

An incr
around
from o
the de
relatio
and ho
of fam

Edited
Guzma
Pope E
and th
Across
how fa
crisis a
practic
thems
throug

In this
unique
around
by sep
of circ
migrat
militar
orphan
the fie
sociolo
all del
of the
why th
how fa
distan
on var

An esp
From
of Fan
reader
and ex
respon
shifts

Parenting From Afar and
the Reconfiguration of Family
Across Distance

EDITED BY

MARIA ROSARIO T. de GUZMAN

JILL BROWN

AND

CAROLYN POPE EDWARDS

2018

New York, OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

7. Imagined and Occasional Co-Presence in Open Adoption: How Adoptive Parents Mediate Birth Connections 150
Mandi MacDonald
8. Untold Transnational Family Life on the Sonora–Arizona Border 176
Marcela Sotomayor-Peterson and Ana A. Lucero-Liu
9. The Experience of Families Separated by Military Deployment 194
Ruth Ellingsen, Catherine Mogil, and Patricia Lester

SECTION III Personal Crises and Family Separation

10. Children as Providers and Recipients of Support: Redefining Family Among Child-Headed Households in Namibia 219
Mónica Ruiz-Casares, Shelene Gentz, and Jesse Beatson
11. Parenting From Prison: The Reality and Experience of Distance 245
Joyce A. Arditti and Jonathon J. Beckmeyer
12. Distance Mothering: The Case of Nonresidential Mothers 266
Michelle Bemiller

SECTION IV Family Separation as a Normative Cultural Practice and in Pursuit of Education

13. “Raising Another’s Child”: Gifting, Communicating, and Persevering in Northern Namibia 287
Jill Brown
14. Satellite Babies: Costs and Benefits of Culturally Driven Parent–Infant Separations in North American Immigrant Families 304
Yvonne Bohr, Cindy H. Liu, Stephen H. Chen, and Leslie K. Wang
15. Going the Distance: Transnational Educational Migrant Families in Korea 321
Sumie Okazaki and Jeehun Kim
16. Where Should My Child Go to School?: Parent and Child Considerations in Binational Families 339
Edmund T. Hamann, Víctor Zúñiga, and Juan Sánchez García

Index 351

FOREWORD

Three themes drive this important collection of studies on parenting at a distance. First, families parenting from afar and family across distance include a “vast diversity” of forms and circumstances around the world, and there are many such families. Second, cultural notions of family life and parenting in these diverse contexts make a big difference in the experiences and consequences of separations. Third, what is considered “normal” family life and parenting is changing; yet some practices, such as fosterage, grandparenting, and economic migration, for example, remain common and continue from past generations in many communities. The goals of the editors and authors are to broaden our ideas of parenting, broaden our definitions of parenting through understanding the ways our ecocultural niches influence family forms and family life, and use these findings to “create a place for more sound developmental science in policy affecting families and children around the world.” These admirable goals are very relevant to the topic of parenting from afar, and they are goals that are just as important for the study of parenting and child development in general.

For example, the putative “standard family model”—that is, the normative presumption of a co-resident conjugal family in a single household—is not the majority, “standard,” or default expectation around the world. This volume provides strong examples of the many kinds of families and households operating across distance that have to be included in that diverse set of family and parenting models. This book provides a rich variety of examples of nonconjugal households, nonmaternal or nonpaternal care, and kinds of families where children and parents are dispersed for many reasons. Most contemporary family research samples in Western research journals and in clinical practice are not representative of the family forms and family practices with regard to parenting to be found around the world. Our growing knowledge of the world diversity in family life and how and why such variations occur depends on qualitative, ethnographic, and mixed-method accounts of these variations, and this book shows the value of such work.

The circumstances that lead to parenting at a distance also are diverse and, unfortunately, increasingly common (e.g., forced migration, war, environmental

dislocation, economic pressures, and others). The volume both establishes an analytic and descriptive category (parenting from afar, from a distance) and shows many variations within the category. The conventional social address categories for family residential situations (conjugal, single-mother, dual-earner married, extended, joint, and so forth) do not fit these circumstances very well or are incomplete descriptive categories. The close-in, on the ground observations and field studies of parenting and family life under conditions of separation in this book provide new evidence about parenting contexts and surely show the need for new, more useful categories for describing and analyzing parenting situations and household and family formations.

