

# CHILDBEARING AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF PARENTHOOD

The Contexts, Actors, and  
Experiences of Having Children

**Edited by** Rosalina Pisco Costa and  
Sampson Lee Blair

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES  
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

**VOLUME 14**

CHILDBEARING AND THE  
CHANGING NATURE OF  
PARENTHOOD: THE CONTEXTS,  
ACTORS, AND EXPERIENCES OF  
HAVING CHILDREN

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY  
RESEARCH VOLUME 14

**Childbearing and the  
Changing Nature of Parenthood:  
The Contexts, Actors, and  
Experiences of Having Children**

EDITED BY

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan  
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2020

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83867-067-2 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-066-5 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-068-9 (Epub)

ISSN: 1530-3535 (Series)



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**Brad van Eeden-Moorefield** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Family Science and Human Development at Montclair State University. His research includes a strong commitment to understanding and strengthening marginalized families, with his most recent work focused on stepfamilies headed by same-sex couples. Much of this research focuses on identifying how factors in the social world (e.g. stigma, stereotypes, and policy) influence everyday family life and how both impact various indicators of individual (e.g. depression and happiness) and family well-being (stability). Dr van Eeden-Moorefield's work has been featured in *Time* and the *Huffington Post*. He provides training to a range of family and childcare practitioners, using his own clinical experience to translate research into practice and practice into research.

**Julia Gerstewitz** works as a Research Assistant and is a Ph.D. student at the University of Giessen, Germany. Along with Nicole Zillien, she is currently examining online-communities of mothers-to-be, focusing on peer-to-peer-learning and negotiation of motherhood. Julia received her degree in sociology, political science, media studies and social psychology from the University of Trier, Germany. She wrote her M.A. thesis on the (re)construction of masculinity, analyzing yoga guidebooks addressed to men. Since then, she has channeled her general interest in the social construction of gender, specializing in the sociology of pregnancy, birth and parenthood. In the context of the current empirical research project on (re)gendering effects of pregnancy forums, she has held several lectures including topics, such as partners' division of labor and care, online discourses on breastfeeding, on the social construction of fatherhood as well as on the feminization of parenthood.

**Ashlyn M. Jaeger** is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Sociology Department at the University of California, Davis. She researches how the biomedicalization of reproduction influences the regulation and use of reproductive technologies. Her dissertation investigates the role of gender and inequality in shaping the construction and navigation of infertility risks in the field of egg and sperm freezing.

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**Marion Müller** is currently a Professor of Sociology at the University of Tuebingen, Germany. Before that, she was a Professor of Sociology at the University of Trier. After graduating in Sociology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Mainz, she worked as a freelance radio news editor at the Hessian Broadcasting Corporation in Frankfurt. The main fields of interest in her research are gender studies, the sociology of race and ethnicity, disability studies, sociology of the body and of sports, world society studies, and the sociology of pregnancy and birth. The overarching goal in her research is to understand the different meanings and the intersections of gender, race and disability in various social contexts, such as family, (high-performance) sports, international politics, and law. Currently, she is running an empirical research project on antenatal classes in Germany, which focuses on the emergence and consolidation of a gendered division of labor and care at the transition to parenthood.

**Tacy Rae LeBaron, M. S.**, is a recent graduate of East Carolina University's Marriage and Family Therapy Master of Science program. She obtained her undergrad degree in Neuroscience from Brigham Young University. Her research interests include complex trauma, anxiety, suicide, integrated healthcare and diversity. She has presented research at the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback conference on secondary Posttraumatic Stress in children of military veterans with PTSD. She has worked as a therapy intern for a homeless shelter, community health center for low-income individuals, and a faith integrated clinic. She has been able to more fully explore diversity training as a Fellow for the Minority Fellowship Program through AAMFT. She has spent two years working as a Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Sheresa Blanchard in areas of early childhood interventions and early childhood inclusion and diversity. Tacy believes that better understanding how the systems around us affect life situations is an overlooked and important factor in moving towards peace and a better quality of life. She strives to be culturally humble in her work with clients and in her research in order to promote more cultural awareness.

