



“Playmakers: The Creators of Modern American Childhood”
with Michael Kimmel

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:00:00] Reach Out and Read — where books build better brains. This is the Reach Out and Read Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a practicing pediatrician with degrees in public health and children's librarianship. I'm a clinical professor of human development and family studies at the School of Human Ecology and a professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Public Health, both at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. At Reach Out and Read, we dream of a world in which every child is read to every day. Our show explores how children and families flourish and thrive through a combination of individual well-being, confident parents, supportive communities, strong public health, and good policy. Join us here for thought-provoking conversations on these issues with expert guests, authors, and leaders in the field of early childhood health and literacy. Research shows that reading physical books together brings the strongest benefits to children. That's why we're happy to have Boise Paper, a responsible paper manufacturer, as the founding sponsor of this podcast through their paper with Purpose Promise Boise paper looks for ways to make a difference in local communities. Thank you to Boise Paper for investing in our Reach Out and Read community. The 20th century was a time of unparalleled industry, creativity, innovation, and distribution in the industries aimed at children, toys, books, parenting advice, and more. A new book by our next guest outlines how one group — Yiddish American Jews — was responsible for practically single-handedly creating the material culture of childhood as we know it. These largely first-generation American Jews invented an idealized childhood that they hadn't had by creating a childhood as a stage of consumption. If they themselves could not ever be a child in such turmoil, then they would create a child that one could have in a inner, turmoil-free world where one could and should have it: America. Our guest today is Michael Kimmel. He's a SUNY Distinguished professor emeritus of sociology and gender studies and founder of the center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University. His latest book is “Playmakers: The Jewish Entrepreneurs Who Created the Toy Industry in America.” Michael, welcome to the show.

Michael Kimmel: [00:02:22] Great to be with you. Thanks.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:02:24] So, to start off with, you have a very personal connection to this story. Can you tell us about that?

Michael Kimmel: [00:02:32] Sure. Well, when I was growing up, there was this photograph that was on my family's piano, and it was of this older man who I didn't know particularly, and Shirley Temple sitting on his lap. And it was autographed to my mother and it said, "with love from Shirley Temple and Uncle Maurice." So, when I retired in 2020 — just in time for COVID — I was looking for a kind of COVID writing project and I said, "you know, I'm going to figure out who this guy, Uncle Maurice actually was." And it turned out he was my great great uncle, the brother of my great grandfather. He was an immigrant from the area around Minsk in Belarus today. And he invented the teddy bear, and he also made the first Shirley Temple doll created — you know, founded the Ideal Toy company. And so, I had this whole history of my family that I hardly knew anything about. My mother occasionally would say something like, "well, you know, Uncle Maurice invented the teddy bear and founded the Ideal Toy company." And I thought, "well, that's kind of interesting." "How come we never got a big box of toys every Christmas? How come? How come we're not rich, you know?" And it turned out that Maurice and his brother Harris, my great grandfather, had come to the states together, had worked together for a while, and then — as many as apparently was quite common among these immigrants — had a massive falling out, never talked to each other again. Right? So, my side of the family was not the side of the family that got the toy companies and the toys every Christmas season but still I thought to myself, "you know, I'm going to — I want to — write a family history. I want to write his story: how he came here, what he did." And there comes a time — and I'm sure you've had this in your own research — you hit a wall. You hit a question that you don't know the answer to, and you can do what a lot of writers and professors especially tend to do at that moment, which is to kind of fudge it and just move on.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:04:52] Sure.

Michael Kimmel: [00:04:53] Or you can say, "I don't know the answer to this. Maybe I should go find out." And the question that I got posed — that I posed to myself — is, "okay, Kimmel, you don't know anything about the toy industry at the turn of the century. You just know about the ideal toy company. What else was going on?" And so, I looked for the definitive history of the toy industry in America. PS: there isn't one. So, I said, "oh, I better go figure this out." And it turned out, and this was the first big surprise of the research, was that virtually all — all but one of the major toy companies at the turn of the 20th century — were founded by first-generation Jews, that is Jews who came here all Yiddish-speaking, either as young children from the old country or were born here — first generation born in America. And we're talking about

Marx, Pressman, Hasbro, Mattel, Lionel Trains, F&B Dolls. Arranbee Dolls, you name it. They were all first-generation Jews. The only one that wasn't was a Gilbert's — The Erector Set.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:06:03] Mhm.

