

# MORE THAN JUST A 'HOME'

Understanding the Living  
Spaces of Families

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

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES  
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

**VOLUME 25**

MORE THAN JUST A 'HOME'

# CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY  
RESEARCH, VOLUME 25

**MORE THAN JUST A 'HOME':  
UNDERSTANDING THE LIVING  
SPACES OF FAMILIES**

EDITED BY

**ROSALINA PISCO COSTA**

*University of Évora, Portugal*

and

**SAMPSON LEE BLAIR**

*The State University of New York, USA*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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**Melinda Vandenbeld Giles** is a Feminist Author and Anthropology Lecturer at the University of Toronto and Lakehead University. Melinda's publications include her Demeter Press edited volume *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism*, her co-edited volume *The Routledge Companion to Motherhood*, and her Inanna feminist novel *Clara Awake*. Melinda's work also appears in many Demeter Press edited collections, *Current Sociology*, *JMI (Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement)*, *Development (Journal of the Society for International Development)*, and *Canadian Woman Studies*.

**Silvia Di Giuseppe** holds a PhD in Sociology from the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS-UL), where she is currently an alumni student, specifically in the Interuniversity Doctoral Programme in Sociology: Knowledge for Open and Inclusive Societies (OpenSoc). Previously, her studies in Sociology began in Italy, where she obtained a Master's degree in Sociology, Social Research and Evaluation from the University of Rome La Sapienza. During her PhD in Lisbon, she wrote a thesis entitled *Estar online e offline: práticas e representações de mulheres portuguesas e italianas na sociedade digital* (Being online and offline: practices and representations of Portuguese and Italian women in a digital society) focusing on digital information and communication technologies (ICT) in everyday life by a target group of women employees, who were living as part of a couple with children, in Portugal and Italy. Furthermore, she was also a Doctoral Scholar at the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). At the same time, she has participated in various scientific meetings in the field of Sociology, presenting several talks (e.g., APA, APS, CIEG, ESA, ESFR, ICCA, and ISA). Although not exhaustive, the areas of gender, everyday life, family and digital ICT cover her main research interests. She is currently conducting research that continues to focus on the use of ICT in the everyday life of Portuguese and

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**Wasana Handapangoda** is affiliated with University of Vienna, Austria. She is Head of the project, “*Ideal*” *Migrant Subjects: Domestic Service in Globalisation*, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Lise-Meitner Grant, M 2724-G. Wasana Handapangoda also has experience working as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. She earned her Doctoral degree in Global Society Studies from Doshisha University, Japan in 2011. Her current research interests lie in transnational migration and domestic work, intersectionality and identity politics, combining gender, work and home, brokerage and the global political economy of care, gender, and digital technology. This book chapter is an outcome of her FWF, Lise-Meitner project.

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**Tate Kautzky** graduated from Whitman College in 2020 with a Degree in Sociology. Kautzky then graduated with a Master of Public Health degree from Central Washington University in 2023. Utilizing qualitative research via systematic literature review, her master’s thesis project is titled, “A Conceptual Definition and Framework for Patient-Centered Contraceptive Counseling: A Review of the Literature.”

**Amanda Andrade Costa de Mendonça Lima** was born in Brazil, where she graduated in International Relations, she has worked in the social and humanitarian sector, especially with populations at risk. She emigrated to Portugal, where she continued her academic career, starting with a Postgraduate degree in Human Rights at the University of Coimbra, and later completing a Master’s degree in Sociology and Public Policy at the University of Minho. Her dissertation and field of study revolve around issues of multiple and subjective inequalities, gender studies, intersectionality, multidimensional poverty, and education. Amanda is currently doing her PhD in Sociology at the University of Porto, where she is continuing her thesis. During her academic career, she participated in research around intersectionality, the impact of COVID on the lives of children and young

people, especially girls, and the concept of Amefricanity as an Afrofeminist resistance movement. The research culminated in the publication of two collaborative articles by the University of Bonn, also providing the possibility to participate in conferences and present the works. Social work has always been parallel to her academic life, considering an empirical process of training and expansion of knowledge developed at the university and in research. Through collaboration in projects that have as their objective and method the outreach of the knowledge produced, Amanda seeks to contribute to a closer dialogue between the University and the communities and individuals studied. ORCID: 0000-0003-1896-9699

**Katie Lindekugel** is a fourth-year Linguistics PhD student at the University of Washington. She earned her BA in Linguistics and Japanese and MA in Linguistics from California State University, Fullerton. At the University of Washington, she is actively involved in both the Language Development and Processing (LDP) and Sociolinguistics Labs. Katie's research interests include child language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics. While at the LDP Lab, she has focused on the potential impact of electronic media on bilingual Spanish-English learning infants through examining naturalistic recordings of family home environments.

