

used and what returns are available from them (Lowndes; Virginia Sapiro). Authors use a gendered analysis to form new insights on such topics as the worn dichotomies between public and private space and maternalism versus fraternalism in democratic politics.

The editors' introduction and conclusion provide a useful overview of the studies and some helpful guidance to the various themes that emerge in the different contributions. However, the volume could use a more clearly delineated thematic organization. The introduction implies a three-part division of the chapters into critiques of Putnam, gender differences in the scope and historical development of social capital, and political implications, but there is little in the actual structure of the volume or in the content of the chapters to suggest how these distinctions follow, with review pieces and critiques jumbled in with descriptive analyses and empirical tests of theoretical formulations. I also would have appreciated a more clearly delineated comparison of points of agreement and disagreement across the different pieces. For example, there are different theoretical interpretations that attribute similar insights on the conceptualization and operationalization of social capital to different theorists and different theoretical traditions. Alternatively, others read the implications of past work in different ways. Even empirically, there are implicit points of disagreement among the authors; for example, Do women collectively have less social capital than men, or are the differences solely in forms and uses?

These are minor criticisms of what is an overwhelmingly useful, provocative, and much-needed collection that should be of value to students and researchers alike. I confess that at times I have been skeptical of the value of social capital as either a theoretical concept or an empirical tool. This volume firmly sets these doubts to rest, presenting a more than convincing case for its utility. The editors and contributors are to be commended for an important and original contribution to a burgeoning literature.

Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women Are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family. By Rosanna Hertz. New York: Oxford University Press. 2006. Pp. ix+273. \$26.00.

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As girls, many of us jumped rope to the moralistic rhyme, "First comes love, then comes marriage; then comes a baby in a baby carriage." Not long ago, single women remained childless, as bearing or adopting a child was not an acceptable option. However, women born in the middle or late baby boomer years are not waiving their sense of entitlement to

having it all—or at least as much of it as possible. Empowered by a sense of their earning abilities and uninhibited by traditional social norms, many of them are moving into motherhood consciously and deliberately, skipping the love and marriage part, hoping that those events might follow later. Rosanna Hertz's book *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice* focuses on contemporary North American women who subvert the normative sequence, and the author does a superb job of providing a window onto this remarkable family change.

More than two-thirds of African-American children are born to single mothers, many of whom are poor, but Hertz's focus is more on the self-supporting "Murphy Browns" of America. Hertz interviewed 65 women, a majority of whom were white, middle class, educated, and heterosexual; 11 of the women in the study were bisexual or lesbian. These women felt ready to move into another stage of their lives by becoming mothers and found that they did not have a suitable partner for that endeavor. Some were in relationships, but with men who did not want children; others had been in brief marriages that did not last. Many of these women engaged in a long decision-making process before having a child, seeking support from those who would be part of a much-needed network once they had a baby, including their mothers, friends, co-workers, or church members. A number of the women chanced pregnancy in a less serious relationship or one that was ending. Others sought out sperm from someone they knew or from a sperm bank, or adopted children—options traditionally utilized by lesbians seeking children. Many of these adoptions resulted in transracial families, another former taboo that has been increasingly subverted in recent years.

It is fascinating to see how these women worked through their agreements about parenting rights and responsibilities with known donors, sometimes in contract form. A number of these single mothers still hoped for a serious committed relationship with someone, and these women did not want the biological father of their child to present an obstacle by being overly involved in their lives. In these cases, the men may or may not end up coparenting, but whatever their relationship with the child, there is no romantic connection between the biological father and mother.

Some of the women who used sperm banks sought out their children's half-siblings, reflecting other novel ways of creating family. Some single mothers created fictive kin as part of their network, while others hired help. Some of these methods of creating fictive kin have been previously utilized by gays and lesbians who, rejected by their biological relations, built new families. Of course, poorer, minority women have been creatively drawing on kin and nonkin ties for decades. In other words, Hertz's research reveals that family practices previously created at the margins of society within stigmatized groups are increasingly being brought into the mainstream.

Hertz expected to find highly ideological women who saw themselves as pioneers in the new family landscape, but that was not the case. She

found that most of them clearly benefited from feminism but adhered to dominant ideologies of women, motherhood, and the traditional nuclear family. Hertz was surprised to find in her four-year follow-up that a number of these women went on to have a second child. However, that finding fits with her argument that these single mothers still reflect mainstream ideologies of the nuclear family; in this country, the dominant notion of a family consists of two children.

Hertz argues that one main difference created by these families is that the mother-child dyad rather than the adult couple stands at the core of the family unit (p. 139). However, in light of the increased scrutiny given to the mother-child bond in our society—the pressure to be an “über-mom” and the lack of male participation in child care piled onto an ideology of domesticity that never really faded—that specific dyadic relationship may very well be at the core of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family configuration as well.

One argument threaded throughout the book is that these middle-class women want to be seen as very different from poor, young welfare mothers: “They distance themselves from the stereotype of the welfare-dependent woman with children” by demonstrating their self-sufficiency and solid middle-class status (p. 27), unlike the “matriarchal family that is part of the culture of poverty” (p. 150). However, because no direct evidence is provided to demonstrate that middle-class single mothers strive to distance themselves from the images evoked by their poorer counterparts, that argument is not convincing. Perhaps it is Hertz’s way of emphasizing what makes her sample different from poorer single mothers.

There remains a double standard in the United States: poor, minority single mothers are stigmatized and punished by society through inadequate social welfare policies, while their lighter-skinned, better-off counterparts might be celebrated as new family pioneers. Even though Hertz is clear about her focus on middle-class women, I wish that she had at least acknowledged this discrimination. It seems to me that it is the role of sociology to challenge rather than to accept and replicate these biases. Again, this may be the way that Hertz magnifies the distinctness of her sample, but we must take care not to further these inequalities by highlighting the desirability of one group of single women having children over those less desirable women who have been engaging in the same practice for decades. Still, this book contributes an important lens on gender and family change that is much appreciated.