**Hassan Raza** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Childhood Education and Family Studies at Missouri State University. His research is grounded in bio-ecological theory and social justice. The focus of his research is to examine the reciprocal relationships of working women with individuals in multiple ecological contexts, such as work, family, and community, to understand their experiences

and to find out those factors that can help working women to decrease work–family conflict and maintain a healthy work–family balance. He also conducts cross-cultural research to highlight the vulnerabilities of women living in developing countries. He uses quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and action research techniques in his research. He has expertise in statistical modelings, such as multilevel modeling, structural equation modeling, and hierarchical linear regression modeling.

**Samantha Reveley** is currently undertaking a 1+3 ESRC-funded Doctorate at Newcastle University while lecturing at the University of Sunderland. She has a BSc in Criminology from the University of Sunderland and received her Master's in Sociology and Social Research from Newcastle University, which was funded as part of her ESRC studentship. Her current teaching foci are criminological and sociological theory, youth crime and criminology, social problems, and applied quantitative research methods. Her research interests lie in understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of identity formation and how an individual's identity comes to emerge through a series of interactional and relational practices. Her work focuses more specifically on exploring how assemblage theory can be used to explore the ephemeral, fluid nature of identity formation and how identity interplays within major life course transitions, such as first-time motherhood. There is a strong emphasis in her research on exploring the subjective lived experiences of those she studies in order to understand how they come to construct their identities and sense of selves through the situated practices and experiences in their everyday lives.

**Zehra Zeynep Sadikoglu** is a Ph.D. student in the Sociology Department at Istanbul University. Her doctoral research investigates how the social role of mother and the social perception of motherhood change in contemporary Turkish society. Theoretical conceptualizations such as post-industrial society, information society, consumption culture, reflexivity, risk society, and surveillance are addressed in the analysis of how the technological and cultural developments specific to late modern conditions affect the experience of mothering in Turkey.

She has been working as a Managing Editor for the *KADEM Journal of Women's Studies* since 2016, and she has been working as a Research Assistant at the Istanbul Medeniyet University Social Work Department since 2017. Also, she was a Visiting Researcher at the Center for Parenting Culture Studies, University of Kent, between April 1 and September 1, 2019.

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**Christina L. Scott**, Ph.D., earned her B.S. at Occidental College in 1996 as a double major in Social Psychology and Theater, and has continued her interdisciplinary love of learning ever since. Christina attended Kansas State University for graduate school and received her M.S. in 1998 and her Ph.D. in 2000. She developed her teaching experience through appointments with several colleges and universities across the nation but found her academic home with Whittier College, where she is currently an Associate Professor. Christina’s research focuses primarily on women’s sexual arousal and behavior. Each spring she interviews and selects two or three new undergraduate students to serve as research assistants for the upcoming academic year. The new research team members are mentored by the current team throughout the spring semester. All undergraduate research assistants are involved in every phase of academic research from the very earliest planning sessions and IRB submission to data collection and analysis. Each year, her research team presents the current project as a regional or national psychological conference marking the completion of a three-semester term of intensive research experience. Exemplary research assistants are invited to continue for an additional year as research associates and assume greater responsibility and leadership roles. Christina has published in a wide range of books and journals and she continues to speak nationally and internationally about her sexuality research. Beyond the Whittier College community, Christina is passionate about sex education and volunteers to speak with local high schools and LGBTQ youth groups about healthy relationships and safe sexual practices. She has enjoyed teaching summer courses in psychology in Shanghai, China, and looks forward to additional international teaching and research opportunities in the future.

**Siri Wilder** attained her B.A. at Whittier College in 2017, where she double majored in English and Psychology. She joined the Gender and Sexuality Laboratory as a Research Assistant in 2016, working under Dr. Christina Scott, and has co-presented research at the 97th and 98th Annual Western Psychological Association Conventions. Siri has continued to work with Dr. Scott following her graduation, focusing on women’s attitudes toward sexuality and reproductive decisions. She is also currently working as the Research Associate at a family and children’s services agency in Los Angeles, California, studying outcomes of at-risk youth following mental health treatment.