**Naja Ferjan Ramírez** is an Assistant Professor in Linguistics at the University of Washington and holds the Distinguished Professorship in Language Acquisition and Multilingualism Endowment. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Neuroscience from Brown University and her PhD in Linguistics and Cognitive Science from the University of California, San Diego. She completed her post-doctoral training at the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington. Naja's research focuses on understanding the extent and origins of variability in brain growth and linguistic development among young children of diverse backgrounds. She is particularly interested in examining how variation in children's early language environments contributes to language development, and in applying this knowledge to the development of interventions. She uses multiple methodologies, including naturalistic recordings in children's homes and early education centers, magnetoencephalography (MEG), and behavioral language measures in the laboratory.

**Ana Rita Nunes da Silva** holds a Master's degree in Artistic Practices in Visual Arts from the University of Évora, Portugal. She currently develops social projects that relate art, education and inclusion. As a freelancer, she paints artistic murals, creatively decorates spaces and teaches artistic activities to children and young people. Passionate about passing messages, she also works in areas related to marketing and communication. She has extensive experience in design, business development, marketing, communication and event organization, skills she acquired throughout her formal education and through various extracurricular activities she developed as a student and which she continues to develop as a professional. As a researcher, she has been interested in themes such as family, identity and memory, topics she explored through archival and participatory processes.

**Simona Strungaru** is a Doctoral candidate in Sociology at the Department of Social and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of New England, Australia. Her thesis critically explores the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse within United Nations peacekeeping through a power elite framework. Simona's research interests are in human rights and children's rights, international law, refugee studies, and Middle Eastern studies, however, she also shares a love of popular culture and animals which allows her the opportunity to engage in expansive and interesting research spaces.

**Jingxian Wang** holds a PhD in Sociology from the School of Sociology and Social policy of the University of Nottingham, England. As one of the "black children" who have lived with this label for almost three decades in modern China, as well as a researcher from sociological background who focuses on qualitative research skills, Jingxian wants to bring these children's voice back to our understandings of what really make sense of children in one's family, and what accounts humans as citizens in the society. With the support of Vice-Chancellor's scholarship for research excellence at the University of Nottingham, Jingxian has researched lived experiences of the "black children" to explain what the label of "black" really meant (and still mean) to this population, as well as to respond her own struggles of being "black". Her research interests include sociology of childhood, family relationship, gender violence, identity politics, China's modernization and globalization, recognition and belonging, shame and stigma, restored injustice, citizenship rights and human freedom.

**Michelle Zhang** graduated from Whitman College in 2021 with a Degree in Sociology and Computer Science. Upon graduating, Michelle went on to attend Santa Clara University School of Law and is now pursuing a career as an attorney in intellectual property litigation.

# FOREWORD

The year 2024 marks 60 years since the release of *A House Is Not a Home*, a 1964 drama, whose soundtrack includes the song with the same name written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Drama, from the Greek *drama* [action] means scenic action represented by characters. It is any piece intended for representation, with an action that unfolds from a conflict, at a determined time and space. Not by chance, we use the dramaturgical metaphor to begin the foreword of the volume *More than Just a 'Home': Understanding the Living Spaces of Families*. The image explored in the song's lyrics of a chair that remains (still) a chair, even if no one is sitting there, seems especially insightful to think beyond the physical boundaries of the space, the architecture, the people, and the artifacts we often and wrongly take for granted as necessarily part of the home and, consequently, of the family.

Understanding the living spaces of families implies seeing more than just a 'home,' just as one must see more than just a 'chair.' Again, we turn to drama. Not exclusively a tragedy or comics, a drama is a relatively hybrid genre, that addresses themes of everyday life. When aggregating the tragic and the comic elements, it allows us to incorporate a colorful and multilayered understanding of the common life ranging from the sublime and the grotesque aspects, pathetic and touching, or, as a sociologist would say, the result of an action-mediated in a variable way by structure and agency. This is the challenge of this volume.

Over time and space, sociology has given varying importance to the study of the house. The house is often a *locus* of special attention when a couple is formed, and the investments made in a neolocal residence constitute a complex social fact. In some contexts, related decisions are strongly family-oriented; in other contexts, individualization and personalization are the driving forces that surround the dreams of a future based on acquisitions, renovations, and decorations. The 'broken house' after a divorce or the death of parents, and the subsequent decisions to be made regarding the division of property have also received varying attention in the sociological literature. The house where one grew up is also somewhat analyzed from a sociological perspective, especially as a space for socialization. However, such descriptions are often blurred by nostalgia or trauma. There is, in short, much to be known about the importance and the relationships between home and family.