A simple example is the “one family, two households” (or better, “one family, multiple households”) unit of analysis for the study, initially, of rural–urban migration in Africa and elsewhere (Weisner, 1997). The household and relationship category “living together apart (LTA)” is another contemporary example developed in the United States. Frequent separations followed by reunifications and cohabitation of a couple along with (either partner’s) children can create an LTA family unit. Parents, children, and other family and household members share responsibilities, caretaking, and support while living apart from others. LTA households and families are very widespread in the United States and throughout the world—yet there is no category for them available in standard census or survey work (Cross-Barnet, Cherlin, & Burton, 2011).

Other useful categories describe family processes in addition to static residential or household classifications (Weisner, 2014). Youth and young adults often have to do “surfing,” for example—moving from one place to another, from household to household, due to poverty, legal issues, child lending and fosterage, family disruptions, and other reasons, as do some children and parents described in this book. This is a not uncommon practice among children and parents today (Roy, Buckmiller, & McDowell, 2008). “Kinscription” is a useful descriptive term for relationship processes and negotiations (Roy & Burton, 2007). Kinscription describes the constant attempts by single mothers (or other caregivers and parents described in this volume) to recruit and involve biological fathers and other romantic/intimate partners and their kin to help their families and be involved in their and their children’s lives. Kinscription processes are central to the lives of millions of mothers in the United States and elsewhere around the world, and there are a number of examples of kinscription at a distance throughout this book.

Framing parental relationships with children and other caregivers as *trajectories through time*, rather than fixed statuses, and recognizing that parenting can be “suspended” for periods of time, yet not abandoned since the potential for reengagement continues, also are constructs that fit with many of the reports from this book. New family and parenting terms and analytic categories hopefully will emerge from research on parenting from a distance and will contribute to stronger comparative, international, and cross-cultural research on family, parenting, and child development.

The findings from these studies also can challenge standard developmental theories. What do the many kinds of parenting from afar (and the alloparenting and caretaking at home by others that replaces and supplements parents’ roles) suggest regarding classical attachment theory, for example? Attachment theory is among the most widely described, taught, and accepted developmental theories in Western psychology and clinical work today. Attachment research is an important field that includes universal developmental mechanisms (such as the attachment-sensitive period in children and the stress-buffering roles of privileged caretakers) with likely universal developmental outcomes (security, safety, buffering of stress, emotion regulation, learning favoring the attachment figures). Yet there is far more diversity and pluralism than is claimed in most developmental research on these topics. What does parenting at a distance suggest regarding ecologically and culturally valid ways to assess children’s security, or parents’ and other caregivers’ sensitivity and attunement, given that so many children are living with parents far away and experience multiple caretaking, fostering, and other arrangements? Many children described in this volume seem to have a sufficient sense of social trust and attachment security from other caregivers, though certainly not all children do so. The experiences are complex.

Mesman et al. (2016) point out that “Attachment theory without contextual components is as difficult to conceive of as attachment theory without a universalistic perspective” (p. 808) and also remark that “the current cross-cultural database is almost absurdly small compared to the domain that should be covered” (p. 809). Yet both these concerns are not widely recognized and acted upon—or even admitted as a serious problem—within most of the attachment research field, and the implications are not often appreciated in literature reviews, theory, research design, and sampling frames (LeVine, 2014). Popular and journalist versions of “attachment parenting,” attachment theory, and its clinical implications remain remarkably unaware of these legitimate concerns, much less the kinds of circumstances described in this book for parenting at a distance (for example, see “Yes, It’s Your Parent’s Fault,” in the *New York Times* [Murphy, 2017]).

This volume shows the importance of research incorporating multiple caretaking, including parenting from afar in conjunction with other caregivers, for the study of attachment and also for other developmental processes (Leinaweaver, 2014). It shows the importance of considering cultural beliefs about security, trust, whom to orient toward for social learning and safety, and the many mechanisms in addition to attachment through which children acquire security. Responsive care is clearly important for children everywhere; indifference or outright rejection is not good for children regardless of the form it might take. Socially distributed care, including many of the situations described in this volume, can provide responsive care. These studies provide examples of the many functional ways caregivers can provide security and social trust other than through monomatrix attachment to a single co-resident maternal caregiver.

