



Capturing Contemporary Japan: Differentiation and Uncertainty

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What are people's life experiences in present-day Japan? This timely volume addresses fundamental questions vital to understanding Japan in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Its chapters collectively reveal a questioning of middle-class ideals once considered the essence of Japaneseeness. In the postwar model household a man was expected to obtain a job at a major firm that offered life-long employment; his counterpart, the "professional" housewife, managed the domestic sphere and the children, who were educated in a system that provided a path to mainstream success. In the past twenty years, however, Japanese society has seen a sharp increase in precarious forms of employment, higher divorce rates, and a widening gap between haves and have-nots.

Contributors draw on rich, nuanced fieldwork data collected during the 2000s to examine work, schooling, family and marital relations, child rearing, entertainment, lifestyle choices, community support, consumption and waste, material culture, well-being, aging, death and memorial rites, and sexuality. The voices in these pages vary widely: They include schoolchildren, teenagers, career women, unmarried women, young mothers, people with disabilities, small business owners, organic farmers, retirees, and the elderly.



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