Michael Kimmel: [00:06:05] So, my first thought when I sort of started to figure this out was, “how come I didn't know this before?”

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:06:15] Right.

Michael Kimmel: [00:06:16] How come nobody seems to have known this before? That's where my book starts.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:06:22] Indeed. Yeah, and it's so neat that it all started with that question about, you know, “who is that person in that photo with Shirley Temple?” So, a common thread for many of these early innovators was that — as you've just commented, right — they were poor immigrant Jews. They were often escaping persecution in Europe. And can you just give our listeners a brief sketch of what was life like for in the late 1800s for the Jews of Europe, and what led them to America, and what was waiting for them when they got here?

Michael Kimmel: [00:06:56] Well, I'll tell you Morris Mitchum's story. He was a young boy in a shtetl outside of Minsk, and to be a Jew, he was the second son. His older brother was the oldest. So, the older brother was thought to inherit whatever property they may have had, but the younger brother — it was perfectly reasonable for the Russian army to draft these shtetl Jews. The problem was they didn't speak Russian. They only spoke Yiddish and, secondly, they were just used as cannon fodder. And remember that Russia, in the turn of the 20th century, had a lot of imperial ambitions that all got thwarted by Germany, by Japan, by other countries. So, his family decided we better get him out of the country. And so, they faked his death. They said he had died of typhoid. And they buried a coffin filled with rocks and then they quietly whisked him over the border into what's now Lithuania. He ended up in Vilnius. They were escaping unbelievable persecution — pogroms that were well-organized, well-choreographed, announced in the newspaper. They didn't read Russian. They would be announced. There would be these announcements. “The red crow will be crowing at 8 p.m. in such and such a place,” which meant — you know — “we're going to kill all the Jews.” So, it wasn't a pleasant time and, as you know, some 2.5 million Yiddish-speaking Jews arrived in New York between 1890 and 1920. In 1924, as you know, the US government shut the door to immigrants — largely because they were afraid of all of the Asian immigrants, but also the Italians, Irish and Jews from

Europe. So between 1890 and 1920, 2.5 million Jews came. They lived in extreme poverty and in the tenements of the Lower East Side. They were very different from the Jews who had immigrated to the US in the middle of 19th century. A large number of German Jews had had come to the US. They were very prosperous, upper middle-class, assimilated quite quickly, and were very uncomfortable with these poor peddlers from Eastern Europe and Russia. So, there were many who were very unhappy about this, saying, “no, we're really Americans. They're not.” On the other hand, these German Jews were the ones who founded virtually every major department store in the East Coast — and quite a few in Chicago, and Texas, and elsewhere. But most of them you know: Gimbel's, and Abraham and Strauss, and Bonwit Teller, and Saks Fifth Avenue. And all of these were founded by German Jews. So, when these Russian Jews began to create toys, they had an outlet for selling them. And so, all they needed between the production and the sales — retail sales — was an army of salesmen. And the many of these Yiddish Jews provided that sales force. So, it was a completely sort of “ethnic industry,” in a way.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:10:33] Mhm. Yeah. It was — I mean, every page it felt like, you know — “oh, and this one! Yes, also founded and run by Jews. Oh, and this one. This one, too.” And it was like — “I know,” like, “Whoa!” Yikes.

Michael Kimmel: [00:10:44] You're just describing my family's experience with my research because, you know, I would be sitting here and I would read these things and then I would come upstairs to make dinner. And I would say, “you won't believe this: Popeye was Jewish” you know. But not only as a postscript — not only was Popeye created by a Jew, Elzie Segar, but the guy who was the model for Popeye was named Rocky Fiegel. He was a Polish Jewish immigrant who worked as a bouncer at a bar in Cincinnati. And Seeger met him, loved his image, you know. But what other comic strip character says, “eat your vegetables?” I mean — so, this is a guy. When Seeger was successful with Popeye, he supported Rocky Fiegel in his old age until he died because he shared the royalties with him. You know, so every day I would come up with this — him too. And that was a challenge for me because I didn't want to simply write a triumphalist parade of awesome Jews. I wanted to explain why: why them, why there, and why at that moment. And I felt like that led me to questions about anti-Semitism, questions about the progressive era and the changing views of children, which I think are critical in study. And so, it happened to be a kind of confluence of factors. And it wasn't just this parade. And I felt like as a sociologist, it was kind of a professional obligation to answer the “why” question.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:12:26] Sure. Yeah. And speaking of like how we view children and childhood — so, the 20th century was declared as “the century of the child,” right, in America. Can we talk for a moment about the progressive

movement and how that changed a lot of how we considered children, because how we think about children now was not how we thought about it before the 20th century?