There are many other developmental processes and theories in addition to attachment theory that would benefit from incorporating evidence such as

presented in this volume. Learning responsibility and tasks in the family and household, emotion regulation, gender socialization and task expectations, self-construal and identity development, expectations for children's competence at different ages, cultural beliefs about developmental stages, and training for interdependence, among others, are all social and cognitive developmental processes influenced by the situations described in this volume.

Parenting From Afar and the Reconfiguration of Family Across Distance encourages thinking about a set of principles for future research programs worth considering for the next generation of scholarship on parenting and families on the move, who are separated, and who experience fluid relationships and family networks. These increasingly common circumstances require samples and designs that reflect the actual behavior, beliefs, and experiences of those studied. More sophisticated designs can take advantage of the ethnographic and qualitative, intimate evidence such as reported in this volume. Research methods and conceptual frameworks at least should not cover up the circumstances in these local social worlds. The authors in this collection provide terrific examples of situations where new units for analysis and designs can be increasingly used and hopefully made the default standard for research.

It is exciting, then, to consider the next steps in research programs that could follow from this volume. Theorizing on the topics of parenting and families at a distance will benefit from this work, and offer a broader range of concepts and situations for understanding distance parenting and its consequences. Local beliefs and meaning systems, ecocultural theories, and religious and family traditions are important, for example, and these all are shown to be important for parenting in many chapters. Research designs can now be expanded based on these findings. For example, sending and receiving communities should be part of the research design wherever possible. In fact, there are often more than just one sending and one receiving places that matters for the children, parents, and other caregivers. Many chapters show how parents, siblings, grandparents, and other caregivers near and far from the child have important roles in financial support, in providing direct as well as indirect care, and in children's imaginations and memory.

The value of adding improved, contextualized outcome measures and process measures also comes through in many of these studies. The chapters describe reasonably successful accommodations to dispersed parenting even in the face of hardship, inequality, and separation. Locally valid and meaningful ways to assess the consequences of parenting at a distance on all concerned should be developed and tested and then perhaps used in complement with other comparative assessments.

Let us imagine an ideal model research collaboration among scholars interested in parenting and child development more generally and parenting at a distance specifically. Let's call it the "Parenting from Afar Study." The team selects eight or so communities with different forms of parenting from afar from around the world. Ethnographic research done alongside local partners describes the situations and then proposes samples and research designs that reflect those parents' and children's circumstances. A suite of mixed methods are developed that incorporate normative developmental and family assessments, some regional

measures appropriate for situations in, for example, India, East Africa, China, or other culture areas, as well as local measures sensitive to parent and child in each local place (Weisner, 2013). These measures move across levels of analysis (physiological, psychological, behavioral, social, cultural, structural, and historic). Samples will be large enough for statistical analysis, and each site has a nested ethnographic subsample within the larger sample for qualitative, intensive studies as well. Some sites may add an appropriate comparison sample of co-resident families as well. The children are selected at comparable ages and family sizes and then followed longitudinally along with their parents and caregivers in both sending and receiving locales. Cross-talk among quantitative and qualitative researchers about their findings, along with local researchers and community partners, improves the study and measures as the project moves along. Each site has a policy researcher and practitioner collaborating, developing, and piloting possible interventions.

Funders surely will recognize the importance of this work and provide continuity and stability of funding for this multiyear international study. Results are reviewed and disseminated by local and national organizations interested in this work, along with scientific publication and policy follow-on projects. Junior researchers and students from each nation participating in this research program gain invaluable apprenticeship skills and go on to contribute to their nation's research and policy capacity. These younger team members, along with the more senior members, form a convoy and cohort of collaborators who benefit and influence future studies of families and children on other topics related to parenting from afar.

Well, perhaps this idealized, gold standard project is not all achievable—but even a good portion of such a longitudinal comparative research program would be terrific! Of course, there already are many examples of research programs like this in the field of culture and human development; this can be done.

