

A Roundtable on Victoria M. Grieve, *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*

Thomas C. Field, Jr., Julia L. Mickenberg, Lori Clune, Mary C. Brennan, Donna Alvah,
and Victoria M. Grieve

Roundtable Introduction for Victoria M. Grieve, *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*

Thomas C. Field, Jr.

More than a story of American child (cultural) soldiers during the 1950s, Victoria Grieve's *Little Cold Warriors* explores a wide chronology of U.S. (and some Soviet) propaganda, education programs, and advertising, which amounted to a global ideological struggle over the meaning of modern childhood and youth. This disconnect between the book's empirical research and narrative (on the one hand) and its title and framing (on the other) has resulted in a vibrant roundtable, one in which the monograph's biggest fans sometimes come across as detractors. One reviewer, Donna Alvah, even worries that Grieve's restrictive framing could damage the cause of Childhood Studies, leading traditional (diplomatic?) historians, already "suspicious of the contention that... actual children played a part in foreign relations," to simply "judge the book by its title and dismiss it as too cute by half." I agree with Alvah that this reaction "would be mistaken." In Grieve's treatment of the elusive concept of agency, for example, readers of *Passport* might sense echoes of the state-nonstate tensions identified by the New Diplomatic Historians or by advocates of the transnational turn.¹

The roundtable kicks off with Julia Mickenberg's largely positive review, which is tempered only by her concern that the Press waged a lackluster copyediting effort and her sense that Grieve set up a few historiographical strawmen. Pinpointing Grieve's contribution as her emphasis on "diplomacy programs and work targeting children abroad," Mickenberg evaluates the book's methodological approach as having a "great deal of merit." To be sure, Mickenberg concedes that it deals with how "school-age children were used by adults" rather than "how young people exercised agency." Yet she hails Grieve's "fascinating evidence," which makes for an "exciting" narrative. Mickenberg was particularly impressed with the chapter on adults' fascination with (and political mobilization of) supposedly innocent, non-political child art. She also praises the chapter on more politicized efforts of the United States Information Agency (USIA) to secretly subsidize the translation of American literature (including children's books) abroad.

Like Mickenberg, Lori Clune laments the book's title. In the most positive review of the four, she describes Grieve's book as covering not just "American Childhood in the 1950s," but the U.S. government's wider "democratic

approach" to diplomacy and propaganda in the early Cold War. She praises Chapter 1's discussion of the federal government's employment of Lone Ranger comics to sell savings bonds, and Chapter 4's "fascinating" description of the corporate-friendly Ad Council's evolution from wartime propagandists to postwar advocates of *laissez-faire* free markets at home and abroad. Clune was particularly impressed by Grieve's final chapter, which would "work quite well as an assigned reading for any high school or college history class," as it "does a great job of putting duck-and-cover drills into a broader civil defense context."

Wedged between Clune's enthusiasm and Alvah's engaging finale, Mary Brennan's review is curt, though not exactly hostile. Declining to speculate on alternative framings or titles, Brennan accepts that book is conceived as an exploration of the essentially "typical" U.S. 1950s childhood, as white, middle-class Cold Warriors. In her author's response, Grieve expresses appreciation for Brennan's candor and her willingness to evaluate the book as it is, rather than dream of what it might have been. Most interesting about Brennan's review is her contention that Grieve's book contains a "glaring omission," the "voices of children" themselves.

Grieve responds graciously to Brennan's critique, but one finds a longer rejoinder to the "childhood agency" question in Donna Alvah's closing review. Like Mickenberg and Clune, Alvah dislikes the titular framing of *Little Cold Warriors*, offering instead the alternative of *Children, Youth, and Images of Children in Cold War Foreign Relations in the Long 1950s*. In the roundtable's most thought-provoking review, Alvah notes that this book is about representations (or "images") of children, rather than about children themselves. Overall, Alvah finds a great deal to like about Grieve's "unique and compelling" inclusion of such a diverse range of histories, which "bring together the study of representations of children" in everything from art exchanges and literature-in-translation, to corporate advertising and civil defense campaigns.

In what may be the highlight of the roundtable, Alvah then enters into a sustained theoretical engagement with Grieve's concept of agency. Acknowledging the book's central paradox, identified by Brennan as the dearth of child voices in a monograph ostensibly about "American Childhood in the 1950s," Alvah strikes a forgiving tone. On the one hand, as Alvah notes, Grieve made a "valiant effort" to explore children's perspectives through their art and limited use of quotations and pen pal letters. On the other hand, Alvah identifies a poignant theoretical passage in the book's introduction, in which Grieve discusses the paradoxes and dilemmas of analyzing agency in the field

of Childhood Studies. The thorny concept of agency has been a trendy one across the history profession, and it is possible that foreign relations historians will take special pleasure in Alvah's quip that sometimes "it is hard to say where coercion ends and agency begins." By the end of the roundtable, it should be clear that international and diplomatic historians will find in this book a fascinating story, not of children themselves but of a broader set of narratives regarding early Cold War propaganda and education programs, and what they meant for the global struggle over the meaning of youth.

Note:

1. Giles Scott-Smith, "Introduction: Private Diplomacy, Making the Citizen Visible," *New Global Studies* 8 (2014); Brad Simpson, "Bringing the Non-State Back In," in Frank Costigliola and Michael Hogan, eds., *America and the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941* (Cambridge, UK, 2013), 260-83. Once a redoubt of human rights in the 1970s, transnational history has now colonized the 1950s and 60s, particularly in the fields of propaganda and covert operations. See Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); and Thomas C. Field Jr., "Transnationalism Meets Empire: The AFL-CIO, Development, and the Private Origins of Kennedy's Latin American Labor Program," *Diplomatic History* 42:2 (April 2018), 305-34.

Review of Victoria M. Grieve, *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*

Julia L. Mickenberg

In *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*, Victoria Grieve puts diplomatic history into conversation with the history of childhood. She does this by drawing upon largely untapped archival evidence to build upon existing scholarship on public diplomacy and the "cultural Cold War" as well as work in childhood history.¹ Grieve makes the claim that her work will get beyond stereotypical understandings of Cold War childhood, and she mentions *Duck and Cover*, *Leave It to Beaver*, Dr. Spock, and the baby boom. In many ways, she accomplishes her objectives, but she limits her rhetorical effectiveness by claiming that scholars still tend to see Cold War childhood in limited terms.

Recent scholarship—much of which Grieve cites—has already done much to challenge stereotypical or one-dimensional images of postwar childhood. Indeed, early on in my reading of Grieve's book I found myself wishing she had set forth the claims for her project's significance in more precise terms. Doing so would have enabled her to advance a stronger case for the original contributions she does make.