In inviting the reader to see more than just a 'Home' when understanding the living spaces of families, this volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* sought to achieve contributions aiming a broad understanding of the house as a plural, diverse, and multi-meaningful space. The call for papers welcomed diverse theoretical approaches and multi-method research project submissions that explore both the ways in which the family socially constructs a home, and how the house, its architecture, spatial arrangement, internal and external



divisions, and micro technologies shape and reshape family relationships in the face of constant changes and challenges. Topics broadly explore the relationships between the family and the material and symbolic dimensions of the home. Such relationships encompass the trajectory and composition of the household, the gendered division of labor, work-family and education-family dynamics, migratory fluxes, and local and public policies, among others. Not surprisingly, the manuscripts consider specific occupational, gender, and age patterns of living in home space, as well as the use and implications of digital technologies, specifically a set of experiences brought about by the recent global COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent “turn to home.”

The call for papers allowed us to gather a total of nine chapters as diverse as they are interesting. As editors, we must recognize it was not easy to establish the order of the chapters as ultimately fixed in the table of contents. In the end, we opted for a sequence that allows one to zigzag through the public and private spaces of the house, from the nuclear to the single-mother family, focusing on the couple or the children, and shedding light on the stages of the interaction and behind the scenes. In neither of these chapters, the home is the fixed, immovable space of the architecture that shapes it. On the contrary, the home is an open space, to which the windows and doors metaphorically refer; and it is also a space of multiple social crossings, determined by the family structure, the composition of the household, gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic condition, among other.

The volume begins with “The Neoliberal Regime of Disappearance: Mothers Living with Their Children in Canadian Motels” by Melinda Vandenberg Giles. From the outset, vignettes from Melinda’s field notes reveal some of the inconsistencies and erasures between public policy narratives and representations of motels and lived realities. The chapter addresses a little-known facet of motels, namely their usage as a family shelter space, thus exploring the concepts of “privacy” and “domesticity” in juxtaposition to shelter, identified as a “public” space capable of offering reasonable conditions for creating a home place. The inconsistencies in the narratives provided by individuals working in the homelessness industry and case workers become immediately apparent as Melinda discloses some of the women’s narratives gathered during fieldwork. As the chapter focuses specifically on women living with their children in Canadian motels, it is especially heuristic for the focus of this volume due to the reflection it brings around the differences between “physical spaces,” “home,” and “home-like” arrangements when discussing poverty and homelessness. From the Canadian national housing program to the global social sector economy, this chapter is also particularly insightful for reflecting on how the marketization of the social domain is contributing to the disappearance of “the poor, the homeless and the hungry” from the political agenda.

The Sands Motel gives way to the vacation home during pandemics in the chapter titled “The Pandemic Vacation Home: Media Framing of COVID-19 and Second Home Real Estate Morality Projects,” co-authored by Michelle Janning, Tate Kautzky, and Michelle Zhang. Methodologically, the chapter draws on the broader collective experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents the results of a content analysis of 62 local news stories from 7 US locations

published in 2020, revealing how the migration of seasonal residents and short-term renters to nature-focused, amenity-rich, and leisure environments during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the social meaning of home for year-round and seasonal or part-time residents. Using Viviana Zelizer's (2005) "connected lives" approach, the chapter contributes to expanding understanding of lifestyle for a deeper analysis of how everyday economic interactions between and within families and neighborhoods are imbued with social and cultural meaning even in times of crisis. Topics related to local economies, health and safety, local government, insiders, and outsiders give rise to dilemmas, deliberations, and conflicting considerations made by individual and group stakeholders in evaluating the acquisition, use, meaning, and dispossession of properties meant for residential use beyond the primary residence. Furthermore, the results suggest that moral considerations of deservedness and citizenship among usual residents and second homeowners are framed as deep and incompatible concerns surrounding economic stability and public health. As COVID-19 yielded a visible shift in second home use from tourism-focused to shelter- and safety-focused (often including teleworking), it also raises important questions about the hidden relationships between second homeowners and host communities, which expands understanding of the changing social meaning of home and the designation of housing decisions as moral or immoral in relation to shifting and opposing public opinion on health, economy, and politics.

