

Melanie Lorie Cook and Louise George Kittaka, eds., *Intercultural Families and Schooling in Japan: Experiences, Issues, and Challenges*

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Japan has diversified considerably over the past several decades, so much so that there are now over three million foreigners residing in Japan. This diversification is expected to intensify further as the twenty-first century progresses. While the past decade has

seen more research on the experiences of these foreigners and the materiality of Japan's diversification, there remains much to be learned about the ways foreigners are engaging with Japanese society and Japan's institutions. *Intercultural Families and Schooling in Japan: Experiences, Issues, and Challenges* offers highly personal, idiosyncratic, and rich insights into the lives of some of these understudied foreigners and aims to do so through autoethnographic methodology.

All of the book's chapters are written by educators in Japan and all are parents of multicultural children. The contributors discuss myriad issues related to raising bicultural and ethno-racially mixed children in a society that much too often still prides itself on notions of its alleged "homogeneity." The chapters herein provide interesting information about the intercultural issues confronted by foreign parents raising children in Japan, such as how they work to preserve a sense of cultural identity in their children, intergenerational and intercultural language issues, and the negotiation of social positionality for themselves and their children.

The book consists of a foreword, an introduction, three parts, and a concluding note. Part 1, "Finding Our Way," explores general issues about child-rearing, such as bilingual education, the challenges of raising children as foreign single-parents, and cultural and linguistic trajectories of multicultural children in a socio-educational milieu that places considerable emphasis on cultural and linguistic conformity. Part 2, "Dealing with the Japanese School System," discusses issues faced by foreign parents when their children attend Japanese schools, as well as the broader utility and transferability of knowledge ascertained by children in Japan's education system. Part 3, "Coping with Challenges," the most emotionally moving of the three, explores the issues encountered by parents raising children with disabilities in Japan and what issues manifest in bicultural foster families.

The book's most significant contribution comes from the deeply personal and detailed autoethnographic accounts of the writers' own experiences and interpretations. Readers will not be at a loss for qualitative substance that elucidates the conceptual matters each chapter engages. These chapters also offer much-needed glimpses into the lives of foreign parents in Japan, their struggles, and how they engage with Japanese educational and sociocultural institutions. While some research has discussed the issues concerning foreign and minority children in Japan, inquiries into the lives of parents are noticeably fewer, especially so relative to Japan's recent diversification. Additionally, perhaps no other work offers such descriptive and emotive accounts of parents' experiences, which provides validation for the book's (auto)ethnographic approach.

Two chapters are worthy of particular mention: chapter 8 and chapter 10. Chapter 8, "An American Mother Raising a Deaf Daughter in Small-Town Japan" by Suzanne Kamata, provides a thorough depiction of the problems and challenges of raising a bicultural daughter with physical and aural disabilities. Kamata's account of her experience offers a moving portrait of how bicultural families raising children with disabilities navigate Japan's educational and medical bureaucracies. Kamata connects her work to Karen Nakamura in ways that offer wider conceptual and theoretical ramifications for the area of disability studies in Japan. Chapter 10, "What to Know and Do to Help Your Adopted or Foster Child Succeed in Japanese Schools," written by one of the volume's editors, Melodie Lorie Cook, also offers an informative and emotive account of the challenges of fostering children in bicultural families. While these two chapters stand out for their autoethnography, readers will find interesting accounts in all of the chapters.

There are, however, some shortcomings with the volume. Foremost, the book aspires to use autoethnography methodologically to obtain insights into contributors' lived experiences. However, none of the chapters dedicate sufficient attention to autoethnography methodologically or conceptually so as to explain its utility, why it is necessary, or how it differs from other forms of qualitative inquiry. While autoethnography is becoming increasingly accepted, the book should have nonetheless contextualized autoethnography and explained how specifically autoethnography can be methodologically beneficial. This would have further validated the autoethnographic approach. Without this discussion, some of the chapters read more like narrative rather than an academic inquiry. Relatedly, the book's chapters utilize a very empirical structure that is not well suited for ethnographic writing. Chapters typically follow the structure of "Introduction," "Background," "Literature Review," "Methodology," and "Conclusion." However, given autoethnography's anthropological underpinnings, the chapters would have been better served locating these portrayals more clearly within an interpretive and anthropological framework rather than one that tries to be empirical. Lastly, some chapters could have developed stronger conceptual foundations and engaged more seriously with the theories they discuss, and a more diverse range of foreign parents' voices could have been incorporated.

Shortcomings aside, *Intercultural Families and Schooling in Japan* offers readers a rare look into some of the multicultural families that are involved in Japan's transformation and the issues that they encounter when engaging with Japan's public and educational institutions. There is perhaps no greater source for conceptually informed firsthand accounts of foreign parents' experiences in Japan. The book will be of greatest interest to readers interested in learning more about the experiences of foreign parents in Japan, Japan scholars, educators, and practitioners.

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