Michael Kimmel: [00:12:50] Right? And so, the material culture — as we described it, as you described it earlier — is very much the expression of what these larger social trends. So, if you think about childhood before the turn of the 20th century, some of the historians of childhood have said — you know, sort of summarize that one. One guy once said, “childhood: I didn't have much.” There really wasn't that much of a child, you know, of childhood. There wasn't a material culture of childhood and the idea of childhood. If you look at child-rearing manuals — from the late 19th, early 20th century, even as late as 1920s with John Watson — the idea was children are willful and the goal of child rearing is to break their will. And so, there was all of this stuff about “don't show too much affection; don't cuddle them; don't love them too much; don't nurture them.” “If they cry at night, just give them a good spanking” — you know, which is about as reasonable as “this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.” Every child knows is a lie. So, these Jews come here and they say, “what are you talking about? That's not how we view childhood in the Talmud; it says children are a blessing. They're born innocent.” And that is a key to the progressive era notion of childhood. John Dewey had this idea of the kind of “blank slate,” almost Lockean idea, that childhood — children — were innocent and society writes on them the needs of social life. And Dewey's progressive ideas about children kind of encapsulated at, say, Bank Street in the early 20th century coincided with two big two big changes in social life. One: compulsory schooling. By 1900, about 1 in 5 children completed elementary school. By 1920, it was about 4 out of 5. Number 2: the campaigns against child labor, which went on for quite some time from the late 19th, all the way through the 1930s — largely because southern factory owners wanted the child labor in the mills and their Congress people, their legislators, constantly tried to undermine that. You know, it was, they said, a “campaign against chores.” Right? So, “you poor farmers, you won't be able to have your children pick up the eggs in the morning” kind of thing. But eventually the end of child labor and compulsory schooling created a space, right — a space called “childhood” that had really never really existed. And then, along comes G. Stanley Hall in 1904, and he says not only that, but children don't become adults at 60 after they graduate from sixth grade. Oh no. They become grownups when they graduate from high school. There's that interim period, which he called “adolescence.”

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:15:59] Yeah.

Michael Kimmel: [00:15:59] So, now you have this enormous space and these and toy companies rushed in to fill it. And I think the history of the toy

industry as an industry is kind of one of those moments where opportunity creates demand — like “here it is. Here’s the space. Go for it.”

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:16:20] Yeah. You know, even in health care, we talk about how pediatrics — you know, the old view was that children were merely “defective” or “incomplete adults.” Right? And that we just had to wait to do things to get them and hurry them along into that “becoming an adult” space. And now, of course, we don't think about it that way at all. So yeah, your book's subtitle — which is “The Jewish Entrepreneurs who Created the Toy Industry in America — and you do, of course, talk about toys — but there is, I'll just say a deep breadth in what you covered, because you covered toys, but also children's books, parenting advice, children's TV, and more. But let's dive in a little on the toys. You talk about so many toys.

Michael Kimmel: [00:17:09] Yeah, I did have a bit of a fight with my publisher about the subtitle because I wanted it to be how these Jews created childhood, but they said, you know, “toys.” So, once I finished, I dove into the deep end and started talking about all these toy companies, I asked the question, “what did they base their toys on?” And so many of them were like product tie-ins — you know, yellow kid early on, the Pillsbury Doughboy today — I mean, all of those. And then, comic strips and many of the great comic strips in America were also written by first-generation Jews — including Ham Fisher, who did Joe Palooka. So, the Ideal Toy company had a contract with Ham Fisher. If Joe Palooka ever had a baby, Ideal Toy Company would make the clothes. You know, they had contracts, of course, with Shirley Temple. This was brilliant marketing on the part of Morris Michtom. Every time Shirley Temple came out with a new movie, they had a new outfit. So, there were after sales after you bought the doll. And remember that dolls in the 1900s were not the things you carried around and played with. The heads of dolls were porcelain or bisque. They were very breakable. In fact, Madame Alexander — who was also first-generation Jew — her father was a doll doctor. If the doll fell from the breakfront and broke, he would like put it back together. Morris created a material that was unbreakable. His competitors thought he was a moron. “What are you doing? You won't have any broken dolls. You won't have any.” And he says, “I got after sale. The outfits will change.” And even today, Barbie is the single largest clothing manufacturer in the world.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:19:10] Right.