**Nicole Zillien** is a Professor of Media Sociology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Giessen, Germany. She received her Doctorate at the University of Trier in 2006, with a thesis on status-specific forms of internet usage. Her

research interests lie in the areas of media and society, digital sociology, the sociology of knowledge, social inequality, the sociology of the body, and the sociology of pregnancy and birth. Her current research projects examine the knowledge production of self-trackers and (re)gendering effects of online-communities of mothers-to-be. She has published on digital inequality, technological affordances, the scientification of the self, health-related online forums and the transition to parenthood.

# FOREWORD

## *Rú yǐng suí xíng*

*As the shadow follows the body*, the English translation of the Chinese idiom chosen as the motto for this Foreword, is metaphorical for this volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* in many ways. Since the beginning of this editorial project, we envisaged the transitions into parenthood as something we knew was colorful, vivid, and dynamic, deeply intertwined in nature and culture, yet scientifically wrapped in many shadows. Some months ago, when we had to choose the title for the volume, the changing nature of parenting appeared to us as the most appropriate formulation to account for such an idea. Today, we can say that we have not deceived ourselves. In gathering and reading the manuscripts received through an international call, we dived into much differentiated, and sometimes contrasting, realities. Despite this, in all of them, we perceived the still-ever-profound changing nature of parenting and the progressive certainty of the importance of using the plural in the title. There is no transition but transitions into parenthood.

The birth of a child represents both the end of one experience, wherein parents have been preparing for the arrival of the child, and also the beginning of yet another experience, involving the rearing of the child. Entry into parenthood represents a fundamental shift in family structure and family dynamics, which practices and senses the recent changes in the family come into question. Transitions into parenthood continue to be a key issue in family research, yet incorporating the main themes and debates that today are placed to the contemporary family: the rising individualism and the (new) place of the child within the family and society, technological advances regarding ICTs, biomedicalization and reproductive technologies, the power and influence of social media into everyday life, the pressure exerted by the market economy and consumption society, the (new) role of the man in the family dynamics, the pluralization of family structures and non-traditional relations, as well as possibilities and constraints raised by issues regarding migration and transnational families.

From all this, it turns out that parenting is not just a matter that concerns only parents and children. It never was. As a cutting-edge topic in family research around the globe, parenting involves a wide range of actors, people from the nuclear and extended family, non-family members, peers, health and education professionals, institutions such as school, medical clinics and hospitals, and community-based organizations aiming to provide support and help. It crosses the physical space between states and continents, and relies upon different motivations, expectations, and values, some deeply rooted, others new and emerging. Furthermore, the decision to have a child has substantial bearing upon the larger



society, particularly in regard to broad population and policy issues. The two components of childbearing and childrearing vary considerably across cultures, over space and time, and each of these continues to change.

This multidisciplinary volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* aims to contribute to our understanding of the varied and complex changing nature of becoming a parent. It brings together research projects from contributors around the globe, along with research designs which vary quite substantially from one another. The theoretical underpinnings are diverse and rooted in different disciplines. Within a quantitative, qualitative, mixed or multi method's framework, various methodologies for data collection and analysis were employed. Literature reviews, interviews, questionnaires, Likert scales or ethnography; statistical, content, biographical and interpretative phenomenological analysis was performed. Pilot, exploratory, descriptive or longitudinal studies used as the unit of analysis either survey datasets, documents or individuals, focusing in their experience *a solo*, as a couple or living in a three-generation family. Pluralization is not just in the title of what we intended to study. Ultimately, it lies in the result as this volume deconstructs monolithic views over transitions into parenthood by hearing the many voices and actions involved, whether by gender, race, education and economic status, family form, life cycle stage and phase in the parental trajectory or career.