In her introduction Grieve notes that "scholars have made the case for understanding the Cold War beyond traditional state politics and through cultural politics, but they have largely ignored the Cold War battle for the world's youth" (6). Work by Margaret Peacock, Andrew Hartman, and other scholars upon which Grieve herself draws undercuts this claim; she even notes, later in the book, that "recent scholarship on postwar childhood makes the case that children were vital participants in Cold War politics on both sides of the Iron Curtain" (57). That said, Grieve's engagement specifically with diplomacy programs and work targeting children abroad seems to me to be quite original and marks the book's important contribution to scholarship.

Following a trend among historians of childhood, Grieve makes an effort to document not only ideas about and images of children but also children's actual experiences as historical actors. Her efforts on this front occasionally

yield exciting results, but, not surprisingly, the book reveals more about the ways in which school-age children were used by adults as tools in Cold War ideological battles than about how young people exercised agency or what they thought about their experiences. However, Grieve does illustrate ways in which children were involved in what she describes, borrowing a term from Sarah Glassford, as "voluntold" efforts that involve subtle or not-so-subtle coercion to encourage children's involvement in various programs. Still, as Grieve emphasizes, children may have understood and experienced these efforts in ways that were different from what adult organizers intended. It is difficult to look at children's political activity in terms of exercising agency when they were so often acting at the behest of, or with encouragement from, adults.

The book is divided into five chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter 1 is called "Cold War Comics: Educating American Children for a New Global Role," but its focus is on various permutations of the Lone Ranger in American popular culture, including comics, but also radio, television, board games, and most revealingly, the Treasury Department's Savings Stamps and Savings Bonds program, whose records in the National Archives Grieve mined. Grieve offers some wonderfully granular evidence about children's involvement in this program (for which the Lone Ranger was a spokesman), mentioning, for instance, the "sixth graders at the Fulton and Marshall Schools in Dubuque, Iowa [who] took turns serving as record-keepers and cashiers for younger students who purchased Saving Stamps" (47).

I found Chapter 2, focusing on children's art exchanges, and Chapter 3, on the Franklin Books program, to be the most interesting sections of the book. In Chapter 2, Grieve concentrates on a program created by a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (and run for years out of her living room) called Art for World Friendship (AWF). Here Grieve highlights a fascinating series of paradoxes: that "the assumed innocence of children's art became a vital tool in negotiating questions of American "national identity" and America's "fight for peace during the 1950s and 1960s" (55) and that a program coming from a group being targeted by the FBI (the WILPF) would be a key tool in international

diplomacy.

Grieve historicizes her discussion well and includes examples of art works by children from both the United States and the Soviet Union that illustrate the ways in which art submitted by children from both countries tended to eschew negative representations of life in their home countries. It is not clear whether program organizers or children themselves curated or censored images to emphasize certain aspects of each society, though the Soviet images Grieve includes in the book do suggest that there was an effort on the Soviet end to allow only the most talented child artists to share work with their American counterparts.

Grieve does present a couple of images that show or allude to less savory images of life in the United States. She describes one picture that shows a Detroit housing project with broken windows, graffiti, and overflowing trash, and she reproduces a picture of an African-American boy and a white boy shaking hands, an image that is striking because it was so unusual and because it affirmed official U.S. discourse *vis à vis* race). She also documents young people's responses to the children's art that they viewed in public exhibitions.

I was especially interested in Grieve's discussion of the Franklin Books program, which set up a structure for enabling local groups in foreign countries (especially in the

Middle East) to choose books by American authors (including children's books) for translation, with unacknowledged support from the United States Information Agency (USIA). Grieve demonstrates the ways in which officials at Franklin and in the USIA sparred over whether the program should be understood as means of "strengthening international understanding and expanding the American overseas market"—the view taken by Franklin officials—or "as a weapon to fight the Soviet propaganda machine" (92)—the USIA preference. She frames Franklin's work in relation to the USIA's own translation program and its libraries abroad.

On the publishing front, Grieve mentions a number of the titles that Franklin shepherded through publication and analyzes one title, *Boys Who Became Famous*, by Sarah K. Bolton, to suggest the quite different ways in which children might interpret books published through the program. But she seems to accept a notion, which was widely held in the postwar period, that science books, the category of children's books most in demand from Franklin, were, by definition, apolitical. Grieve says such books could serve the USIA by making young people in foreign countries associate the United States with progress and technological advancement.

However, it is probably worth noting that science was also the most popular subject among left-wing writers of children's books in the United States. They occupied a significant share of the market when it came to children's books on scientific subjects, because the assumption that science was "objective" made it less likely that such books would arouse suspicion. Indeed, several of the authors and texts that Grieve cites as having been translated through the Franklin Books program were also recommended by the Marxist magazine *New Masses* for the ways they could teach children critical thinking and thus empower them to challenge capitalist logic.²

Chapter 4, "Cold War Advertising," and Chapter 5, "The Cold War in the Schools," suggest the organizational challenges of Grieve's effort, in that both chapters encompass but move well beyond their ostensible focus and might have been better served by more capacious titles (the former might have been something about "youth and propaganda" and the latter might have used the broader category of "education" rather than schools). The great variety of efforts that go well beyond the labels of "advertising" or "schooling" demonstrates the many ways in which American children were employed in official and unofficial propaganda, selling not just products but also the American Way of Life to Americans and to young people throughout the world.

Chapter 5 begins to hint at Grieve's conclusion. She notes that "the inquiry-based methods of the new social studies encouraged some students to question the one-sidedness of AVC [Americanism vs. Communism] classes and to demand a more rigorous and honest approach to studying their own nation's politics, as well as those of the Soviet Union" (171). She also mentions examples of students (like a young Joan Baez) who refused to participate in "duck and cover" drills. Still, the majority of her examples discuss ways in which young people took part in projects—from Sister Cities to the People to People program (the focus of Chapter 5)—that served to uphold the Cold War status quo.

In her conclusion, Grieve circles back to a claim she made on the book's first page: that "American childhood in the 1950s is best understood as an era of political mobilization" (1) and that, in this sense, the 1950s do not look so different from the 1960s. Young people were active all along, but the political focus changed, she insists. Grieve notes early on in her book that her focus on "typical"

children precludes discussion of the Communist left, but she opens her conclusion with a protest by Women Strike for Peace (WSP), an organization with strong influence from the left, and one that echoed arguments made in more openly leftist publications like Albert Kahn's *Game of Death: The Effects of the Cold War Upon Our Children* (1953). Of WSP's arguments about ending nuclear testing because of its dangers to children, for instance, she says, "children were no longer the reason to *fight* the Cold War; children were the reason to *end* the Cold War" (196). The influence of WSP activism in the early 1960s was indeed evidence of changing times, but their rhetoric was not new.