Michael Kimmel: [00:19:11] So, comic strips — Al Capp is a great example of this. Lil Abner, Al Capp, was born and raised in New Haven, Conn. He never really set foot in the South, but he created this whole world in Appalachia that's basically a shtetl, you know. And that was what he knew — so, comic

strips and, of course, the history of comic books is very well known as basically, you know, a Jewish ghetto. And here's where I would introduce another piece to this progressive era and the assimilationist story that I think that I'm telling the comic book artists did not go into making comic books because they wanted to — they wanted to go into advertising. And advertising in the 1930s was a very white shoe, Protestant, New York business profession. And they would go with their portfolios. They would go to the managing partner at ad agencies and they would say, "I'd like to be an artist here." And they'd say, "I'm sorry, we already have our quota of Jews," which often was zero. But so, they went to the pulps kind of as a second, you know, sort of as a refuge, so they could still do art. But all of the great comic book artists — you know, from Siegel and Shuster and Superman to Stan Lee and the Marvel Universe — were all first-generation Jews. Jack Kirby. And then, finally, so as I'm doing this now, I feel like I'm like swimming way over. I mean, water is way over my head and the American and the New York Public Library came up with this list of the 100 most important children's books of the 20th century. And so, I read through it, and about 40 of them were first-generation Jews. And I said, "that is way out of proportion to our population," you know, which is less than 2%. So, I thought, "okay." So, I started looking at some of those books and now I'm reading about books that were read to me as a child and the books that I read to my son as a child and I had no idea they had this back story. I had no idea that Ezra Jack Keats, for example, was a poor Jewish boy in Brooklyn, who was so poor that what he did was he would walk to the public library branch every day after school just to read. Nor did I know that, you know, Maurice Sendak was a window dresser at Saks Fifth Avenue until Ruth Krauss — another first-generation Jew — said, "why don't you help me illustrate, you know, 'The Carrot Seed?'" And instead of doing what most children's books authors did — which was pay him a flat fee — she said, "I'll share the royalties with you. Your work is so good." That gave him the start to do the number one book of all time of the 20th century, "Where the Wild Things Are." So, those are pretty well known. The best story, of course, is the story of, you know, and the origin of "Curious George." Because I didn't know it was a Holocaust story that the rest were — you know, if you think of a map of France — the Germans were coming from the north and the east through Belgium, down through Lille into Paris. And on the night before that great scene of the Nazi troops marching up, the Champs Elysees and Margaret Ray pieced together some bicycles. They built it south and west and drove — got road to Spain, then to Portugal, to Lisbon, to New York with this manuscript for a book about a monkey who they named "Fifi." And they got here and they had contacted a publishing house who said, "Fifi's not going to work. Let's come up with a different name." And that's how "Curious George" is born. I didn't know that there were these backstories to these books. Did you know? I mean, you know, "Eloise." You know the woman who did Eloise. Is there a more non-Jewish character than a little girl who lives at the penthouse of the Plaza Hotel and hates to take her boss? I mean, she was Jewish. And

these are the surprise moments that I had throughout the book that that they were creating. And I think the most poignant part for me in this story is they created the childhood that they didn't have. They created the material for a childhood that they themselves could only dream into existence. They were poor living on the Lower East Side in Lower East Side tenements. And yet, they imagined this world of creativity and curiosity and play.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:24:11] Yeah. And there was so much innovation that went on. I mean, particularly with the toys. I mean, this. I actually knew the story of the teddy bear somewhat, but the Erector Set, and the Tinkertoys, and all that — you know, and how they were just saying, “oh, well, this is how buildings are built. Why don't we just make a small version of it with these cheaper parts and, and let kids enjoy this in different ways? Right? Yeah.