This volume explores childbearing, its contexts, actors and experiences. In doing so, it explores issues regarding assisted reproduction, contraception, birth-preparation classes, the midwives' role and experiences toward medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth. In the chapter titled "Putting Gender on Ice: Preserving Motherhood in Media Coverage of Elective Egg and Sperm Freezing," Ashlyn M. Jaeger uses elective egg and sperm freezing as a case to compare representations of men and women as agents of biological reproduction. Aiming particularly to understand how gender and risk are co-produced in the context of new reproductive technologies, and departing from a content analysis of internationally renowned newspaper articles about egg and sperm freezing, Ashlyn interestingly traces how fertility risks facing men and women are differently portrayed in the media. Concerning freezing both egg and sperm, the research shows how the gendered construction of infertility risk reinforces normative expectations around childrearing and perpetuates gender inequity in parenting norms.

Transition into motherhood is presented as a major life-course event for most women, not infrequently fraught with difficulties, due to the uncertainty and instability which accompany it. Samantha Reveley departs from this idea for the chapter titled "Becoming Mum: Exploring the Emergence and Formulation of a Mother's Identity during the Transition into Motherhood." Theoretically, she uses assemblage theory assumptions and in the empirical work she draws on biographical narrative interviews with White British, heterosexual mothers from the North East of England, each at different stages in motherhood. The interviews focused on inducing uninterrupted narratives detailing the lived experiences of these women as they transitioned into and across motherhood. By the end, transitioning into motherhood proved to be a multifaceted process that comprised of numerous stages where a woman's identity and sense of self would become

destabilized and reformulated as a result of changes in her everyday lived experiences and routines.

In “Contextual Influences on Contraception Use Among Poor Women in Pakistan,” Hassan Raza, Brad van Eeden-Moorefield, Soyoun Lee, and Lisa Lieberman use bioecological theory and logistic regression over cross-sectional datasets taken from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys to examine the effects of different contextual factors such as husbands’ desire for children, visit by a family planning worker, media messages and province level on women’s use of contraception in Pakistan. The results discuss significant predictors of women’s use of contraception across time, raising important issues about fewer studied topics, such as the (non)coincidence among partners of the desire for having (more) children.

Marion Müller, Nicole Zillien, and Julia Gerstewitz coauthor the chapter “Doing Becoming a Mother: The Gendering of Parenthood in Birth-preparation Classes in Germany.” While advocating that German birth-preparation classes have received little attention in sociological research thus far, the authors present results from a current study examining the role of birth-preparation classes in the extensive gendering during the transition into parenthood, in Germany. Methodologically, ethnography of birth-preparation classes was combined with a content analysis of text material made available by professional associations of midwives. By focusing on female corporeality in birth preparation courses, the authors draw the attention on how birth-preparation classes introduce a gendered distribution of labor as early as in the antenatal phase and, thereby, function as institutions promoting a process of re-gendering and re-traditionalization of child care and labor, and legitimize these differences through naturalization.

“Midwives in Ontario Hospitals: The Mainstreaming of ‘Alternative’ Childbearing,” by Melodie Cardin, makes use of semi-structured interviews with midwives throughout the province to interrogate the progressive integration of Ontario midwives into the hospital system. The author uses the lens of Michel Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge to identify the ways in which medicalized norms have been privileged in Ontario birth care, and to demonstrate how pregnant women and midwives have struggled against the power/knowledge of hospital environments. This chapter offers an “alternative” to medicalized childbirth, which recognizes that a birth caregiver’s role is both the physical care of mothers and babies, and broad guidance for families during a liminal experience.