The emphasis is once again focused on family households and pandemic times in Chapter 3. *Women's Narratives: ICTs in the Family Household During the (Post-) Pandemic* by Silvia Di Giuseppe, has as its backdrop the fact that the pandemic occurred in the broader context of a digital society, where digital technologies of information and communication (ICT) were already widely used, to explore the lasting and diverse impact of ICT use on households in the (post-) pandemic. Specifically, the chapter focuses on the multiple changes, challenges, and tensions resulting from the increased use of ICT at home, due to lockdown, mainly for professional and educational purposes. The empirical work is based on the daily lives of Portuguese and Italian women, who live in nuclear families, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thick descriptions of Mafalda and Anastasia's cases are presented to illustrate how changes during the pandemic forced families to become more technologically dependent. Although it had a visible and immediate impact on the spatial organization and technological equipment of houses (for example, on the arrangement and decoration of spaces), transforming them into a workspace, it revealed profound changes and permanence, particularly those related to gender roles, education, and class imbalances, which seem to penalize couples with young children and women more than men.

The next chapter adds knowledge about lesser-known spaces in the home and the underlying social dynamics. Strongly permeated by class issues, the "Maid's Room: The Blurred Identity of Live-in Maids," by Amanda Andrade Costa de Mendonça Lima, explores understanding surrounding the definition of family, "as-if" and "family-like" relations by questioning the physical and symbolic place of the live-in housekeeper, both in socioeconomic and historical terms, departing from the analysis of the architectural and social dynamics

of the home. Specifically, Amanda undertakes an intersectional and teleological analysis of the intrinsic devaluation of paid work for social reproduction, based mainly on gender, race, and class inequalities. Ultimately, the chapter proposes a hermeneutic dive into the experience of this working class, revealing both the hierarchical socioeconomic system and its subjectivities. Combining a sociological, philosophical, and anthropological analysis, the ambiguous place of domestic workers becomes clearer, thus promoting a reflection on the multiple layers of understanding surrounding the family and household. Among these, the emotional bonds created with family members are particularly significant, especially with the children for whom they are responsible. As these women reside in their employers' residence and participate in the practical and emotional life of the house and the lines that outline the "architecture of inequality" become more defined, the contour separating this family from their own becomes blurred.

Wasana Handapangoda is the author of the chapter titled "(Re)Making Home(s) on the Move: Sri Lankan Live-In Migrant Domestic Workers in Kuwait." The text departs from the scenario of transnational migration to explore how migrants conceptualize and experience home. Recent theorizing on transnational migration has produced a state of flux in the naturalized conception of home as a fixed, bound, discrete, and trouble-free place of origin, (re)defining home as a project tightly entangled in the functioning of the global capitalist economy. Qualitatively based on the lived experiences of Sri Lankan women who migrated to Kuwait as live-in migrant domestic workers (MDWs), independently of their families, the chapter explores these stories to show the changing meanings of home in the intersection of power and control. The results suggest that MDWs negotiate and construct belonging and not-belonging dialectically in multiple homes, thus being simultaneously "here," "there," and "nowhere." In the analyzed context, home isn't something that is "there" or "behind"; instead, it is taken on a journey with women to a distant, foreign land. In the end, stories of mobility and transformation of Sri Lankan women working in Kuwaiti private homes as live-in MDWs make it possible to understand home, identity and belonging beyond traditional views and in different ways, constructing, and contesting boundaries between "us" and "them," private and public, and global and local. This chapter also adds insightful knowledge to the volume by considering home constructs as a space of (un)making, which is (re)produced through MDWs' own feelings of being at home (or not at home) and those produced by others that make them feel at home (not at home).

The chapter "Zooming Home and Family Gatherings in Pandemic Times: Ritual, Memory, and Identity," co-authored by Ana Rita Nunes da Silva and Rosalina Pisco Costa, brings back the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to explore the relationships between home and family. Specifically, it focuses on art, culture, and society by shedding light on the enduring role of family rituals in creating and maintaining family identity whilst affirming the role of ICT, in both the construction and reproduction of the family dynamics amid pandemic times. The reflection is made on a live-by-Zoom art exhibition opened in March 2021, during the second confinement in Portugal, where family photo albums

and various artifacts are used to show the family's history, and, at the same time, to invite others to imagine the artist's family as well as the family of each viewer. Inspired by an arts-based approach and storytelling sociology, methodologically the paper is based on data collected through direct observation and autoethnography. In the end, it is argued that just as families "live" on Zoom, so do family rituals. The Zoom platform reproduces the family environment, its opportunities, and constraints. Looking at the opening of the art exhibition as a family ritual allows one to think about how individuals have experienced family gatherings during the pandemic, but also how art can generate such family intimacies in such exceptional times.