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combined Cold War triumphalism with evidence of young people's disappointment about the older generation's hypocrisy. A popular rhetoric of commitment to public good rang hollow, given the primacy of profit above all else; rhetoric of democracy likewise rang hollow in the face of racial discrimination and segregation. Indeed, the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War is an issue that

Grieve touches upon, but not in a sustained way, and there is less attention to race throughout the book than there might be. Gender issues and distinctions likewise receive little attention.

In addition to fleshing out some of her arguments more effectively, Grieve could have profited from several works that came to mind while I was reading. Her discussion of the Lone Ranger as frontier hero would have benefited from engagement with the paradigm and evidence that Tom Engelhardt sets forth in *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (1995, 2007), a book that also reads children's culture, especially westerns, in relation to postwar politics and battles against "reds" of various kinds. Grieve's discussion of aid programs like CARE (in chapter 4) made me wish she had engaged with the idea of Cold War "integrationism" as the counterpoint to the strategy of "containment," a paradigm Christina Klein sets forth in *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (2003). The latter book includes a discussion of the ways in which foreign adoption and aid programs like CARE served this goal. Grieve's book also has more copyediting errors than one would like to see in a book by a first-rate press.

Obviously, any ambitious work will have limitations, and I should emphasize that there is a great deal of merit in Grieve's *Little Cold Warriors*, most of all in the fascinating evidence she unearthed from archives and newspapers. Grieve's work demonstrates an effort to uncover children as historical actors on the world stage and also urges caution about presuming to understand children's motivations or the meanings they drew from various texts. Her book brings important new insights to both diplomatic history and the history of children and youth.

Notes:

1. On the cultural Cold War and public diplomacy, Grieve cites Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York, 2001); Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago, 1985); David Cate, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York and Oxford, UK, 2005); Michael L. Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit: American Art and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); and Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War* (New York, 1999), among others. For schol-

arship on postwar children and childhood, Grieve draws upon Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2014). She also cites Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Cold War Kids: Politics and Childhood in America, 1945–1960* (Lawrence, KS, 2014) and Andrew Hartman, *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School* (New York, 2008), among other sources.

2. For further discussion see Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (New York and Oxford UK, 2006). Chap. 6 is devoted to books about science.

Review of Victoria M. Grieve, *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*

Lori Clune

Entertainer W. C. Fields famously warned actors never to work with animals or children. Luckily, scholars have ignored his advice – or at least the second category in it – and have boldly ventured to give voice and agency to children. Their works expand and enrich traditional historical narratives, to the considerable benefit of the profession.

Victoria M. Grieve makes her contribution to this literature with *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*. She notes that the U.S. government, particularly under the Eisenhower administration, took what she describes as a “democratic approach to diplomacy” and used all Americans as cultural diplomats in the vital propaganda component of the Cold War (14). However, like other historians who have moved over the past two decades to explore the role of artists, activists, and intellectuals in various propaganda efforts, she goes beyond the study of government officials to shine a spotlight on the actions of young Americans. We cannot understand the Cold War solely “through the actions of politicians, diplomats, and generals,” she writes, but must include “ordinary Americans, including children” (5).

In Grieve’s telling, American children “functioned as ambassadors, cultural diplomats, and representatives of the United States.” They were still innocent enough that observers could differentiate them from children in the Soviet Union, who were often characterized by Americans as subjects of state-sponsored “brainwashing and ideological indoctrination” (2, 3). However, Grieve steps away from nostalgic and de-politicized visions of the lives of children during the 1950s and examines multiple efforts to politically mobilize American youth. She moves well beyond Bert the Turtle, the animated character that taught children to “Duck and Cover” in the filmstrip of that name, to show the large number of school-age baby boomers who were “mobilized and politicized by the U.S. government, private corporations, and individual adults to fight the Cold War at home and abroad” (2).

Thanks to Grieve’s first chapter, which examines Cold War comics, readers may never look at Lone Ranger comics – and Westerns in American film and television more broadly – in the same way. The author builds on the work of others to show how the character of the Lone Ranger was fighting for “law and order on the western frontier,” taming the West through “benevolent supremacy” to show how the United States could tame the world and make it “safe for democracy” (21). Children were encouraged to see

the Lone Ranger as a stand in for the United States, “not conqueror or colonizer” but “civilizer and savior” (21).

When Senator Homer Ferguson, in praising the values of the Lone Ranger in 1953, referred to the “principles of good citizenship, patriotism, fair play,” I could not help but think about the Doolittle Committee report (30). Written in 1954 to convince Eisenhower of all that the CIA was capable of in waging the Cold War, the report argued that the United States was “facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination by whatever means and at whatever cost. There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the U.S. is to survive, long-standing American concepts of ‘fair play’ must be reconsidered.”¹ What would the Lone Ranger and his legions of innocent followers have thought?

In one of the clearest connections between U.S. government officials and cultural products directed at children, Grieve explains how the U.S. Treasury Department used the character of the Lone Ranger to support the Peace Patrol, a U.S. Savings Stamp and Bond program. Between 1958 and 1960, the Lone Ranger urged children to collect coins to donate to the program. The money would help to “build the economic and military strength required to preserve our freedom,” because, simply stated, “peace costs money” (47). According to Grieve, millions of children participated and the program was a huge success. The Peace Patrol even inducted television dog “Lassie” as its “first (and only) canine member,” thus ignoring the other category cited in W. C. Fields’s warning.

As is often the case in a well-structured book, several of the chapters would work well as stand-alone articles. Chapter 2 covers the interesting story of cultural diplomacy and children’s arts programs, while in chapter 4, Grieve examines advertising and its use to depict free market capitalism as superior to Soviet communism. Her discussion of the American Economic System ad campaign is fascinating and is outdone only by the riveting elements of the Cold War in schools in chapter 5: “The Cold War in the Schools: Educating a Generation for World Understanding.”

Grieve does a great job of putting duck-and-cover drills into a broader context of civil defense. Chapter 5 would work quite well as an assigned reading for any high school or college history class. What student could quickly forget Grieve’s terrifying description of the mandatory blood-type tattoo program for Logan, Utah schoolchildren? Dog tags, identification bracelets, and mandatory tattoos? Beyond duck and cover, indeed. And who could help but admire the fascinating story of students and teachers who pushed back against the traditional Americanism-versus-Communism curriculum in the late 1950s and 1960s by seeking out more politically challenging textbooks such as the *Communism in American Life Series*, so “students could make up their own mind” (173)? The impulse behind the anti-war and free speech protests of the 1960s and 1970s can be traced back to these earlier student rumblings.