In “The Medicalization of Pregnancy and Childbirth in Contemporary Turkey: The Effect of Risk Discourses for Turkish Women’s Experiences,” Zehra Zeynep Sadıkoğlu aims to describe how Turkish mothers experience the medicalization of pregnancy and birth within the contemporary social and cultural structure. The study was designed as a phenomenological research, and highly educated mothers in the middle and upper-income groups living in cities with small children were interviewed about their expectations and experiences about pregnancy and childbirth. Specifically, the paper focuses on expert knowledge and risk discourses. Zehra cannot fail to notice the power of such discourses,

as even in cases when the participants were opposed to the technological and medicalized conceptualization of pregnancy and childbirth, and objected to some aspects, the hierarchical superiority of the doctor and the fact that the expert knowledge was socially approved, did not allow the participants to challenge the validity of it, and they behave cooperative.

Christina Scott, Siri Wilder, and Justine Bennett write together the chapter “Going It Alone: A Multigenerational Investigation of Women’s Perceptions of Single Mothers by Choice Versus Circumstance.” The study explores attitudes toward single mothers and personal willingness to become single parents in the future. Interrogating choice versus circumstance, the paper discusses the (still) prevalence of negative stereotypes of single parents despite the rising number of unmarried and/or divorced parents. Using Likert’s scales and open-ended questions, the authors explore West Coast American female respondents’ attitudes toward fictitious single mothers, advantages/challenges faced by each mother and willingness to become a single mother by choice. Entering into the millennials’ mind and attitudes, comparing and contrasting it with adults, is quite interesting as it simultaneously allows us to find old persistence and new trends regarding (un)willingness and (dis)advantages of being/becoming single mothers either by choice or circumstance.

In “Building a Family within a Non-Heterosexual Couple: Struggles, Fears, Representations and Practices,” Filomena Santos and Rita Dias aim to deepen the knowledge of the family dynamics of non-heterosexual people, specifically as far as the process of transition into parenting is concerned. The chapter interrogates what it means to the men, and women interviewed, to be a father and to be a mother in a same-sex couple and how they project themselves as fathers and mothers. Based on in-depth interviews with Portuguese young adults’ women and men who have a same-sex relationship and a project of parenting in mind, the authors discuss issues related to the challenge of heteronormativity, equality within the couple, projects and gender representations of parenthood.

Sheresa Boone Blanchard and Tacy Rae LeBaron explore implications for how race might impact the variability across families in their study, “A Qualitative Inquiry: Reflections on Pregnancy, Birth, and Transition to Parenthood Experiences of African-American Couples with a Toddler Son.” The authors interviewed African American, heterosexual couples with a toddler son in a southeastern US county about their beliefs, practices and challenges in their lives right before and during the pregnancy, delivery and right after the birth of their son. The qualitative thematic analysis showed that most parents shared similar experiences of planning the pregnancy, breastfeeding from birth and both being involved in care giving. However, variability in preparation, emotions and adjustment existed during this period. Although differential pregnancy outcomes could be race-related (i.e. gestational period length and preterm delivery), other aspects of this universal experience were similar to the average couple in the US.

With the research included herein, this volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* resulted in an extraordinarily rich collection. Being informed for such different disciplines, theoretical frameworks and research designs, it offers a multitude of studies on the multiple and multiplex dimensions of the transitions

of parenthood both across space, time, and culture. Moreover, bringing together contributions from PhD students, early-career and established researchers, either in single or co-authorship, this volume also provides the attentive reader an interesting insight behind the scenes of the research, showing how the distinctive hands who write and the distinct stages in which writing occurs shape the research' scope and depth.

For this wonderful outcome, we are deeply grateful to the authors who provided important contributions to the volume, the members of the editorial board, the external reviewers and the magnificent staff at Emerald Publishing, for their outstanding assistance in bringing this book to print. Our task was greatly facilitated by the generosity of their collaboration and dedication to this project.

As we finish writing the foreword, we firmly believe that the most interesting contribution of this volume is yet to come. Today, these chapters offer an insightful look into transitions into parenthood, around the globe. Tomorrow, they can be a fruitful tool into new and different ways of studying it. Definitely, the great benefit of this volume is not for the contributors, nor for editors, but for all the potential readers, who certainly will find here many inspiring motives to pursue further research with the aim of bringing scientific informed light into contemporary family's shadow fields.

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