Still with the pandemic context as a background, "The National Lockout: Impacts of Australia's International Border Closure on Family Relationships and Notions of Citizenship," written by Simona Strungaru and Jo Coghlan, broadens the understanding of the home through the analysis of the impact the restrictions imposed on the entry of travelers into Australia, closing its international borders in March 2020, as an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The border closures have had a huge impact on the lives of Australian citizens living abroad and the lives of their families. The chapter explores the multiple and diverse effects of the Australian government's decision to close the national border, presenting the lived experiences of Australian citizens negatively affected by the government's decision. Based on an online survey carried out in late 2021 and early 2022, Simona and Jo explore notions of the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship in the context of the pandemic, and the profound impacts that the national lockdown has had on Australians as individuals, family members and in its sense of national identity. The conclusion that the separation of citizens from family during lockdown has placed considerable pressure on the family as a social institution and has had significant impacts on the physical and mental health of Australians is an important and somewhat novel contribution to the current CPFR volume.

The remaining two chapters explore notions of home in strong relation to the parental dyad and the dynamics of parenting, the former in Latinx families and the latter in the Chinese context. "Contextual Factors of Electronic Media Exposure and their Effects on Parent-Infant Interactions in Latinx Families," authored by Katie Lindekugel and Naja Ferjan Ramírez, looks at the broader picture of infants' increased exposure to electronic media in North American families to examine contextual aspects of electronic media exposure, and the effects of electronic media on two types of parent-infant social interactions associated with child language development: parentese (a style of infant-directed speech distinguished by its higher pitch, slower tempo, and exaggerated intonation) and parent-infant turn-taking. The research uses naturalistic daylong recordings collected in the homes of bilingual Spanish-English infants of Latinx descent. Specifically, using Language ENvironment Analysis (LENA), two daylong audio recordings were collected from each family. The results interestingly demonstrate that although all infants were exposed to multiple electronic media sources in English and Spanish, they experienced more adult-directed than child-directed programming.

Furthermore, various devices were found to differentially affect parental language input. As these results contribute to the growing body of research on electronic media and parent–infant interactions, they are particularly important for designing culturally sensitive language interventions and messages using the home as a *locus* for child language development through media exposure.

The volume ends with a chapter titled “Children Belong Nowhere: Discontinued Family Identity of the “Black Children” (*Heihaizi*) of China’s One-Child Policy,” authored by Jingxian Wang. This research aims at explaining the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of the “black children” (*heihai zi*), a very little-known generation that lived in hiding under China’s one-child policy. The term “black children” has mainly been used to describe their absence from their family registration and education. However, this research aims to expand the meaning of being “black” to explain children who were concealed more than at the level of family formal registration, but also physical freedom and emotional bonding. Details of their day-to-day experiences, namely where they lived, how were they raised, who was involved, who benefited from it, and who didn’t. Moving beyond the scholarly considerations that inform the one-child policy, the chapter repositions the “black children” as primary victims and reveals the family as a key figure in the co-production of their diminished status with the support of state power. In closing the volume, this chapter contributes to improve understanding of how these children’s lack of access to ongoing, stabilized, and reciprocally recognized family interactions shaped their own idea of self-worth and identity.

Undoubtedly, these nine chapters result in an extraordinarily rich collection of the *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* series. On the one side, its international scope is fully fulfilled here, with research coming from America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, and China. On the other, the diversity of disciplines, theoretical approaches, and research designs attests not only to the multidimensionality of family studies, but also to the importance of a more than disciplinary reading of the topics under study, namely the uses and meanings of the home across space, time, and culture. Finally, despite an (un)expected predominance of female authors, the volume gives voice to single and multiple authorship, by researchers with different backgrounds, with different professional affiliations and experiencing distinct stages of their careers.

An immense and grateful thanks goes to the authors who provided important contributions to the volume, the editorial board, the external reviewers, and the excellent and highly professional staff at Emerald Publishing, for their outstanding assistance in bringing this book to print. Their trust and constant support across the project development were key in successfully reaching this wonderful output.

As we finish writing and reviewing this foreword, sitting calmly and comfortably in our chairs in Évora and New York, we remember and reflect on the way in which our homes were, in themselves, the physical, relational, and symbolic spaces of co-production of this volume. And, at the same time, we wonder how the contributors to this volume experienced the process of writing their manuscripts in specific places, certainly crossed by experiences, imagination, and contestation

around the home, its different architectures, underlying relationships, constitutive artifacts, and assigned meanings. As we wrote at the beginning, the 1964 drama *A House Is Not a Home* remains a timeless and inspiring title for anyone interested in studies of family and home. This volume does nothing but strengthen personal conviction and scientific evidence for those who doubt.

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