My main criticism is a general one. I think the title is too narrow for the broader work that Grieve has produced. American childhood is too limiting a description. It cannot accommodate, for example, her exploration of Soviet comics in chapter 1. The subtitle is catchy but confining. Also, the 1950s are only part of her story. The author explores the Kennedy administration, for example, and occasionally (as in chapters 3 and 5) ventures well into the 1960s and early 1970s (see also the Lone Ranger board game and toys discussed in chapter 1).

I was left wanting more from chapter 3 as well. In her

discussion of books, Grieve argues that the U.S. government used “books as weapons” (90), but she largely limits her discussion to children’s books overseas, such as an Arabic translation of *Little Women*. The story of the U.S.-funded Franklin Books was fascinating, but it made me want more on American children and the children’s literature industry in the United States. This would have been a great chapter in which to build on the work of Louis Menand concerning Dr. Seuss and children’s literature as a Cold War industry. In *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*, for example, Seuss uses numerous little cats residing in the big cat’s hat to rid the home of a growing pink stain. They finally succeed with a nuclear explosion and the resulting sterilizing fallout. I read this children’s book to my survey classes every semester to great effect and I was hoping to learn more about such literature. I would also have loved even more visuals, in addition to the well-chosen ones included. I often feel the lack of those in books grappling with cultural history.

I must admit that I am drawn to the study of children. This is in part because my students are often quite fascinated by the study of young historical actors. Whether it is children’s meals during the Great Depression, toys and games during World War II, or 1950s elementary school children ducking and covering and reading *The Cat in the Hat*, students are drawn to the study of children and teenagers since they can readily remember those ages. I have no doubt that this volume will be read and enjoyed in many history classes, particularly those that deal with the Cold War, cultural history, or the history of childhood.

Grieve concludes with the – surely uncontested – observation that the current Trump administration has not made the role of the State Department and cultural diplomacy a priority in fortifying relations with nations around the world. She also wonders if children will have a say in this action, as she argues they have had in the past. Current events would indicate that young Americans may be as politically engaged as ever in our nation’s history.

In early November 2018, for example, when the Supreme Court rejected a Trump administration request to halt a lawsuit involving climate change, they were handing a victory (albeit perhaps only a temporary one) to those who initiated the lawsuit – children. Lawyers for the plaintiffs explained that the more than twenty children and young adults involved are suing the federal government, in a case that originated during the Obama administration, over its inaction on climate change. They are asking the Supreme Court to order the executive branch to craft a plan to phase out fossil fuel emissions, since, they argue, they are already suffering from the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The actions of these young Americans certainly speak to their political interest and activism.

They are not alone. In the aftermath of the murder of seventeen individuals, including fourteen students, at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida – the deadliest high school shooting in U.S. history – survivors became activists. Student survivors, such as high school senior Emma González, have channeled their anger and fear into political action and gun-control advocacy.

It is not difficult to imagine increased activism among young Americans, as issues that affect them personally pull them into political awareness. School shootings, climate change, and voter suppression, like the dangers of nuclear war, will continue to prompt even more politicized and activist children and young Americans. We welcome the histories, sure to come, that will include children as an essential component of the emerging complex narratives of

U.S. history in the third decade of the twenty-first century.

In sum, this is a slender volume that makes a significant, thought-provoking contribution to the fields of propaganda, public diplomacy, culture, childhood, and Cold War history. Grieve’s depictions of the agency and activism among children and young adults during the Cold War are sure to provoke additional penetrating histories, along with many fascinating classroom discussions.

Note:

1. Report on the Covert Activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (Doolittle Committee Report), September 1954, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86B00269R000100040001-5.pdf>.

Review of Victoria M. Grieve, *Little Cold Warriors*

Mary C. Brennan

Victoria M. Grieve’s *Little Cold Warriors*, which focuses on children and childhood, adds to the growing literature on the cultural ramifications of the Cold War mentality in the United States for the American people. Grieve is very clear that she is concentrating almost exclusively on white American children raised in middle-class homes. To her credit, she acknowledges that the perceptions of children of different races and socioeconomic circumstances would change the discussion and require a different argument. And although she does mention Soviet children on occasion, she does so only to further her argument concerning American youth. Children from other nations are mentioned only in passing or in relation to receiving information from or about American children.

Grieve’s main argument is that children became another tool utilized by various American governmental and non-governmental forces to challenge the perceived communist threat posed externally by the Soviet Union and internally by the liberal mindset and agenda. To that end, Grieve provides ample evidence of children serving as “public diplomats” and childhood being utilized as a marketing tool for the “American Way.” Turning children into marketers of the American worldview, Girl Scout and Boy Scout leaders, educators, and government officials encouraged young people to become pen pals with children in an “occupied” or potentially problematic country. American youngsters would tell their foreign correspondents about the wonders of America, thus undermining Soviet propaganda about the materialism and depravity of life in the United States.

A similar goal motivated art teachers and government officials to encourage the exchange of hand-drawn portraits of American home life. Educators and members of the United States Information Agency asked students to draw pictures depicting everyday life as a counter to what they characterized as lies being spread by their communist enemies. Young people also participated in activities such as raising funds (“Trick or Treat for UNICEF!”) and gathering books to send to underprivileged children in foreign lands.

In addition to serving as public diplomats, children as a general group functioned as a vital tool for ratcheting up the concern about the dangers posed by communism. The image of pure American childhood depicted in movies, books, and television shows and promulgated from pulpits and in political ads made a wonderful backdrop for anyone trying to raise the fears of American adults. All propagandists had to do was imply that communism

threatened this idyllic stereotype to intensify already existing anti-communist sentiments. The Ad Council in particular became extremely adept at utilizing the image of the ideal nuclear family (breadwinner father, stay-at-home mother, several children, white, middle class) to promote not just anticommunism but pro-capitalism as well.

Grieve also spends a significant amount of time showing the ways in which various pro-America, pro-capitalist forces subtly (and sometimes overtly) educated American children about the evils of communism and the rewards of capitalism. Using every means at their disposal—comic book characters such as the Lone Ranger, specialized educational programs provided to schools, government projects like the People-to-People program—important adults ensured that children absorbed the correct message about their world.