Future comparative work, even if only partially meeting this ideal, will help further the goal of the many fine authors in this volume to create better policy. It is likely that research programs for assessment of what might improve the lives and well-being of children, parents, and caregivers in conditions of distance parenting require initial close-in ethnographic knowledge, such as we find in this volume. These kinds of holistic, contextual, policy-related studies can reverse the policy paradox in which children, parents, and families that don't easily fit the "standard expected model"—though clearly likely to benefit from support—miss out on programs or are in institutions not well adapted for them (Yoshikawa, 2011). The next steps, then, are to construct a logic model for how and when to provide useful supports that add value to the successful accommodations that already exist for parenting from a distance, to test that model, and then to improve the difficult economic and sociopolitical situations that also go along with separation and change. This can improve the well-being of all children, parents, and communities, including those parenting from afar.

—Thomas S. Weisner

REFERENCES

- Cross-Barnet, C., Cherlin, A., & Burton, L. (2011). Bound by children: Intermittent cohabitation and living together apart. *Family Relations*, *60*, 633–647.
- Leinaweaver, J. (2014). Informal kinship-based fostering around the world: Anthropological findings. *Child Development Perspectives*, *8*(3), 131–136.
- LeVine, R. A. (2014). Attachment theory as cultural ideology. In H. Otto and H. Keller (Eds.), *Different faces of attachment* (pp. 50–65). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mesman, J., van IJzendoorn, M. H., & Sagi-Schwartz, A. (2016). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: Universal and contextual dimensions. In J. Cassidy & P. Saver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment* (pp. 790–815). New York: Guilford.
- Murphy, K. (2017, January 7). Yes, it's your parents' fault. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/07/opinion/sunday/yes-its-your-parents-fault.html?_r=0.
- Roy, K., Buckmiller, N., & McDowell, A. (2008). Together but not “together”: Trajectories of relationship suspension for low-income unmarried parents. *Family Relations*, *57*, 197–209.
- Roy, K., & Burton, L. (2007). Mothering through recruitment: Kinscription of nonresidential fathers and father figures in low-income families. *Family Relations*, *56*, 24–39.
- Weisner, T. S. (1997). Support for children and the African family crisis. In T. S. Weisner, C. Bradley, & P. Kilbride (Eds.), *African families and the crisis of social change* (pp. 20–44). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press/Bergin & Garvey.
- Weisner, T. S. (2013). Why qualitative and ethnographic methods are essential for understanding family life. In S. McHale, P. Amato, & A. Booth (Eds.), *Emerging methods in family research: Approaches to measuring families* (pp. 163–178). Dordrecht: Springer Verlag.
- Yoshikawa, H. (2011). *Immigrants raising children*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book, for the most part, was born out of our own childhoods and experiences with families in various forms in different parts of the world. As researchers, we have found ourselves conducting work on issues deeply connected to our own roles within our families. We also wanted to add to the existing literature that is helping to reshape the cultural narrative of the “normal family.” The call for papers produced a fascinating spread of work and depth of expertise on a range of societies in different parts of the world. Almost all of the data in the book is based on original fieldwork and how families reconfigure themselves “in real time” and in the daily routines of their lives. We thank all the contributors to this volume. Their passion to address and improve the well-being of vulnerable families through their scholarship inspires us to continue with this work. We want to acknowledge all the participants in the studies presented in this book—each living the reality of family reconfiguration across distance, at times against the dominant notions of what family should look like in their communities.

We would like to thank our editors, Andrea Zekus, for her confidence in this project and guidance in the publishing process, and Courtney McCarroll, for carrying this endeavor over the finish line. Our students Aileen Garcia and Sarah Taylor provided invaluable support in editing and organizing materials to prepare for submission. Laura Padilla-Walker shared her support and experience in navigating the proposal submission process at the very onset of this undertaking.

To Ninel Constantino, visual artist and faculty at the University of the Philippines, College of Fine Arts—thank you for generously allowing us the use of your work for the book cover. We were so drawn by paintings in your *Road Trip* series. Each piece evoked a sense of distance and separation that was also expressed in many of the works in this volume. Maria and Ninel first met in 1976 at the JASMS preschool in Quezon City and were best friends throughout their childhood years. Collaborating on this project added another layer of reconnecting with family at a distance.