

they observe in other cultures and maintain the “rightness” of their own culture, even though often “wrong” is simply different; Or, second, they romanticize the activities and interactions of other cultures while denigrating their own culture. Mei-Ling carefully avoids these pitfalls, all while sharing the good, the bad, and the ugly. For example, in “How the Japanese Let Their Children Fight,” she observes that Japanese parents and teachers provide little if any intervention in children’s squabbles, allowing children to learn to deal with problems themselves and to become members of the community. At the same time, she recognizes Japan’s increasing concern about bullying. As an aside, this chapter also delves into discipline, corporal punishment, and authoritative parenting.

My only criticisms of *How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm* include some very occasionally jarring language and a tendency to oversimplify some concepts and findings. However, this book is not meant to be a dissertation but an informative and enjoyable read for the general public. To her credit, Mei-Ling crafts each chapter well, deftly exposing the general reader to sometimes conflicting scholarly work in an interesting and easily digestible manner. It is nice to see academic “poetry” (to scholars) made accessible and enjoyable to the public.

In short, *How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm and Other Adventures in Parenting* does for the general population what Barbara Rogoff did in her seminal book, *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. Mei-Ling’s book makes accessible and puts in context information from other cultures, applying it in new and creative ways. Culture is mostly invisible,

learned through our active participation. Yet, it is dynamic and ever changing. As we study it, we not only learn about others but about ourselves. The take-away messages in this fun and thoughtful book are what I spend an entire semester trying to teach undergraduates: Children are resilient; Parents in every culture do what they think is best to help their children be socially competent; What appears different at first glance often has the same ultimate goal; And there is more than one way to skin a cat. Finally, as parents, we evolve and our perceptions often change as our children grow older and more are added to our brood, which makes me wonder what Mei-Ling will think of her discoveries when she looks back with the eyes of wisdom rather than wonder. Then, perhaps, we will be graced with *How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm—Part Deux!*

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Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth-Century Japan

Mark A. Jones

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In the last decade, scholars in a range of fields have explored the rich child-centered world of contemporary Japanese consumer culture. Works like Anne Allison’s *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (2005) and

Joseph Tobin's edited collection, *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (2004), have illustrated the ways contemporary Japanese children live in a world full of imaginative playthings linked to powerful currents of national culture and global commerce. Scholars know much less, however, about the origins of one of the world's most influential play cultures. We also understand little about how Japanese children's pervasive popular culture conflicts with an apparent national obsession with entrance examinations and *juku* (cram schools). Mark A. Jones's ambitious *Children as Treasures* provides a welcome history of childhood in Japan in the first decades of the twentieth century. Jones embeds his examination of child-raising practices within a complicated background of changing class identities, arguing that the "rearing of children became the defining emblem of middle-class identity in early twentieth-century Japan" (p. 2).

There are really two stories in *Children as Treasures*—one about the shaping of a middle class in early twentieth-century Japan and the other about emerging popular and intellectual conceptions of childhood—and Jones deftly weaves the two together. The book is also divided chronologically between a first half on the late Meiji period (1880s to 1912) and a second half on the Taisho period (1912 to 1926), which preceded the authoritarian militarism of the early Showa period. During the late Meiji era, established elites fashioned a vision of the middle class as the social foundation for a national community rooted in morality rather than materialism, reflecting anxieties about rapid growth in urban spaces and mate-

rialist desires. In this context, the image of the *ryosai kenbo*, the "good wife, wise mother," was charged with shaping a generation of *shokokumin*, or "little citizens," who were "morally virtuous and physically vigorous, a symbol of a sound family, a sturdy middle class, and a strong nation" (p. 147). The later Taisho era witnessed the expansion of an education system that provided new opportunities for social mobility as well as the growth of a mass media catering to middle-class aspirants, which resulted in new pressures that reshaped both the image of the middle class and that of the ideal child. Through the 1920s, two visions of childhood competed for the attention of parents: the *yutosei*, or the "superior student," and the *kodomorashii kodomo*, or the "childlike child." By the end of the Taisho era, the image of the *yutosei*—a disciplined child who constantly prepared, both in school and after in *juku*, for rigorous entrance exams—emerged triumphant, valued because of its role in nationalist education and the opportunities schooling afforded for climbing the social ladder in a period of expanded social mobility.

In contrast to the recent scholarly works on contemporary Japanese children's culture, Jones focuses not on the goods and toys with which children played but on what he calls the "architects of childhood" (p. 3)—a diverse array of actors, from public intellectuals to aspiring middle-class mothers, who debated endlessly the child's ideal nature and the most effective means of cultivating it. Such actors participated in the lively public discourse that resulted from the emergence of the child-study movement, a national and transnational development that followed

the dictum, “The child is not an adult” (p. 92), and sought to understand the child’s interiority on her own terms. (In this transnational movement, which rests implicitly in the background throughout the book, also lays the origins of the academic study of play.) Jones’s approach is a function of his source material; whereas contemporary anthropologists study children’s behaviors and development in the context of play, Jones meticulously reconstructs intellectual and popular debates about childhood in Japan from the country’s vibrant turn-of-the-century print culture, an exhaustive foundation of primary sources over which Jones displays impressive command.

If I was left wanting anything, though, it was this: the book is less about the lived experiences of turn-of-the-century Japanese children and more about the multitude of actors shaping children’s lives, particularly mothers and the burgeoning army of child-study professionals who penned countless tracts for the rapidly expanding middle-class marketplace. The fault lies not with Jones, however, but with the documentary record available for historians to reconstruct the past.

Chapter 5, “The Childlike Child: Play and the Importance of Leisure,” will be of particular interest to scholars of play. Jones details the emergence in the 1910s and 1920s of the archetypal image of the *kodomorashii kodomo*, which rejected specifically the image of the *yutosei* and more generally the alleged artificial pressures of discipline and regimentation that modernity imposed on children. Promoters of the *kodomorashii kodomo*, including an influential antimodernist group, believed childhood to be a natural, innocent state

and associated it with characteristics like “freedom, laughter, emotional satisfaction, physical exertion, primitive energy, and creativity” (p. 283). As a result, Taisho society saw the “creation of a new geography of childhood” (p. 277) in which public spaces like parks and libraries actively embraced their youngest patrons. The *kodomorashii kodomo*, however, ultimately lost the struggle for childhood to the *yutosei*, remaining a dissenting perspective among a minority, a “haunting whisper” (p. 249) across a postwar era in which the image of the superior student was “massified and internalized by Japanese parents and children” (p. 317).

Jones’s excellent study is a valuable contribution recommended to historians of twentieth-century Japan and scholars interested in the history of education worldwide and the global origins of the child-study movement.

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Inter/vention: Free Play in the Age of Electracy

Jan Rune Holmevik

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“Just as agents seeking to express themselves in alphabetic writing need to be literate, that is master the discourses and conventions of writing, agents who seek to express themselves in digital media need to be electrated (p. 4).” Jan Rune Holmevik frames his book *Inter/vention: Free Play in*