Michael Kimmel: [00:24:38] So, these immigrants had this idea that childhood — and this is, of course, you know, the last piece of this puzzle for me — was looking at, I mean, this is sort of your, your bailiwick as well. All of the psychologists who basically created the subfield of developmental psychology, of child psychology, were also first-generation Jews. And their idea from Erik Erikson in 1950, childhood in society — to Maslow and Bronfenbrenner, and Ganot, and Kohlberg, and Carol Gilligan; nay, Carol Friedman — all of them had this idea that children were curious. They were creative. They should be nurtured in this creativity, not broken. And so, all of these toys are designed to enable that creativity, the pleasure of and to nurture that curiosity. So, that's the part, you know, the gift that kept on giving, I think, for me.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:25:42] Right. I found where you were discussing comic books and superhero culture just so interesting as well, right — about how you can see some of these elements of the immigrant experience and cultural assimilation and the struggles and tensions around that. Right? So, I mean, the classic — right — Superman is, you know, Clark Kent.

Michael Kimmel: [00:26:09] You can say it.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:26:10] Just unassuming, you know — gets easily pushed around, you know, all those things. Right?

Michael Kimmel: [00:26:16] Right. Signaled by the fact that he wears glasses.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:26:19] Yes. Of course. You know, as we all 3 of us on the screen here are wearing glasses. Of course. Yes. And then, of course, his alter ego has these amazing powers — and you know, muscle-bound and being able to fly and to do the right thing at all times. Right? This

transformation there as thinking of that as a metaphor for the immigrant yearning. Right? And desire was really quite fascinating.

Michael Kimmel: [00:26:49] To me, I think the beauty of Superman does have — I mean, and many writers have thought, you know, sort of picked through Superman comics as if it were the Talmud, like looking for these parallels, looking for the, the deeper meanings. And there are people, you know, but I think that there's two things that these superheroes embody. Yes. So, on the one hand, underneath that sheepish heart that everyone sees the bookish nerd, the effects. You know, think of Archie comics — the Dilton Doiley type — underneath that beats the heart of a lion, a superhero who has superhuman strength. So, there's that, I think. And that is a very Jewish trope. I think it's a trope that's used, for example, in other areas that I didn't cover — for example, Jewish comedy or Jewish films, like the Marx Brothers or the way that Jews get revenge against those who hold those stereotypes is to be smart, sly, figure it out. But the second thing is — remember that the Siegel and Shuster create Superman in 1937 — and immediately he fights the Nazis. And there is an element that these superheroes fight back, because the reports that we were getting. My father at age 17 went to the Army recruiting office. Yeah, he was 17. And he said, “I want to go kill Nazis.” In 1943, he said, “I want to go kill Nazis.” And they said, “sorry, you're not old enough.” But they said to him, “you know, if you go down the street, the Navy will probably take you.” So, he did, and he joined the Navy. But that idea, that of fighting back, was so powerful in my growing up as a young Jewish boy in the 1950s and '60s — the stories of, you know, waiting to be murdered. Passivity of, you know, those heroic stories really mattered to, us. I think they gave us a model of what it meant to win. And so, I felt like both of those underneath — there's this powerful, you know, creature — and that they fight back.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:29:10] Yeah. I have to admit, one of my favorite lines in the book was — I don't have it right in front of me at this moment but was — when, you know, we were going on about like “will reading comics, you know, and seeing violence cause kids to become violent and all?” And you said something along the lines of, “I don't think hearing biblical stories in church or synagogue leads children to want to go and blow a trumpet and tear down the walls of their employers,” you know, or something like that, thinking of Jericho. So, yeah.

Michael Kimmel: [00:29:43] No, exactly. I mean, periodically, people have worried — particularly in the early 1950s, that comic books, that TV shows were causing the two that were leading to the two great problems for young boys in the 1950s, which were the two great temptations: Juvenile delinquency and homosexuality were the two scourges that that had to be dealt with. And there was a kind of Professor Harold Hill, you know, about

poolrooms in “The Music Man.” There was the same kind of worry that comic books were leading young boys astray. They were leading them to delinquency, and saloons and, you know. Many of the movies of the time — particularly like “Rebel Without a Cause,” which is caused by, you know, sort of in which juvenile delinquency is caused by a passive father — if you remember that pivotal scene in the film where James Dean comes home, and he's worried, and he's concerned, and he's anxious, and he wants to talk to his father: Jim Backus. And Jim Backus is in the kitchen wearing an apron, washing the —

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:30:56] Dishes.

