinities 2012-07-25)

"As an eminent sociologist of gender and sports, the son of a high school coach, and a parent, Michael Messner is uniquely positioned to illuminate the persistent and changing gender dynamics of parent-organized youth sports. The result, as predicted, is a perceptive, vividly detailed, and

highly readable book."#151;Barrie Thorne, author of *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*"Michael Messner has brilliantly assembled many important insights into the current culture of adult-organized youth sports. If every town or municipality governing the use of publicly owned facilities, which are dedicated to ensuring cohesive communities and are truly committed to equality and diversity, made this book mandatory reading, the ethical climate in youth sports will inevitably change for the better. No longer will permits be handed out to youth sports organizations that are, intentionally or unintentionally, excluding participation by adults at the coaching and administration levels by gender difference, racial inequality, and class distinction. Only then will we see safer, saner, less stressful, and more inclusive youth sports programs for our children."#151;Brooke de Lench, author of *Home Team Advantage: The Critical Role Of Mothers In Youth Sports* and founder of *MomsTeam.com: The Trusted Source For Youth Sports Parents*#147;Well into the post-Title IX era, Michael Messner shows how our children's playing fields continue to perpetuate pre-Title IX gender norms and 1950s family forms. If you've spent any time on the sidelines#151;or even if you haven't#151;you'll laugh with rueful recognition at Messner's lively depiction of suburban sporting life and learn from his insightful analysis. Messner (a sociologist and multi-sport dad) uses his unique perspective to lay bare and demystify the highly gendered assumptions and practices that still undergird and are at the heart of youth sports. With a wry and knowing eye, he documents how a new 'soft essentialism' undermines the egalitarian ethos of competitive youth soccer and baseball, with implications little different from the outright separate spheres thinking of old. *It's All For the Kids* gives readers a front row seat on the real lives of soccer (and Little League) moms#151;and dads#151;and is sure to be much discussed, reminding us of the profound influence of sports in contemporary culture.â •#151;Pamela Stone, Hunter College and Graduate Center, City University of New York#147;Combining years of observation and personal experience with insight and a much-needed critical analysis, sport scholar Michael Messner exposes the numerous ways in which traditional hierarchies and inequalities are (re)produced in one of the most important institutions in this culture#151;youth sports. Messner's trenchant critique provides ample evidence that in the post Title IX era of 'soft essentialism', youth sports has become a 'comfort zone' where class distinctions, and racial and gender ideologies flourish. Much work needs to be done to create an environment that is truly 'all for the kids.'â •#151;Mary Jo Kane, Director, and Nicole M. LaVoi, PhD, Associate Director, Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, University of Minnesota

Item arrived on time and as described.

Michael Messner's newest book, "It's All For the Kids" furthers his long record of scholarly excellence coupled with bold insightfulness. He is one of those scholars that make you say after you read his work, "Of course! Why didn't I think of that?" He makes difficult truths seem so obvious. In this book, Messner discusses the politics of youth sports from the standpoint of parental involvement. In spite of gains made for girls' and women's athletic participation since the early 1970's, Messner finds that not much has changed in terms of gender segregation of young athletes and the adults who sponsor and facilitate their participation. Women rarely coach, and so both boys and girls expect that men are still the voice of athletic authority and role models, while women are the "team moms" -- snack providers and team administrators. Messner's point is that this parental segregation with its message about rigid constraints about gender roles in society overshadows the advances that have been made to include girls in sports. He also addresses the impact of economic and social segregation on our kids' athletic careers. This book is a great read for anybody who cares about gender equality and the politics of youth sports. If you are a parent of a young athlete, it shouldn't be missed.

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