The greatest challenge Grieve faced in trying to accomplish her goals was one she acknowledges in several places in the book: she can readily demonstrate that children saw, heard, read, and watched a wide variety of anti-communist propaganda, but proving that the children absorbed the intended message is a completely different matter. Were children buying Lone Ranger comics because he was a wholesome American hero or because they liked cowboys? Did they trick-or-treat for UNICEF because they supported its goals or because it was the latest fad?

Although Grieve admits that it is almost impossible to ascertain what the children thought about their situation, she clearly would like to be able to discover what the kids thought about all of this. In fact, the voices of the children are the most glaring omission of the book. The reader longs for the occasional anecdote from young people. Are there no copies of the letters written to pen pals? No diaries? Even memoirs would provide some indication of the voices of the young. This might be asking for a different book. If so, then I apologize. I did want to know, and I think Grieve did as well.

Children, Youth, and Images of Childhood in Cold War Foreign Relations during the Long 1950s

Donna Alvah

Although it is less catchy, this review's title more accurately reflects the content of *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s* than the book's actual title does. Victoria Grieve's thesis is that, contrary to the popular conception of American childhood in the 1950s as a carefree time for the young that was distinct from the difficult, politicized eras of World War II and the 1960s, images of American children and childhood were used extensively in the politics of U.S. Cold War foreign relations, as were actual children and youth.

Businesses, private organizations, and the U.S. government employed several means—art created by children, books, and advertising that depicted idealized American childhoods—both domestically and abroad to show audiences the positive aspects of the American way of life and to persuade them of the need to oppose communism. However, to secure alliances in the international fight against communism, the private distributors of such images tended to focus on portraying Americans as benevolent people who sought “world friendship” and “mutual understanding” with people in other nations. The U.S. agencies involved in propagandizing tended to prefer sending messages to foreigners that focused not on “mutual

understanding” or cultural exchange but on conveying American superiority via a “one-way intellectual street” (92).

Grieve contends that “children of all races, classes, ethnicities, and geographical locations engaged in Cold War culture, civil defense, and internationalist cultural activities.” Her focus is on what she characterizes as “typical” children and childhoods, not the “explicitly political activities of communist or leftist children” (6–7). Many of the “internationalist cultural activities” that she describes resemble those that military officials, parents, and teachers in this same period encouraged children in military families living abroad to engage in: to enact “cultural diplomacy” by representing American ideals and advancing U.S. foreign policy goals in encounters with residents of occupied Germany and Japan and in nations hosting U.S. military bases. In fact, thanks to Grieve's discussion of the origins of public diplomacy, I suspect that the inspiration for such

instructions to U.S. military family members abroad originated with Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs William B. Benton (5, 9).¹ Grieve shows that American children in civilian families also contributed to Cold War aims from their schools and communities in the United States.

Central to Grieve's analysis is that notions of children as universally innocent and thus transcending nationalistic and

base political objectives were, paradoxically, extraordinarily powerful tools in the ideological war between the United States and the Soviet Union (5). Here she builds on Margaret Peacock's argument that Soviets and Americans used images of children and childhood as “innocent weapons” in their Cold War rivalry to demonstrate the alleged superiority of their economic and government systems and win the allegiance of decolonizing nations.² Although Grieve draws upon an impressive array of archival and popular sources, her interpretations of them may not be entirely new or unexpected to those familiar with histories of modern children and youth and the political use of their images in the Cold War. Yet the way in which she brings together the study of representations of children and childhood in art, books, and advertising is certainly unique and compelling, as is the information that she provides about actual children's activities.

Much of the book examines various ways that representations of children and childhood—as well as art exchanges, books and advertising—figured into U.S. Cold War foreign relations. In chapter 2, “A Small Paintbrush in the Hands of a Small Child: Children's Art and Cultural Diplomacy,” Grieve traces the international circulation of ideas, beginning in the 1920s, about the ways in which children's art could advocate for international understanding and peace. After World War II, private individuals and organizations, schools, and museums in the United States won the State Department's endorsement of their efforts to help facilitate international exchanges of children's art. In their view, children could serve as “diplomats” and “cultural ambassadors” to the Soviet Union and other nations via their artworks, even if the art was created within parameters defined by adults. “Depictions of war,” for instance, were excluded (55, 57, 60–61, 67–71, 74, 79).

Chapter 3, “The Accidental Political Advantages of a Nonpolitical Book Program: Franklin Publications and Juvenile Books Abroad,” is not really about “American Childhood in the 1950s” and is only indirectly about childhood anywhere else. Rather, it is mainly about how the Franklin Books Corporation and the United States

Information Agency (USIA) partnered to provide fiction and science books, textbooks, and other types of books to juveniles in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, and Africa (97, fig. 3.1; 114). Grieve states that “scholars have largely neglected a key audience of both public and private international book programs—young people.” Yet this chapter tells us less about this audience than about the interesting politics of disputes between the USIA and the Franklin Books Program, Inc.—“a gray propaganda program that operated at the nexus of US public-private cultural diplomacy”—over what books were appropriate for recipient nations (91).

Chapter 4, “Your Grandchildren Will Grow Up Under Communism!": Cold War Advertising and American Youth,” examines the use of images of children by the Advertising Council (known as the War Advertising Council during World War II) in the advertising campaigns called “The American Economic System,” which was designed for a domestic audience, and “The Crusade for Freedom,” which was aimed at Eastern Europeans (137). Children were “both image and audience,” according to Grieve (129). “The Crusade for Freedom,” a CIA enterprise, not only used images of American children but also enlisted their participation in the campaign (138–39).

Grieve’s findings that the art exchanges, books, and advertisements discussed in these chapters usually presented idealized visions of American society and childhood are unsurprising. It was the rare child whose artwork alluded to troubled race relations or acknowledged poverty in the land of plenty (77–78, 80, 81). Advertisements featured white children and families and depicted the United States as a land of “Classless Abundance for All” (133, 143, 146). For contrast, Grieve intersperses her study of American-made images of American children and life with Soviet depictions of the United States, Soviet comics, Soviet children’s artwork, and American depictions of foreign children.

The first and last chapters of Grieve’s book focus on how American children were taught a particular vision of the United States in the Cold War, a vision shared by the U.S. government and mainstream American society. Grieve argues in chapter 1, “Cold War Comics: Educating American Children for a New Global Role,” that educating the young to see their nation as a force for good in the international battle against communism extended beyond the classroom and into the realm of popular culture. She focuses on Lone Ranger “texts” comprising radio and television programs, comic books, novels, games, and toys. (There are pictures of some of these as well as other items throughout the book, but the halftone images are too small to allow one to easily see details.)