Michael Kimmel: [00:30:57] Right, exactly. And so, he walks out, realizing his father cannot provide for him. So, as a result — and this was one of the biggest surprises to me — the advertisements for so many toys for boys in the 1950s and early 1960s, where advertisements that depicted fathers and sons together. Almost every ad for Lionel Trains, for example, has a father and a son — you know, “makes me feel like a boy again and makes him feel like a man,” kind of thing.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:31:29] Sure.

Michael Kimmel: [00:31:29] Yeah, and if you imagine girls play in the 1950s, you don't imagine mother. You imagine two girls and two dolls sitting at a tea party. You don't. But so much of the boy stuff — for example, all of those model airplanes that I played with — Ravel, Aurora, the ones where you glue them together and put the decals on those — well, all of those were invented by first-generation Jews. And they were a father-and-son project because a five, six-year-old can't quite get the glue in the hole the right way. But they were a father-and-son project.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:32:03] Yeah. Well, we're almost out of time here, but your book is of course about Jewish individuals and their connections with all this. But it's also a book about immigration in many ways. And it's so key to the American story, right, in so many different aspects. What do you hope that the next wave of immigrants might bring to American life?

Michael Kimmel: [00:32:28] I think they're already bringing it. I think it's a great question. To me, that's the story is this group of immigrants — like all groups of immigrants — are saying, “where do we fit in?” “Where are we going to be home?” You know, Jews had always been the “visiting team,” you know, and they finally are getting to — they want to find a place that's home. They want to and I think that's the yearning of every immigrant group. And one of the things that I feel, you know, that I was trying to figure out as

writing is like, “where does this book end?” And as you would know, the book ends on the set of Sesame Street, which was created by a woman who was half Jewish and she convened a panel of experts who were all virtually all Jewish child experts. And the reason that it's so interesting to me is, think about the set of Sesame Street. It's not a suburban house with a green grass lawn and a white picket fence. It is a tenement. They're back on the Lower East Side. There's laundry hanging from the fire escape. There's a character that lives in a garbage pail. I mean, they've gone — the arc of the book is they've come back to that place for which is the source of creativity, and nurturing, and home. I just thought it was the right place to end.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:33:55] Indeed. And as an immigrant myself, I think I can at least personally confirm that — yeah, I think all of that rings true. So, thank you for this amazing book, and this work, and for the opportunity to share it with our listeners.

Michael Kimmel: [00:34:10] It's really been a pleasure. Thank you so much.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:34:16] Welcome to today's 33rd page or something extra for you, our listeners. One of my favorite paragraphs in this book is so contrary to how we think about children today, that I just had to share it with you. In a chapter about a new ideal of childhood, Michael tells us, “still, the inquisitive child, the precocious child, was a source of anxiety and concern. Hardly someone to be celebrated. Precocity was perhaps a danger sign that, if unchecked, might lead to feeble-mindedness. Beecher and Stowe believed that intellectual precocity was a brain disorder and recommended that the precocious child be forbidden the use of all books and encouraged to play outdoors. One 19th century doctor Frances Emily White advised parents to prevent the precocious child from engaging in any kind of mental activity whatsoever, lest brain inflammation develop. He should not be allowed to learn to read, and should spend his early years in a rural area playing outdoors. It was as if childhood precocity was part of the growing problem of mental and physical decline, particularly for boys who were losing their hardy sense of rough and tumble manhood in favor of nerdy book learning. This would have come as a bit of a shock, I imagine, to those Yiddish immigrant boys for whom the highest expression of manhood was a burning desire to sit and read the Talmud all day.”

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:35:48] But that's part of our story, and that's our 33rd page. You've been listening to the Reach Out and Read Podcast. Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization that is the authoritative national voice for the positive effects of reading daily, and supports, coaches, and celebrates engaging in those language-rich activities with young children. We're continually inspired by stories that encourage language literacy and

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