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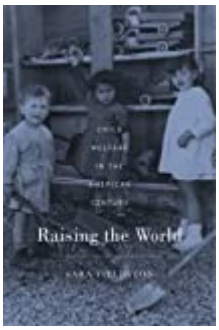

Sara Fieldston. *Raising the World: Child Welfare in the American Century.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-36809-5.

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Sara Fieldstonâs *Raising the World: Child Welfare in the American Century* helps to build the case, now made by many scholars, for considering foreign policy from the bottom up, wresting our conceptualization of international relations from the world of men-in-suits and dispersing it, as it should be, through various sectors of the population. It is also an important contribution to the historiography of childhood and child welfare, a component of international relations. These are not well-trod paths but they are not new territory either. Where *Raising the World* says something very new is in its suggestive, at times impressionistic, discussion of the links between the post-World War Two project of âThird World Developmentâ and childhood.

The book traces the history of US state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the realm of overseas child welfare. Familiar organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Christian Childrenâs Fund, Foster Parents Plan, Save the Children, and the Unitarian Service Committee, working independently or sometimes collaborating with government institutions, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), form the nucleus of the story. Examining everything from the history of pen pals, child welfare programs, summer camps, and theories of child development and child-rearing practices, Fieldston follows the activities of NGOs and their emerging belief that âchild rearing was a means of effectuating larger political changesâ (p. 11). Almost all of these NGOs are international in scope, with branches in other parts of the developed world. Indeed it was in the United Kingdom that international child welfare activism got its start, after World War One. Fieldston recognizes this, yet she claims this is a national story: âonly in the U.S. did voluntary groups tie international child welfare so inextricably to the rhetoric of love and mutual affectionâ (p. 7).

The United States may well have seen itself as the head âof an affectionate family of nations,â but this strikes me as a claim that needs to be shown and developed, not simply stated and assumed (p. 7). Child saving is pleasurable to plenty of people around the world. This holds on an individual, familial, and national level. Historian Margaret Peacockâs *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (2014) examines the history of how children were figured in US and Soviet popular culture during the Cold War. Peacockâs work has gone a long way toward illustrating the similarities in discourses about children between these

two rivals. At the same time that they armed themselves to the teeth, they also worked extremely hard to convince themselves that they were providing the best possible system and future for their (and the worldâs) children. As Cold War historian Odd Arne Westad observed in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (2007), both the United States and the Soviet Union needed to test the universal applicability of their theories, and international child welfare was an ideal venue.

Fieldston examines child welfare activities in postwar Europe and Japan. NGOs tried to convince the US government that child welfare issues belonged in the Marshall Plan. (This itself is a really useful way to rethink the Cold War from the bottom up.) Their argument was dismissed, but Fieldstonâs point is to show that, through the combined activities of multiple NGOs, child welfare did become an important component of foreign relations between states. More than many historians of the politics of child welfare, Fieldston takes the psychological or interior world of child reform campaigns seriously and explores how the âhearts and mindsâ battle during the Cold War was also a âstruggle to create a certain type of heart and mind, a particular configuration of personal characterâ (p. 110).

The most innovate chapter, âTraining the Natives of the Future,â proceeds from this insight. Fieldston revisits the well-worn history of the post-World War Two âdevelopmentâ agenda for the Third World and recognizes something that countless commentators have overlooked: psychology. Following the suggestion of Harvard social psychologist David McClelland, writing in 1957, Fieldston explores how development proponents infused modernization theory with prevailing notions of child development. âA society could only progress as far as its own citizensâ desire for development,â she observes, and the best way to cultivate the individualâs âimpulse to achieve â was through intervening in child rearing (p. 141). Fieldston argues that economic development was perceived primarily as a âproblem of personalityâ (p. 142). This explains why a variety of popular development programs, including day nurseries, mothering classes, and educational programs, were all designed to instill values and break the infamous âculture of povertyâ (p. 146). Through such interventions, the carrot of compassion, niceness, and care for childrenâs futures were elevated over the stick of military interventions. Foster parents programs, for example, acted as foreign agents of modernization (teaching proper values to children and proper parenting styles); they were also great examples of the âbeautifulâ rather than âuglyâ Americans at work (p. 170). This is innovative thinking about the complex origins of the contemporary development project, particularly given the heavy political economy orientation of this field.

Yet for a study of the transnational politics of childhood, this book contains a remarkably narrow perspective when it comes to thinking about the United States. It is marred by a myopic national vision and a failure to think as amply as it might have about the âAmericannessâ of the âAmerican century.â To be fair this is a problem shared by plenty of historians of the United States, even those who work in self-consciously transnational fields. At least Fieldston acknowledges work on this topic from other national contexts, but she does not make a convincing argument about what makes this an âAmericanâ story, or how the activities of American child-savers differed from, complemented, or competed with those from the United Kingdom, Australia, or Canada, for example.

Raising the World could also generate good classroom debates about the history of humanitarianism and NGO activities in different parts of the world. At times Fieldstonâs own thinking about the global politics of childhood is a little rough around the edges, not surprisingly perhaps because these are complicated topics. Were NGO activities simply examples of âexpansionist postwar foreign policyâ that were âcloakedâ in âlove and benevolenceâ (p. 4)? Is there, as Fieldston contends in this book, a clear separation between the humanitarian and the political realms? When historical actors claim their humanitarian rather than political intentions, how do we weigh these claims? Are NGO actors different from state actors? Do benevolent intentions matter in global politics? While this book does not answer or settle these questions, it provides a good basis for discussing them.

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