Grieve makes the case that the “ubiquitous” Lone Ranger represented the virtuous United States (28). Parents tolerated their children’s consumption of Lone Ranger products because of the character’s high-mindedness: he was fair, tolerant, patriotic, and he did not shoot to kill (in contrast to gangsters and other disreputable types also prominent in popular culture). Narratives about him attempted to inculcate in children a view of the United States as fair and tolerant and to provide them with a model of ideal American behavior (30, 39). Grieve writes that after World War II, “the masked hero represented American ‘benevolent supremacy’ in relation to [the Native American character] Tonto, who embodied ‘Third World peoples’” (21).³ Although the television program’s writers intended to have Tonto “[provide] a heroic role model for African American children,” she notes that African Americans criticized the character and other aspects of the television

program as racist depictions (35).

In most of the chapters, Grieve provides evidence that children and youth engaged in activities that promoted U.S. Cold War aims. In the first chapter, she acknowledges that it is difficult to ascertain how diverse children responded to the Lone Ranger’s teachings. However, she points to millions of children participating in a U.S. Treasury “Peace Patrol” savings stamp and bond drive promoted by Lone Ranger actor Clayton Moore as evidence of the character’s appeal to the young, suggesting that they may have wanted to emulate his virtues and that they bought into the program’s narrative about the character and role of the United States in the world (26, 48, 49). To establish that “children were central symbols and actors in both domestic and foreign propaganda campaigns,” she points to a myriad of children’s activities: art exchanges, essay writing, letter-writing for pen-pals, “patriotic contests and awards,” the Youth Committee of the People-to-People program, Boy Scout efforts for civil defense, the International Farm Youth Exchange program, photo album and scrapbook projects, and more (128, 133, 135; examples are from chaps. 2, 4 and 5).

Among the challenges for those studying children and childhood in the past is finding sources that give insight into children’s own perspectives as opposed to relying on sources that tell us about what adults were thinking about children’s perspectives. Grieve wants to allow children’s voices to be heard, but this is easier said than done, though she

makes a valiant effort. She incorporates quotations from children, including some who supported U.S. Cold War goals and some who criticized them. I enjoyed her readings of the artworks depicting “typical life” for children, such as playing in the snow. Grieve believes that “the art collected and distributed by AWF [Art for World Friendship, an art exchange program] offers a rare opportunity to recover the perspectives, experiences, and agency of American children through their depictions of ‘daily life’” (79–82, 177–78, 179–83, 187–89). But my impression is that the artworks allow us just a glimpse of this. For most of the book it is adults’ voices that we hear, since it is adults who articulated visions of children as representatives of American ideals and Cold War aims and organized the art exchanges and other events that asked children to function as the nation’s messengers.

Grieve takes on another challenge for historians of children: locating their agency. She both assumes children’s agency and questions its extent:

All human beings, adults as well as children, act within a universe of limited options and possibilities. Although it is important to understand the special constraints that can limit some children’s voices, these constraints vary over time and place, and according to gender, race, nationality, class, and many other factors. The question of agency, therefore, might be best understood as one more paradox at the heart of Cold War American childhood (6,7).

Grieve sees play as an area in which children could exercise agency. Even though adults created the Lone Ranger cultural products enjoyed by children, she suggests that “if play is understood as a form of repetitive rehearsal for adult roles, we can read comics and other forms of children’s pop culture as one way to understand the historical processes by which young people acquire agency as historical actors” (26). And although adults organized the activities that they expected children to engage in to

embody and communicate American ideals, Grieve reads children's agency in these roles.

Countering the popular image of children "ducking under school desks during a nuclear attack drill," she argues that "children in the 1950s were not simply victims. They exercised agency in their chosen volunteer activities, engaged with popular culture on a variety of levels and intentionally participated (or perhaps refused to participate) in particular school and extracurricular programs (6)."⁴ She acknowledges the difficulty of determining children's agency, however—in knowing whether children's creations expressed their actual perspectives or merely reproduced what they thought adults wanted, or some combination of both. For instance, excerpts from essays by Philadelphia children sound as if their authors had merely imbibed and repeated back adults' anticommunist messages (82–84).

Thus, doubts remain: did these children exercise agency in what appears to be mimicry or following adults' instructions? What types of evidence might give us insight into what children actually believed? Do adults not also at times say what they think others wish to hear even if they do not embrace or even entirely understand it themselves? I like Grieve's use of the term "voluntold," denoting adult authorities' "subtle coercion" of children to compel or persuade them to do what the grown-ups wanted (56).⁵

Though Grieve admits that identifying agency in children's activities on behalf of U.S. Cold War policy goals can be tough, I think that at times she verges on unnecessary overstatement. For example, she declares that "American children and youth, politicized by the federal government as well as by private organizations, corporate America, and the public schools, became little Cold Warriors, ambassadors, and representatives of the nation" (17). Without evidence that gives us insight into what children were thinking (which, as historians of children and youth well know, can be very difficult to come by), it is hard to say, when writing of children and youth engaging in activities *en masse*, where social expectations and coercion end and original thought and individual agency begin. Propagandists' intentions and ideas, articulated throughout the book and well supported with evidence, don't tell us what children thought they were doing. To argue that children played a significant part in the Cold War, I think it is sufficient to show how they did so while maintaining a critical distance from the "propagandists" (127).

I admit to being uneasy about the first part of the book's title, *Little Cold Warriors*. I am persuaded that American children were significant participants in the pervasive, adult-designed promotions of the United States as superior to the Soviet Union and in the programs to win foreign alliances, but I fear that the moniker may overstate children's agency and conceptions of their activities and so may detract from the validity of the book's argument. (Did people use the term "little cold warriors" in those days, or even "cold warriors"?) As a historian of children and youth in the Cold War, I worry that scholars who are uninterested in or even suspicious of contentions that actual children, and not just images of children, played a part in foreign relations—or who are not even convinced that the history of children and youth is a worthwhile area of study—may judge the book by its title and dismiss it as too cute by half. That would be a mistake, because Grieve succeeds in demonstrating that children and depictions of children both played important parts in U.S. Cold War foreign relations and that the Cold War shaped many children's lives, regardless of what their own understanding of it was, or what they thought about activities that adults saw as pertinent to the Cold War.

Notes:

1. See Donna Alvah, *Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946–1965* (New York, 2007), especially chap. 6, "Young Ambassadors."
2. Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2017).
3. Grieve credits Melanie McAlister for the concept of "benevolent supremacy," citing *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).
4. For my analysis of the popular image of children engaging in civil defense drills, see Donna Alvah, "I am too young to die": Children and the Cold War," special issue, *OAH Magazine of History* 24 (October 2010): 25–28.
5. Grieve cites a 2015 conference paper for the term "voluntold," but the neologism came into use at least several years earlier.

Author's Response

Victoria M. Grieve

Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s was a project long in the making. Initially rooted in my interest in Depression-era literature written for children and art created by children under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, this book approaches foreign policy from a Childhood Studies perspective. My intention was to contribute to ongoing conversations about American public diplomacy during the Cold War and particularly to address how it politically mobilized children and made use of notions of childhood innocence.

Among the challenges that all historians of childhood face are locating the voices of their subjects in the historical record and determining to what extent children acted independently. Each of the reviewers assesses my efforts on those questions. But before responding to their critiques, I would like to thank them for taking the time and effort to write such thoughtful reviews. It is a daunting task to respond to these respected scholars, whose work I have read and appreciate. Thanks also to Andrew Johns for providing this valuable opportunity to discuss my book.

Donna Alvah succinctly summarizes my point that "businesses, private organizations, and the U.S. government employed several means—art created by children, books, and advertising that depicted idealized American childhoods—both domestically and abroad to show audiences the positive aspects of the American way of life and to persuade them of the need to oppose communism." Chapter 1 of the book argues that *The Lone Ranger*, one of the most popular radio and television children's shows of the decade, came to embody American values both at home and abroad. Children demonstrated their understanding of this connection by participating in the *Lone Ranger's Peace Patrol* and buying U.S. Treasury bonds "to defend the peace."

Alvah also notes my attempt to build on the work of Margaret Peacock and others in chapter 2, where I argue that children's presumed "natural" innocence was put to explicitly political purposes that were couched in the language of "world friendship." Although she states that my interpretations are "not entirely new or unexpected . . . to those familiar with histories of modern childhood," the ways in which I brought all these representations together are "unique and compelling."

While Alvah is correct that the politicization of children is not a new or unexpected claim for Childhood Studies scholars, I hope that readers and students in other fields find the information new or surprising. My goal was less to prove that children were politically engaged, which scholars of childhood have been doing for decades, but to show the utter pervasiveness of this politicization during the Cold War in almost every facet of children's lives, from leisure activities to classrooms and textbooks

to extracurricular activities, as well as through exposure to political propaganda on television, radio shows, and print advertisements.

Powerful organizations, from the federal government to large corporations, specifically targeted the political potential of children through innocent messages of world friendship and mutual understanding and attempted to channel that potential toward meeting the nation's foreign policy goals. Children learned these messages in numerous ways: they participated in public diplomacy programs and carried the intended message of "world friendship" to other nations through pen pal letters, art work, and study abroad programs.

Alvah acknowledges my attempts to wrestle directly with the two main challenges for historians of childhood. The first of these is finding sources that give insight into children's own perspectives and thinking, rather than describing what adults thought about children and childhood. Despite my "valiant effort" to allow readers to hear children's voices, Alvah says, it is mostly adult voices we hear. She uses the Art for World Friendship chapter to illustrate her criticism that we see "just a glimpse of" children's thoughts through their artwork. Indeed, I am painfully aware of the difficulty of locating children's voices in the historical record. Children tend not to write books or document their feelings about international politics in traditional historical sources. I turned instead to unusual sources to "hear" their voices.

I didn't use diaries or other written sources, in part because my sources did not include them, but I also think that historians of childhood should look to nontraditional sources to understand what children thought and felt. I am not convinced that reading the diary of a ten-year-old girl from 1957 would have provided a clearer or more "truthful" account of her impressions of her role in the Cold War than her art work or pen pal letters. Nor am I convinced that reading the memoirs of baby boomers gets us any closer to how children might have conceptualized their actions when they were in elementary school. And this is the crux of the problem. What sources inch us toward the truth? A picture? A letter? A diary? Where is it that children most fully express their thoughts and ideas, particularly about abstract topics like politics?

In my opinion, historians should use all the sources at their disposal: both formal, written sources as well as those that require reasoned and cautious interpretation. By using all available sources, we may piece together some broad understanding of what particular children thought and felt about something as large and abstract as the Cold War. In that spirit, I explored popular culture, toys and games, artwork, and participation in public diplomacy programs in an attempt to add to the conversation. While obviously not conclusive, I do think *Little Cold Warriors* adds archival evidence and interesting sources to ongoing conversations about the history of childhood during the Cold War.

The second challenge, Alvah notes, is determining the extent of children's agency. I am glad that Alvah recognizes my ambivalence about the notion of children's agency (both assume and question it, she says) and the ways scholars use it. Feminist scholars have for decades questioned the very notion of individual agency as a relic of Enlightenment thought, not only for women and children, but for human beings in general. In *Little Cold Warriors*, I relied on the work of scholars of play to try to understand how an item of popular culture like *The Lone Ranger* might have functioned as an arena where children's unscripted play could be

understood as "agency."

Of course, finding documents that describe what children thought they were doing when they were playing "cowboys and Indians" in the back yard is likely impossible. So, as in my attempt to "hear" children's voices through their drawings and paintings, I tried to envision other ways of understanding the concept of agency. I borrowed a word that Sarah Glassford used at the 2015 conference of the Society for the History of Childhood and Youth. Her term "voluntold" seemed to capture our doubts about freedom of choice as it related to the mobilization of young women who served in the Canadian Red Cross during World War I, and it gets to the heart of the question of children's agency. Yes, children did what their parents, teachers, and Scout leaders told them to do. But within certain boundaries, in pictures of "daily life" in the United States or in pen pal letters, for example, children were free to draw or write what they wished.

Alvah asserts that I sometimes overstate children's agency without providing enough evidence to support my contention that children did in fact sometimes think of themselves as ambassadors of the United States. She may be correct. However, this idea was introduced to very young children through art and play, as well as advertising and book drives and UNICEF collections. Perhaps very young children did not have fully formed ideas about themselves as ambassadors. Yet, it is clear that some older children and teenagers clearly recognized themselves as such. When and how did this process evolve? At what point can we say that children, or any individuals, are acting as independent agents? In the end, Alvah allows that both depictions of children and children themselves played important roles in U.S. Cold War foreign relations, and that the Cold

War shaped many children's lives. Whether they developed their own ideas about their place in it did not matter.

Julia Mickenberg, like Alvah, finds that my efforts to document how real children thought about their experiences fall short of the mark. She too thinks "the book reveals more about the ways in which school-age children were used by adults as tools in Cold War ideological battles than about how young people exercised agency or what they thought about their experiences." On the other hand, Mickenberg finds some persuasive evidence of children's agency in the Art for World Friendship program. Here she sees at least some children alluding to "less savory images of life in the United States," including pictures that raised doubts about the narrative put forth by the U.S. government about ever-improving American race relations. Nevertheless, she too notes the use of the term "voluntold" as an appropriate indication of my own ambivalence about children's agency. On one level, it seems that Mickenberg sees agency only when young people pushed back against the messages they heard, whereas I see agency in children acting in concert with them as well. Although both reviewers claim that I overstate my arguments, I thought that my ambivalence was clearer. I certainly recognize the limitations of what my sources reveal, but I chose to highlight instead what we can learn from them.

Mickenberg rightly notes that my goal was to put diplomatic history into conversation with the history of childhood "by drawing upon largely untapped archival evidence to build upon existing scholarship on public diplomacy and the 'cultural Cold War' as well as work in childhood history." However, she takes issue with what she characterizes as overly broad claims and wishes I had stated

my arguments in “more precise terms.” Mickenberg found the most important contributions of *Little Cold Warriors* to be the book’s “engagement specifically with diplomacy programs and work targeting children abroad.” Although she finds the chapters on popular culture, advertising, and the schools less convincing, they contributed important evidence about the ubiquity of Cold War propaganda in children’s lives and the ways children engaged with these messages.

I must take issue with Mickenberg’s contention that I accept the notion that science books were “apolitical.” In fact, I was trying to make the opposite point. Science books were indeed political. As Datus Smith, the director of Franklin Books, said, the USIA should publish science books precisely because they served to link the United States with the notions of progress, free inquiry, and the peaceful uses of atomic energy. When USIA officials failed to see any foreign policy benefits to publishing science textbooks or supplementary science readers, Smith pointed out the political benefits of seemingly apolitical books. However, I appreciate Mickenberg pointing out that many left-leaning authors found employment writing science books during the Cold War because they were seen as apolitical, in that they could not be spun for ideological purposes. The irony of both Franklin Books and New Masses recommending the same science books only heightens the questions of children’s reception and agency.

Finally, Mickenberg doesn’t find my argument of continuity between the 1950s and the 1960s as convincing as it could have been had I focused on sources explicitly tied to the New Left, such as the Port Huron Statement. If I am understanding her correctly, she seems to be indicating that I am arguing for the continuity of the politics from the 1950s to the 1960s youth movements. My point is not that there was sustained ideological continuity between the two decades, but that because young people had been involved in Cold War politics since the end of World War II, the rise of the New Left and the New Right and the political activism of young people in the 1960s should not be understood as a sudden manifestation of political consciousness. Mickenberg points out that although I note some examples of dissent in the 1950s, such as young Joan Baez refusing to take part in her high school’s civil defense drills, most of my research emphasizes the degree to which young people supported the Cold War status quo.

Here again, Mickenberg seems to see agency only in terms of dissent. But many children seemed to accept the Cold War logic, and most Americans in general continued to support the government’s policy in Vietnam, even in polls taken immediately after the Tet Offensive. In a 1966 Gallup poll, 47 percent of Americans defined themselves as “hawks” and 26 percent as “doves.” Another poll found that 48 percent would vote to continue the war, while 35 percent would vote to withdraw. The New Left represented a vocal minority of young people, not a majority, and the rise of the New Left took place simultaneously with the rise of the New Right. Agency cannot be understood only as dissenting from the status quo.

Although Mickenberg criticizes my lack of “sustained attention to race and gender,” reviewer Mary Brennan notes that I was “very clear” that I was “concentrating almost exclusively on white American children raised in middle-class homes.” Each chapter, however, does engage in some analysis of these issues. Native Americans and African Americans took issue with the representation of minority communities in *The Lone Ranger* television show. Advertisers imagined the American child who needed protection as exclusively white and middle class. Some children offered drawings that contradicted the standard

American line on race relations. And Franklin Books struggled to find a book by author Richard Wright that the USIA would approve for translation.

I chose not to offer a sustained analysis of race or gender because, as Brennan notes, doing so would have changed the fundamental nature of the book. Such an emphasis also risked focusing even more on adult perceptions of their raced or gendered audiences, a focus that I was trying to avoid. Further, an attempt to analyze the *reception* of popular culture, advertisements, and government programs by a raced or gendered audience would have been largely speculative, given my evidence base.

Like Alvah and Mickenberg, Brennan points out the challenges of hearing the voices of actual children. However, she differs from the other reviewers in recognizing my explicit acknowledgment of this challenge. She notes that I ask several questions of my sources: were children buying Lone Ranger comics because he was a wholesome American hero, or because they liked cowboys? Did they trick-or-treat for UNICEF because they supported its goals or because it was the latest fad? In wrestling with the questions, my answer in the end was “Yes.” American children likely did both.

Lori Clune’s most pointed criticism deals with the title of the book, which I will discuss in detail below. Although she was interested in the USIA’s Franklin Book Program, which was the focus of the third chapter of *Little Cold Warriors*, Clune says that it made her want to learn more about how popular literature for children in the United States might have politicized young readers. Her point is well taken. The best book I’ve read about Cold War children’s literature is Julia Mickenberg’s *Learning from the Left: Children’s Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (2006), which focuses on how leftists tried to educate their children against the Cold War status quo. I am sure a book could be written from the opposite side of the political spectrum as well, focusing on how conservatives and Cold Warriors tried to inculcate their own political ideas into children via literature. Clune likewise raises the question of reception when she wonders how American children might have interpreted Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* (1958), with the Voom’s holocaust-like eradication of the spreading pink stain. Although I don’t know the answer to that question, I can assure her that the book wasn’t translated for publication by Franklin Books!

There seems to be universal discontent with the title of the book, *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*, as well as the titles of some of the chapters. Alvah dislikes the book’s title because she fears “the moniker may overstate children’s agency” and possibly encourage historians in other fields to discount the importance of Childhood Studies in general. Julia Mickenberg takes issue more specifically with the titles of chapters 4 and 5, which she suggests are too narrowly focused to encompass the actual content of the chapters. Lori Clune thinks the “title is too narrow” to accommodate the broader themes and chronological periods that the book addresses. She notes that I explore not only American childhood but Soviet comics, as well as later examples from the 1960s and 1970s.

I must confess to being a little surprised by these comments, and I am largely without an adequate response. In retrospect, my editors and I should have given more thought to the specificity of the titles than we did. I don’t presume to think that my choice of titles, however, will impact the integrity of the field or otherwise diminish the research presented in the book.